



GCPEA SUBMISSION TO THE 38th SESSION OF THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW

REVIEW OF SOMALIA

1. Introduction

The Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA)¹ makes this submission ahead of the 38th Session of the UPR to be held on 03 – 14 May 2021. GCPEA was established in 2010 by organizations from the fields of education in emergencies and conflict-affected fragile states, higher education, protection, international human rights, and international humanitarian law who were concerned about on-going attacks on educational institutions, their students, and staff in countries affected by conflict and insecurity.¹

Attacks on students and teachers, and the destruction of their schools and universities occur commonly in many armed conflicts, with the number of countries experiencing attacks on education remaining alarmingly high in recent years.² The Coalition's recent report, *Education under Attack 2020*, shows that at least 11,000 reported attacks on education in 93 countries have harmed or killed over 22,000 students, teachers, and academics between 2015 and 2019. [Somalia](#) was one of 37 states profiled in the report for experiencing a systematic pattern and high level of attacks. Children have been particularly affected by conflict in Somalia, and attacks on education continue to affect many parts of the country. More than 140 attacks on schools, students, and personnel were reported between 2017 and 2019, the majority of which were violence, abductions, and threats against students and teachers. GCPEA reported that between 2017 and 2019, armed groups used schools as venues for child recruitment, with over 200 children recruited from their places of learning. Armed groups, including Al-Shabab also threatened teachers who refused to teach their curriculum or did not help recruit students for fighting purposes. Unidentified armed parties and non-state armed groups also sporadically targeted higher education personnel.³

Attacks on education violate the right to life, liberty and security of person, as well as the right to education, amongst other human rights. Armed parties also target women and girls in ways that are unique to them or that disproportionately affects them.⁴ Girls are the first to drop out of school and the last to return after an attack. Further, their right to participation in decision-making is curtailed when their education is truncated.⁵ The effects of military use of educational institutions can be devastating for students, teachers, and their communities, turning schools into targets for attack, depriving children and youth of access to education, and putting their security and that of their teachers at risk.

Safeguarding the right to education is critical towards achieving all other human rights, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals. The right to education is guaranteed in nearly every multilateral human

¹ GCPEA is an international coalition of organizations that includes: Human Rights Watch, Institute of International Education/IIIE Scholar Rescue Fund, Education Above All (EAA) through its program Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict (PEIC), Plan International, Save the Children, UNICEF, UNESCO, and UNHCR

² During situations of armed conflict, attacks on education violate international humanitarian and criminal law and may constitute war crimes as set out in the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and customary international humanitarian law. Resolutions of the United Nations Security Council, the General Assembly, and the Human Rights Council call for strong and decisive action to end attacks on education and deter the use of schools for military purposes.

³ It should also be noted that attacks on education are likely significantly underreported due to constraints to monitoring and reporting

⁴GCPEA, "It is very painful to talk about: impact of attacks on education on women and girls", November 2019

⁵ OHCHR, "Attacks against girls' education on the increase", February 2015



rights treaty that has been adopted at the international and regional levels.⁶ This includes the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child – to which Somalia is a State Party to. More than [one-half of all UN member states](#) (105 states), including Somalia have further committed to protect students, teachers, schools, and universities from attacks through the [Safe Schools Declaration](#). By endorsing the Declaration, Somalia has committed to use the [Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict](#). There is growing concern that Covid-19 is exacerbating existing vulnerabilities, with the twin threats of attacks and the pandemic further reducing the ability of students and teachers to learn and teach and adding urgency to the need to implement the Safe Schools Declaration. It also remains critical that students who previously ended their studies due to attacks, are included in plans for returning back to school.

2. Attacks on Education in Somalia

Attacks on schools, students and personnel

Between 2017 and 2019, there were at least 140 UN-verified incidents of attacks on schools, students, and personnel. In addition, GCPEA identified almost 30 alleged reports of attacks on students and education personnel between 2017 and 2019, though it was unclear whether these overlapped with UN reports. The majority of these were targeted killings, and the reasons for the attacks were not always reported in media sources. Evidence suggested that attacks on teachers were often linked to school and curriculum-related issues; according to the UN, teachers who declined to adopt al-Shabaab's curriculum faced direct attacks.⁷

Child recruitment at, or on the way to or from school

Al-Shabaab's use of schools for child recruitment was a significant problem in Somalia during the 2017-2019 reporting period. As reported in *Education under Attack 2018* and *2020*, recruitment efforts escalated in late 2017, after al-Shabaab issued its new curriculum. According to UN sources, 2017 saw at least 76 verified cases in which child recruitment occurred at schools, with at least 242 children recruited. Child recruitment in school settings continued in 2018.⁸

Military use of schools and universities

Although GCPEA heard of anecdotal cases of school and universities used for military purposes in late 2017, at the time of writing its report, research did not find any reported or verified cases in 2018 and 2019.⁹ One incident of a school used for military purposes in 2019 by the Somali Police Force, was subsequently reported by the United Nations.¹⁰

Sexual violence at, or on the way to or from, school or university

⁶ OHCHR, "Attacks against girls' education on the increase", February 2015

⁷ GCPEA, *Education under Attack 2020* (New York: GCPEA, July 2020), [eua2020.protectingeducation.org](#).

⁸ GCPEA, *Education under Attack 2020* (New York: GCPEA, July 2020), [eua2020.protectingeducation.org](#).

⁹ GCPEA, *Education under Attack 2020* (New York: GCPEA, July 2020), [eua2020.protectingeducation.org](#)

¹⁰ UN General Assembly and UN Security Council, "Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General," 9 June 2020



For the 2017-2019 period, GCPEA identified one report of sexual violence at, or on the way to or from, school. During the previous reporting period, GCPEA did not identify incidents of this violation. Reports of conflict- and school-related sexual violence may be underreported due to stigma or data availability. At least 328 girls and three boys survived rape and other forms of sexual abuse by parties to conflict in Somalia in 2018, according to the UN, though whether these attacks occurred while children were at, or on the way to or from, school, was not indicated.¹¹

Attacks on higher education

GCPEA identified at least seven reported attacks on higher education in Somalia between 2017 and 2019. These included targeted killings of academics and the use of explosive weapons which affected university facilities.¹²

Positive developments

The Somali Government has taken important steps towards protecting education by endorsing the Safe Schools Declaration, a political commitment to protect education during armed conflict. As part of the government's commitment to domesticate Safe Schools Declaration, an inter-ministerial task force was set up to advance the implementation.

3. UPR Recommendations for the Government of Somalia:

Urgent action is needed to protect against attacks on education, including by continuing, strengthening and supporting implementation of the Declaration, taking into account the particular ways in which women and girls¹³ are uniquely impacted by attacks on education. Recommendations for the Somali Government include:

- **Implement the Safe Schools Declaration** in a gender-responsive manner, including by considering GCPEA's guidance, What Can be Done to Better Protect Women and Girls from Attacks on Education and Military Use of Educational Institutions;
- **Effectively, impartially and transparently investigate alleged violations** of applicable national and international law, **appropriately prosecute perpetrators**—from both state forces and non-state armed groups, and ensure that cases of attacks on educational facilities, students, and teachers are brought to existing national courts or establish ad hoc mechanisms to address such case;
- **Ensure that the Child Rights Bill that is currently being developed includes the sanctioning of attacks on schools and students, the recruitment and use of children, and the use of schools by armed forces and armed groups;**
- **Implement the Roadmap to accelerate implementation of Somalia's 2012 action plans to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children, and the killing and maiming of children;**
- **Strengthen and systematize existing efforts to monitor and report on attacks on education; and promote more consistent disaggregation of data**, including by documenting whether these violations occurred at or on the way to schools or universities; and

¹¹ GCPEA, *Education under Attack 2020* (New York: GCPEA, July 2020), eua2020.protectingeducation.org

¹² GCPEA, *Education under Attack 2020* (New York: GCPEA, July 2020), eua2020.protectingeducation.org

¹³ Priority actions to address the specific impact of attacks on women and girls can be found in GCPEA's report ["It is Very Painful to Talk About": The Impact of Attacks on Education on Women and Girls](#)".



Global Coalition to **Protect
Education from Attack**

- **Develop and implement gender-responsive risk assessments** and school security and response plans to prevent and mitigate the impact of attacks on education before and during, and after the reopening of schools and universities

Please also find below the links to the *Education under Attack* 2020 report and related resources:

- Full report: http://protectingeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/ea_2020_full.pdf
- Executive Summary: [English](#), [Arabic](#), [Spanish](#), and [French](#)
- Interactive microsite: <http://eua2020.protectingeducation.org/>
- [Somalia country profile](#)