



VOTE FOR SAFE EDUCATION

GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR EDUCATION POSITION STATEMENT

“Education remains a basic human right, whatever the circumstances, even during conflict. More than any other circumstance, conflict makes the case for providing appropriate educational responses to the needs of children and youth at risk and exposes the dangers of neglect. Quality education seeks to promote peace and tolerance, enhances options and opportunities for employment, and also elevates the living standards thus reducing child labour and poverty. For children caught in conflict, school forms an essential psychological intervention, a critically important step on the road to recovery from the trauma of violence and destruction.”

Third GCE World Assembly, 2008, Resolution B

Schools, universities and other places of learning should be peaceful, safe spaces; no learner or educator should fear attack, while at school, for going to school, or because they raise their voice about their right to a good education. Yet around the world, students, teachers and schools have been and remain under attack. From Colombia to Côte d’Ivoire, Nepal to Nigeria, Uganda to Ukraine – over two dozen countries have witnessed students and teachers being attacked, or have had their schools and universities targeted or used for military purposes over the last 10 years. The frequency and brutality of such attacks on education and on the education community are major threats to the achievement of the right to education.

The challenge

Attacks on education happen in many different situations. In contexts of conflict and war, students and teachers are often particularly vulnerable: they are frequently harmed in fighting, or are sometimes specifically targeted for

attack. In some conflicts, education buildings are used as barracks to house fighters; as bases to mount security operations or fighting positions; as prisons or centres for detention, interrogation or torture; as training grounds for soldiers; and as weapons stores. Schools are sometimes also used to indoctrinate, recruit and train students.

Some attacks on students, educators or educational institutions take place even during times of peace; these are often attacks aimed at curbing academic freedom or protest, or at undermining the right to education.

All such attacks have lasting effects, necessarily for those directly targeted, but also on the strength and resilience of the education system as a whole. When students, teachers or education institutions are attacked, or buildings used for military purposes, the right to education is violated, students and education staff are harmed and put at risk and the damage to societies as well as individuals is severe and long-lasting. Such actions, even now, are denying educational opportunities to millions of students worldwide, and these attacks require a concerted response at both the country and international levels.

The next steps

States should already be committed to protecting students, educators and educational institutions from attack and military use; the fact that such violations of the right to education are still happening indicates a need for greater prevention, monitoring, and enforcement of protections.

Making & implementing commitments:

All States should endorse and implement the “*Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*”, produced by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack after extensive consultation; this includes integrating the guidelines into their own military doctrines, policies and training. All States should also publicly acknowledge and commit to respect the right of students and educators to gain or provide an education, and to express their views, even their dissent, about their education.

Monitoring:

The UN-led Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict, which operates through country task forces, should enhance the monitoring and reporting of attacks on schools, students, teachers; threats of attacks; and other actions during conflicts that limit the right to education.

Prevention and systems:

Relevant ministries and education actors in countries where attacks on education occur should establish preventative measures, such as early warning systems, and a rapid response system for attacks.

Support:

International organisations should offer support for all of these efforts, including monitoring attacks, and developing systems to prevent attacks.

Transparency and openness:

Civil society must be engaged and consulted on all strategies to prevent and respond to attacks on education, learners and educators, ensuring that the perspectives of those most affected are heard.

Quality education is a fundamental, universal human right; and accessing this right is in itself a means to promote peace and prevent conflict. States and other actors, including multilateral agencies, must do all they can to ensure this right is not violated through violent attack.

ABOUT THE GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR EDUCATION

The Global Campaign for Education is a civil society coalition that calls on governments to deliver the right of everyone to a free, quality, public education.

Operating in over 90 countries and dozens more across our regional and international networks, GCE members include grassroots organisations, teachers' unions, child rights groups and international NGOs.