

# Schools shall be safe sanctuaries



**A guide to the Declaration by  
Education International**



Education International  
Internationale de l'Éducation  
Internacional de la Educación



Students take lessons in front of Goodness Mercy School, Maiduguri, Nigeria, after it was destroyed in violence unleashed by Boko Haram, a sect whose name means 'Western education is a sin'



## INTRODUCTION



In most parts of the world teachers and students do not have to worry about whether they are going to be shot on their way to school or blown up when they get there.

But increasingly in conflict countries and fragile states they are putting their lives at risk simply by turning up for lessons – because rebels, armed forces and repressive regimes are targeting schools, universities, students and teachers for attack.

It is time for the world to take action to stop this growing problem. These attacks violate the most basic human rights for students and teachers – the right to life, and the right to education.

The latter includes the right to education in safety and the right to a good quality education, both of which are denied by violent military and political attacks and

the fear that spreads with them.

The violations represent an attack on the provision of education, an attempt to prevent children and young people from realising their fullest potential as human beings, and therefore an attack on civilisation itself.

It is the responsibility of every national government and the whole international community to ensure that students, teachers, schools and universities are protected, that the perpetrators of attacks are punished and that education becomes a force for peace.

By this Declaration on Schools as Safe Sanctuaries we, the 30 million teachers represented by Education International, are demanding that schools be respected and protected as zones of peace.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'F' followed by a horizontal line that ends in an arrow pointing to the right.

**Fred van Leeuwen**

General Secretary, Education International

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# Schools shall be safe sanctuaries

Education International Declaration on Violent Political and Military Attacks Against Schools and Education Institutions, Students, Teachers, Academics and all other Education Personnel, including Support and Transport Staff, Education Officials, Education Trade Unionists and Education Aid Workers

## ARTICLE 1

**Reaffirm the commitment to the principle of the right to education in safety**

The international community, governments, and all parties to conflicts shall recognise and respect the right of all children and adults to a safe education in a peaceful learning environment, and shall respect education institutions as safe sanctuaries. The international community calls on the United Nations Security Council to commission the creation of an international symbol for use on education buildings and education transport facilities to encourage recognition that they must be protected and cannot be targeted for attack or used for military purposes.

## ARTICLE 2

**Take practical measures to ensure protection**

The UN Security Council, governments and parties to conflict shall take all possible practical measures to protect students, teachers, academics and all other

education personnel from all deliberate violent political or military attacks on their way to or from, or at, their places of learning or work; and take all possible measures to deter such attacks. All governments should ensure that national legislation conforms with international law in protecting the right to education in situations where it is under threat and prohibiting attacks on education institutions and those working and learning in them.

## ARTICLE 3

**End impunity for attacks on students, teachers, academics, all other education personnel and education facilities**

The international community shall assist in ending impunity for attacks on education, and bring those culpable to justice. It will ensure that humanitarian and human rights instruments are used to prosecute perpetrators of attacks on schools, colleges, universities, education

offices, and other education facilities; and perpetrators of attacks on students, teachers, academics, education support staff, education officials, education trade unionists and education aid workers. This explicit focus on attacks on students and staff in addition to buildings and facilities must also be included in the investigations of the International Criminal Court and the UN Secretary General's monitoring of the grave violations against children in armed conflict.

## ARTICLE 4

**Strengthen monitoring of attacks and efforts to end impunity**

The international community, governments and human rights organisations shall develop systematic means of gathering information to aid the global monitoring and analysis of the frequency, scale, and nature of violent military and political attacks on students, teachers, academics, all other education personnel, and

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*‘The international community shall assist in bringing those culpable to justice’*



**Israeli first grade students practise an emergency drill in case of rocket attacks on their school in Ashkelon**

education institutions; and to monitor efforts to end impunity for all attacks. The international community calls on the UN Security Council to support such efforts, as a means of encouraging further action to prevent attacks on education.

#### **ARTICLE 5**

##### **Prioritise action and share expertise on resilience and recovery**

The international community and governments everywhere shall prioritise efforts to increase the resilience and recovery of education systems and institutions subjected to attacks, and share information on such efforts.

#### **ARTICLE 6**

##### **Make education an agent for peace**

Teachers, their unions, governments and the international community shall work to prevent education from aggravating conflict. They shall enable schools, colleges, universities and all other education institutions to become zones and agents of peace, promoting tolerance, understanding, conflict resolution, and respect for cultural and religious diversity both in their curricula and by fair, inclusive and transparent management in line with the 1966 and 1997 Recommendations concerning the Status respectively of Teachers and Higher Education Personnel.

#### **ARTICLE 7**

##### **Support campaigns of solidarity**

Teachers, their unions, non-governmental organisations and civil society are urged to join solidarity campaigns in support of victims of attacks and threats of attack, as a means to put pressure on governments and the international community to take action to end impunity; protect students, teachers, academics and all other education personnel; and make education institutions safe sanctuaries in which all students have equal opportunities to fulfil their individual potential and become advocates for peace in the world.

# Where going to school puts your life at risk

The Beslan school massacre and the bombing of schools in Gaza are just two examples of a worrying trend towards violent political and military attacks on education buildings, students and staff in recent years

**T**he Israeli bombing of two UN schools in Gaza in January 2009 grabbed the headlines around the world when doctors reported that more than 40 people, including children, had died at al Fakhura school.

Three young men, all cousins, died when the Israelis also bombed Asma elementary school, Gaza city, hours earlier.

The al Fakhura school attack was the worst incident in Israel's retaliatory response to rockets fired by Hamas into its own civilian areas.

And it occurred despite the fact that the UN had passed on the GPS co-ordinates of the schools to the Israeli military so that they would be spared from attack, because they were being used to shelter civilians.

There hadn't been such international coverage of an

**Afghan student Atifa Bibi recovers in a hospital after Taliban militants threw acid over girls on their way to school in Kandahar**

attack on a school since the Beslan school massacre in southern Russia in 2004, in which 344 people died, including 186 children, during a siege by armed Chechnyan separatists.

But the terrible truth is that there have been countless military attacks on schools and other education targets in other countries in between these dates and it has become a growing global problem.

The first global study of such incidents, *Education Under Attack*\*, published by UNESCO in 2007, warned that the number of reported attacks on students, staff and education buildings had risen dramatically in the previous three years. Most of the attacks occurred in countries suffering wider conflicts, but they were all deliberately targeted.

The worst hit countries were Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, Nepal, Palestinian Autonomous Territories, Thailand and Zimbabwe.

These attacks take the form of:

- Multiple deaths by targeted bombings and deliberately sprayed gunfire in places where large numbers of students or education staff congregate.
  - Targeted assassinations of individual teachers, education staff, students and trade unionists.
  - Destruction of education buildings by bombing, rocket attacks, burning, looting and ransacking.
  - Illegal detention, forced "disappearance" or torture of staff, officials, union members or students.
  - Abduction for extortion, or forced recruitment as child soldiers, or rape by armed forces.
  - Or threats of any of the above.
- Note that these incidents do not include general classroom violence or shootings for apolitical reasons, such as the many examples in recent years of gun rampages or threatened shootings in classrooms by







disaffected students or lone civilians in Germany, Finland, the United States and elsewhere.

Updated figures show 280 academics were killed in Iraq between the fall of Saddam Hussein and April 2007 in a campaign of liquidation of intellectuals; 310 teachers were assassinated in Colombia between 2000 and 2006, an average of 44 a year; there were 281 bombing, missile and arson attacks on teachers, students, education officials and schools in Afghanistan in 2005-6; militants murdered 99 teachers and burned down 297 school buildings in southern Thailand between 2004 and 2008; and in Nepal 10,600 teachers and 22,000 students were abducted in 2002-6 and 734 teachers and 1,730 students were arrested or tortured.

**Palestinian civilians and medics run to safety as Israeli shells strike a UN school in Beit Lahia**

The methods and motives for the attacks have varied from conflict to conflict.

In Afghanistan the Taliban has burned down or bombed girls' schools and issued death threats to those who teach in them, out of an ideological belief that girls should not be

educated. But they also target boys' schools and appear to oppose the imposition of non-religious education. There may also be a military objective of undermining government control.

In Iraq intellectuals have been assassinated for belonging to an opposing political faction or an opposing strand of Islam. There have also been mass killings of students via bombings at university facilities.

In southern Thailand, Buddhist teachers are being targeted by Muslim separatists who oppose the imposition of Thai-Buddhist culture. Many of the killings have been carried out by pillion passenger assassins on motorbikes riding up behind teachers and shooting them on their way to or home from school. ►

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*In Afghanistan, Taliban militants have burned down or bombed girls' schools and issued death threats to those who teach in them, out of a belief that girls should not be educated. But they also target boys' schools*



In Colombia teacher trade unionists have been caught in a struggle between left-wing guerrillas and right-wing government-backed militia and have been murdered, tortured or “disappeared” for taking a stand on social justice or human rights, including the right to education in their community.

In some cases, attacks are part of a strategy by occupying forces of tearing down the infrastructure of a resistant power. For example, in Operation Defensive Shield in the Palestinian Autonomous Territories in 2002, Israeli forces destroyed 11 schools and damaged 112, and confiscated equipment and records from the Ministry of Education.

But Palestinian guerrillas have also invited attacks on schools by using them as a cover for attacks on Israeli forces.

During the conflict in Nepal children were abducted in their

**The Israeli attack on this UN school at Beit Lahia, Gaza, reduced this classroom to a burnt-out shell**

thousands for re-education lessons by Marxist guerrillas, with a proportion forced to stay on as child soldiers. According to Human Rights Watch: “Once recruited, children were kept in the ranks through punishment or the fear of it: any who considered escape also had to consider the possibility that the Maoists would exact reprisal on their families.”

Although there has been no global scientific monitoring of attacks, the UNESCO study suggests this is a growing modern phenomenon, as militants in cultural, ideological and ethnic conflicts around the world recognise that schools, teachers and students are soft targets. In most places schools are left unguarded and staff have no means of defence.

Since the UNESCO study was published the attacks have continued in many of the countries highlighted and have become a growing problem in

other states. For example, in Somalia dozens of teachers and students were either killed, injured or abducted in 2008, according to press reports.

But the most serious recent example was reported at the same time as the UN school bombings in Gaza.

In Swat territory, north-west Pakistan, the Taliban threatened to blow up any girls’ school that remained open after January 15, 2009.

“Failing this the schools will be bombed and violators would face death. They will throw acid into the faces of our daughters if we don’t comply,” a government official who had heard the warning made by a Taliban leader on clandestine radio, told IRIN News.

It is no idle threat. Militants attacked more than 170 schools, mostly for girls, between July 2007 and March 2009.

*\*[www.unesco.org/education/attack](http://www.unesco.org/education/attack)*



# 'Close the schools, or we will kill you'

Fatema, 36, reaches into her handbag and pulls out a wad of letters from the Taliban. Some are addressed to her, some to her colleagues. Most are poorly written. But they all have one thing in common: they contain death threats.

"Hello Fatema, I have a request that you stop doing this work... If you continue I will kidnap you, take you in a car and kill you," reads the first, unsigned.

"If you do not close the government schools, we will kill you," reads another carrying the seal of the Taliban.

A third signed by the office of Mullah Mohammed Omar, the Taliban leader, says: "If continue (sic) with schools you have not reason to complain for what happens to you."

The letters began arriving six months after Fatema, a softly spoken but quietly determined woman, became director of education in a province of Afghanistan where the Taliban were making inroads. Some of them were pinned to her door at home or left on her doorstep.

A fourth, addressed to both Fatema and a



director of one of her districts, with 48 schools, said: "Close schools for girls... It is the Islamic duty not to continue with these schools." Four days after Fatema received it the director was killed. He was the fifth education official assassinated in her province.

When another director visited Fatema in distress, he said: "The Taliban will kill me, what will I do?" She urged him not to go back to his district, but move to her office to work out a solution from there. "But on his way home they kidnapped him, gouged out his eyes, then slit his throat," she recalls.

For two years Fatema, whose full identity is withheld for her own safety, was responsible for 480 schools and 240,000 students, 70,000 of them girls.

"As director, my hope

was that all girls would go to school and I set up girls' schools everywhere, even in places controlled by the Taliban."

But in some areas where the Taliban learned of her efforts, they burned the schools down and banned children from attending.

She responded by setting up 200 schools based out of view in villagers' houses, with the help of UNICEF.

When the death threats started, Fatema sought training in how to use a pistol, and gained authority to carry a .38 Beretta. Only after 18 months did she get a bodyguard.

"At the beginning, I could not sleep," says this mother of six children. "During the night I was wondering how I would be killed."

She says the Taliban

went to the mosques and decreed that anyone working as a teacher or in a school would be targeted. Afterwards they sent threatening letters to the offices and schools.

During her tenure, 13 schools were destroyed and 35 forced to close because of the constant threats. She believes the situation in her province is getting worse.

"Schools and educational institutions are again being burned, teachers and educational personnel are being killed," she says. "We are a poor country. I ask the world to give our students education in safety and peace."

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*Fatema was speaking to Brendan O'Malley at the launch of the UNESCO study, Education Under Attack, at the UN in New York, November 2007.*

# Fear and violence end learning

Education for All cannot be achieved unless governments take action to prevent attacks and assassinations

Attacks on schools and other education institutions are morally unacceptable, contravene fundamental human rights and have a detrimental effect on the provision of education and the wellbeing of teachers, students and their families.

The damage is caused in a plethora of ways. Pupils and staff stay at home or flee the area for fear of being attacked. Buildings, resources and materials are destroyed. Pupils are recruited as child soldiers by force or voluntarily, which prevents them from attending school. The killing, abduction and “forced disappearance” of teachers causes staff shortages and deters future recruitment.

Additionally, the loss of teachers’ and pupils’ lives in violent and often sadistically brutal ways can cause severe psycho-social trauma among staff and pupils, hindering teaching and learning for lengthy periods. There have been incidents in Thailand of teachers shot and burned in front of their

own pupils. In Nepal and Afghanistan headteachers have been beheaded. In Iraq a teacher was raped and her mutilated body hung up outside the school for several days.

Threats of attack can exponentially increase the impact of real human rights violations on attendance at school, and on concentration and motivation in class.

UNESCO’s *Education Under Attack* study concluded that “in the areas with the most incidents the impact of violent attacks on education provision has been devastating”.

Governments have a duty to take action from the points of view of both preventing human rights violations and fulfilling the international commitment

**The targeting of schools in fighting has destroyed educational infrastructure in Afghanistan (above) and forced schools to use tents (top right)**

to provide Education for All.

In 2000, 164 countries signed up to the pledge at the Dakar World Education Forum to:

- Provide good quality primary education for all.
- Achieve gender equality at all levels, especially full participation of girls in basic education provision.
- Halve adult illiteracy.
- Expand and improve early childhood education.
- Provide equitable access of young people and adults to learning and life skills programmes.
- And improve all aspects of the quality of education; all by 2015.

The estimated number of children out of school has dropped from 104 million in 2000 to 75 million, and the Millennium Development Goal of achieving universal primary education is the most achievable of the MDGs.

But these targets cannot be met in areas where teachers and pupils are driven out of education by fear of military attack or assassination; or



*‘In the areas with the most incidents the impact of violent attacks on education provision has been devastating’*



where governments are reluctant to repair or rebuild schools due to the risk of them being burned or bombed again.

Since 40 per cent of children not in school are in conflict countries, this is a serious challenge.

In Article 1, Education International calls on the international community, governments, and all parties to conflicts to recognise and respect the right of all children

and adults to a safe education in a peaceful learning environment, and to respect education institutions as safe sanctuaries. To this end it urges the United Nations Security Council to commission the creation of an international symbol for use on education buildings and education transport facilities to encourage recognition that they should be treated as safe sanctuaries and should not be targeted.



**A Kenyan school damaged in post-election violence**



## **Where attacks disrupt education**

### **Afghanistan**

In 2008 IRIN reported that the worst-affected province, Helmand Province, only 54 schools, mainly for boys, were open out of 223. More than 300,000 students in 12 provinces were being deprived of an education by attacks.

### **Iraq**

In 2006-7, 30 per cent of the country's 3.5 million pupils attended classes compared with 75 per cent the year before; University attendances were down by 60 per cent in many departments following a campaign of bombings and assassinations directed at students and academics.

### **Thailand**

100 to 1,000 schools close for a week every time a teacher is shot by Muslim separatists in the ongoing conflict in the three southernmost provinces. Many of them are killed in front of pupils.

## **The right to safety**

**"Schools should be respected and protected as sanctuaries and zones of peace."**

Dakar Framework for Action, 2000, expanded commentary, paragraph 58.

**"All higher-education teaching personnel should enjoy freedom of thought, conscience, religion, expression, assembly and association as well as the right to liberty and security of the person and liberty of movement."**

From paragraph 26 of the 1997 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education teaching personnel.



# Protection must be prioritised

Schools are often attacked because they are soft targets, so practical measures must be taken to deter violence and punish perpetrators

Schools and colleges suffer from being soft targets, because they are often easily identifiable targets with little or no protection to deter attackers. In Article 2, therefore, Education International calls on the UN Security Council, governments and parties to conflict to take all possible practical measures to protect students, teachers, academics and all other education personnel from all deliberate violent political or military attacks on their way to or from, or at, their places of learning or work; and to take all possible measures to deter such attacks.

Methods have included increasing the presence of the state's armed forces in the area, providing armed guards at schools and providing armed escorts for teachers and students on their way to and home from school. For three decades since the 1974 massacre at Mai'a lot school, Israelis have placed armed guards in every school and on every school bus to prevent further attacks.

However, this tactic does not always work.

The Thai government has made significant efforts to provide armed escorts for teachers travelling to school. Unfortunately this has led militants to respond by targeting vehicles transporting teachers and their guards with remotely detonated bombs.

Where conflict is widespread or schools are remote, alternatives to protection by state forces may be needed.

In Afghanistan, community protection schemes have been established. This involves setting up a committee of parents or community members and urging them to stand together to protect their school



against Taliban attacks. In some cases this has led villages to impose an 8pm to 8am curfew on the school vicinity and post people to keep watch against intruders. In other cases villagers have run out and

**Some Thai (top) and Iraqi (right) primary school students are protected by armed guards**

*In Afghanistan, community protection schemes involve setting up a committee of parents or community members and urging them to stand together to protect their school against Taliban attacks*



challenged Taliban assailants when they have threatened the school. Anecdotal evidence suggests this has had a deterrent effect, possibly because it also demonstrates that local people value the school. Such methods can be complemented by communication with a national monitoring and support network, providing early alerts to enable the government to send in national troops in areas of growing conflict.

Other measures, taken in Thailand, include permitting teachers to carry guns and providing training in the use of firearms. It is a question of governments and international security forces recognising the importance of providing adequate protection to ensure that children can continue to enjoy the right to education in a safe environment.

## Resilience limits the damage

In Article 5, Education International calls on the international community and governments to prioritise efforts to increase the resilience and recovery of education systems and institutions subjected to attacks, and to share information on such efforts. Such activities could include the development of distance learning methods, using information technology, in countries where the targeting of schools or the general level of violence deters attendance. IT could also be used to support academics and students in temporary exile.

In Afghanistan UNICEF has worked with community leaders to encourage the establishment of schools within village homes, ►



## 4 RESPONDING TO VIOLENCE

which makes them less visible and less obvious targets for attack. Speeding up recovery means making rapid resupply of teachers and teaching and learning materials and the repair and reopening of school facilities a priority in the response to incidents and in post-conflict rebuilding work.

### Monitoring to mobilise support

The UNESCO study highlighted the lack of any global system of monitoring attacks on education, which could be used to mobilise preventive and restorative action. In Article 4, Education International calls on the international community, governments and human rights organisations to develop means of gathering information to aid the monitoring and analysis of the frequency, scale, and nature of violent military and political attacks against education institutions, students, teachers, academics and all other education personnel; and to monitor efforts to end impunity for all attacks.

It also calls on the UN Security Council to support such monitoring to encourage action on this issue. Such efforts need to be handled sensitively because the gathering of information can be fraught with difficulties. In parts of Colombia, for instance, different branches of the same union are fearful of sharing data, in case it falls into the wrong hands and leads to further victimisation of members. At least one government has tried to minimise international coverage of attacks on teachers, even though it has taken strong



action to try to deter them, perhaps because it is worried that publicity could adversely affect the tourism trade.

In some conflicts information about attacks may be used as a political weapon to gain international support and can be hard to verify. Information on the use of child soldiers or the bombing of schools in the Sri Lankan conflict, for example, could not be checked because the government prevented journalists and NGOs from entering the battle zone independently.

**Thomas Lubanga, in the first trial to open at the International Criminal Court, faces charges of recruiting and using child soldiers in DR Congo, which he denies**

*'What is needed here is the same growth of the human rights movement which we saw around freedom of expression or equal rights for women – good documents, sensible strategies, and then well-co-ordinated lobbying to get governments to move'*

### Making use of international law

The international community, which has signed up to human rights conventions and to the Millennium Development Goals, must play its part in ending impunity and pressing parties to end attacks on education.

The scope exists in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court to prosecute perpetrators of attacks on education, because attacks on civilians and education buildings are a war crime and acts of murder carried out due to a declared policy are crimes against humanity.

The problem is that the ICC in its first six and a half years was only able to open one full trial, in January 2009.

Congolese militia leader Thomas Lubanga is being tried for the forced recruitment of child soldiers who were part of a rebel army responsible for mass killings, rape and torture of civilians. He is charged with recruiting children under the age of 15 and sending them into combat, which is a war crime.

If attacks on education are to be deterred there needs to be a much more concerted attempt to end impunity for the range of crimes against education and bring the perpetrators to justice. If no one is arrested, no one charged and no one punished, the violence will not stop. What is needed is a forceful campaign from teacher unions and human rights NGOs to ensure these crimes are tackled.

The late Katerina Tomasevski, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, urged greater use of human rights tools to prioritise



the protection of teachers. She said the UN Commission on Human Rights had failed to do so because it had not faced a forceful NGO campaign.

“What is needed here is the same growth of the human rights movement which we saw around freedom of expression or equal rights for women – good documents, sensible strategies, and then well-co-ordinated lobbying to get government delegations to move,” she said.

This means examining human rights instruments, making commentaries and getting international resolutions passed on them.

In addition to the Rome Statute existing instruments include the UN Declaration on Human Rights, the Convention on the Optional Protocol on the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, International Labour Organisation core conventions and the Recommendations on the Status of Teachers and Higher Education personnel.

In Article 3, Education International calls on the international community to build on the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, who has pressed for the wider application of human rights instruments on issues relating to children in conflict, particularly the recruitment of child soldiers.

As recommended by UNESCO, the international community should work to further embed the protection of teachers and academics within human rights law and focus the application of existing

**Lobbying is needed to ensure that international law is used to deter the enlisting of child soldiers and attacks on schools**

instruments on protection for schools, colleges and universities and the education process.

The International Criminal Court should therefore be given adequate resources to include this focus in its investigations and bring a greater number of perpetrators to trial. But teacher unions can also campaign for governments to set a condition of adherence to human rights norms, particularly the right to education and protection of both the education institutions and the process of education, when entering trade or aid agreements with parties to a conflict.

For example, they can raise questions about whether the US government is requiring the Colombian government to adhere transparently to international human rights law in their treatment of teacher trade unionists as a condition of providing them with extensive military aid

for its war against leftist guerrillas; or whether the UK government should be giving aid to education in Ethiopia at the same time as the human rights of teacher trade unionists are being violated.



# Work to make schools part of the solution

It means promoting inclusion, tolerance and understanding, and running schools in a way that gains the trust of all parties to the conflict



International calls on teachers, teacher unions, governments and the international community to prevent education from aggravating conflict and seek to turn schools, colleges and universities into zones and agents of peace.

Schools and colleges have a vital role to play in working for peace, by promoting inclusion, tolerance, transparency, cross-cultural understanding, sensitivity to culture and language, conflict resolution and enquiry-based history learning methods. It is not just about what is in the curriculum, but about creating an ethos. Schools need to be run in a way that will gain the trust of parties to conflict. This means having fair whole-school policies, student democracy and participation by parents in decision-making, and transparency in staff appointments. It also means recruiting and retaining well qualified, capable teachers.

In Thailand the government has recognised this problem by exploring with UNESCO a

One reason why schools and colleges are targeted for attacks is that in some conflicts education has triggered or aggravated tension. This can happen when:

- Education systems deny school provision, equal distribution of education resources, or equal right to employment as teachers to particular ethnic groups.
- The curriculum imposes an alien language, culture or political philosophy.
- Lessons encourage hate, for

instance via one-sided propagandist history curricula, or promote misunderstanding by ignoring the history and values of minorities.

In Article 7, Education

**Schools should become zones of peace and joyful learning**

*Schools and colleges have a vital role to play in working for peace, by promoting inclusion, tolerance, transparency, cross-cultural understanding, sensitivity to culture and language, conflict resolution and enquiry-based history learning methods*



## Student democracy and giving parents a say in decisions can help reduce the risk of schools being targeted

possible compromise in which state schools in the three southernmost provinces would be allowed to use the local language, Yawi, as medium of instruction and would offer religious instruction in Islam instead of Buddhism. In return private religious schools would teach national curriculum history and geography and the Thai language.

In the Balkans, and in Greece and Turkey, attempts are being made to eradicate inflammatory texts from school history books.

In Northern Ireland education for mutual understanding, the study of the cultural heritage of both communities and the study of recent history are compulsory, and voluntary contact schemes in which pupils from both sides of the divide work or carry out

### Education's role in making peace

**“Education from the earliest school years should be directed to the all-round development of the human personality and to the spiritual, moral, social, cultural and economic progress of the community, as well as to the inculcation of deep respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; within the framework of these values the utmost importance**

**should be attached to the contribution to be made by education to peace and to understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and among racial or religious groups.”**

Paragraph 3 of the 1966 ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers.

field trips with each other are strongly promoted. In one community parents are examining their local, highly contentious, history together.

A blueprint already exists for all schools to follow a style of education that will promote peace and tolerance: the 1966 Recommendation concerning

the Status of Teachers (above).

The aim should be to enable schools to become zones of peace, actively contributing to the easing of tension. This in turn would encourage wider recognition and respect for places of learning as safe sanctuaries that should not be targeted.



# Solidarity saves lives



**R**aquel Castro, a teachers union leader, and Samuel Morales, a teacher trade unionist, had gone to a small village in August 2005 to meet other regional leaders of CUT, a congress of unions.

They were to discuss how to lead a campaign to protect peasant farmers being thrown off their land to allow for oil exploration.

All had previously received death threats for their work defending education or campaigning for social justice. So they slept in separate houses to minimise the risk.

Soldiers from the Colombian army came looking for them, found Raquel and Samuel's three colleagues, took them outside and shot them dead. But they didn't find Samuel and Raquel until later.

When they caught up with them they put them under psychological pressure, making them face firing squads believing they were going to be killed. The presence of local people may have deterred their deaths, but they were arrested,

**Teacher trade unionists Raquel Castro and Samuel Morales were jailed in Colombia after escaping assassination, then freed following international protests of support**

blindfolded and bundled into a helicopter – Raquel was thrown onto the bodies of her dead colleagues – and taken into custody. They were charged with “rebellion”, which carries a six-year sentence.

Convicted at a “trial” they were not allowed to attend, they spent the next two years in prison, in appalling conditions. For instance, there was no toilet paper and women were denied sanitary towels.

Raquel thought she had been abandoned and was going to die in prison. Then one day a delegation from the British Trades Union Congress visited her. Jerry Bartlett, NASUWT deputy general secretary, recalls: “It was quite an emotional interview. Raquel finds it hard to believe that she has the love and support and commitment of teachers abroad. She thought she had been forgotten by the world.”

He told her they were hoping to visit Samuel's prison the next day and asked if she had a message for him.

“Yes,” she said. “Can you tell him I think about him each

day. I was born a teacher, I'm teaching here in prison and I shall die a teacher.”

Both were freed – and given the EI Human and Trade Union Rights Award – in 2007. And Bartlett is convinced that the campaign by all teacher unions in the UK really made a difference.

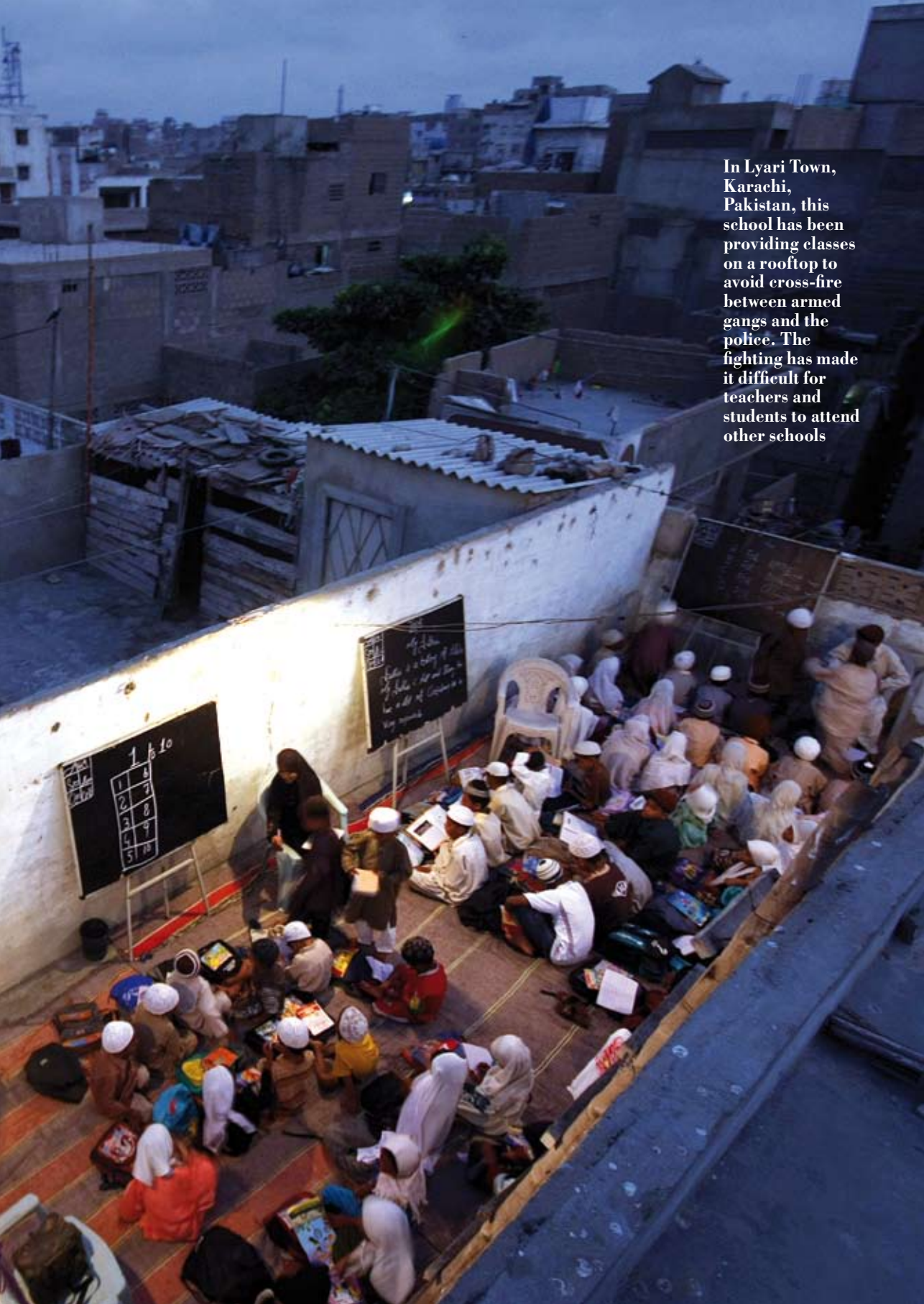
“We used Amnesty style techniques to draw attention to their plight. Hundreds of members from across the UK wrote to the Colombian government and we picketed the Colombian Embassy.”

In Article 7, Education International calls on teachers, teacher unions, non-governmental organisations and civil society to join solidarity campaigns like this one in support of victims of attack, as a means to press governments to end impunity and properly protect students, teachers, officials and union members.

Teacher unions can also take the lead in pressing for education institutions to be treated as safe sanctuaries in which students have equal opportunity to fulfil their individual potential and become a force for peace in the world. Bartlett says he is sure that continuing international campaigning has kept Raquel and Samuel alive.

“We believe that the fact that we put the spotlight on them has actually kept them safe since their release from prison, as they are under death threat both from the government and paramilitary agencies.”

In Lyari Town, Karachi, Pakistan, this school has been providing classes on a rooftop to avoid cross-fire between armed gangs and the police. The fighting has made it difficult for teachers and students to attend other schools







A peacekeeper stands guard as children wait outside a school in Cité-Soleil, Port-au-Prince, Haiti

## Education International Declaration on Violent Political and Military Attacks Against Education Institutions, Students, Teachers, Academics and all other Education Personnel (including Support and Transport Staff, Education Officials, Education Trade Unionists and Education Aid Workers)

Education International (EI) is a Global Union Federation – representing nearly 30 million teachers and other education workers from pre-school to university, through 401 member organizations in 172 countries and territories.

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