



Dear Colleague,

In dozens of countries across the globe students, educators, schools, intellectuals, aid workers, education institutions and education opportunities are threatened by armed attacks, assassinations, abductions, forced recruitment, looting, destruction of property and other violence. In these settings the right to education is at risk, as is the physical, cognitive and psychosocial well-being of students and their teachers and communities. This significant problem requires urgent attention.

A unique inter-agency coalition, the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), has been formed to lead an international effort to respond to this need. The goals of GCPEA are to:

- Highlight the incidence and impact of attacks on education in conflict-affected and fragile situations among key actors, and cultivate public support for education in safe and secure environments;
- Promote the strengthening of existing monitoring and reporting systems as well as the creation of new systems where needed;
- Promote effective, coherent, timely and evidence-based programmatic measures, including prevention and response;
- Encourage adherence to existing international law protecting education and the strengthening of international norms and standards as needed; and
- Fight impunity for attacks on education by promoting and supporting a range of accountability measures.

GCPEA is governed by a small number of organizations that volunteered to constitute the initial Steering Committee: Council for Assisting Refugee Academics, Education Above All, Education International, Human Rights Watch, Save the Children International, UNESCO and UNICEF.

GCPEA is inviting organizations at global, national and local levels to join as affiliated organizations in order to expand the network of organizations working toward achievement of GCPEA's goals. As an affiliated organization, you will:

- Become part of an advocacy network of peer organizations to strengthen protection of education
- Have the opportunity to take part in selected temporary working groups
- Have an opportunity to contribute to the body of knowledge of the incidence of attacks on education
- Receive periodic updated information on attacks against education worldwide

Attached you will find an application for organizational affiliation and our advocacy messages. Please take the time to review both documents and complete the application form. We would like to be able to include your name on our list of affiliated organizations at our upcoming global launch event on June 21, 2011, or soon thereafter.

Please return the attached application to GCPEA. For more information about GCPEA and for an electronic copy of our member application, visit our website at www.protectingeducation.org. We thank you for your participation in advance and ask that you direct any questions or comments to gcpa@protectingeducation.org or via telephone at 1.212.377.9446.

Sincerely,

Zama Coursen-Neff

Secretariat Office

350 Fifth Avenue, 34th Floor

New York, NY 10118-3299

1.212.377.9446

www.protectingeducation.org



Application to join GCPEA as an affiliated organization

Organization Name

is applying to join the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) as an affiliated organization.

Endorsement of Vision, Mission and Advocacy Goals

(please place a check mark to indicate your organization's endorsement)

- Our organization believes in the vision of GCPEA: We seek to establish a world in which all who wish to learn, teach and research, at all levels and in all forms of education, and all those who support them, can do so in conditions of safety, security, dignity and equality, free from fear, consistent with the principles of mutual understanding, peace, tolerance and academic freedom.**
- Our organization supports the mission of GCPEA: To catalyze enhanced prevention of attacks on education; effective response to attacks; improved knowledge and understanding; better monitoring and reporting; stronger international norms and standards; and increased accountability.**
- Our organization endorses the advocacy goals of GCPEA:**
- To highlight the incidence and impact of attacks on education in conflict-affected and fragile situations among key actors, and cultivate public support for education in safe and secure environments
 - To promote the strengthening of existing monitoring and report systems as well as the creation of new systems where needed
 - To promote effective, coherent, timely and evidence-based programmatic measures, including prevention and response
 - To encourage adherence to existing international law protecting education and the strengthening of international norms and standards as needed and
 - To fight impunity for attacks on education by promoting and supporting a range of accountability measures
- Our organization agrees with the content of the advocacy messages document of GCPEA: This document has been provided to our organization by GCPEA. We have reviewed its contents and agree with the advocacy messages therein.**

Signed

Date

Title

Address

Phone / Email



I. GCPEA Advocacy Goals:

- To **highlight the incidence and impact** of attacks on education in conflict-affected and fragile situations among key actors, and cultivate public support for education in safe and secure environments;
- To promote the strengthening of existing **monitoring and reporting systems** as well as the creation of new systems where needed;
- To promote effective, coherent, timely, and evidence-based **programmatic measures**, including prevention and response;
- To encourage **adherence to existing international law** protecting education and the **strengthening of international norms and standards** as needed; and
- To fight impunity for attacks on education by promoting and supporting a range of **accountability** measures.

II. Advocacy messages:

What constitutes an attack on education?

Attacks on education are any intentional threat or use of force—carried out for political, military, ideological, sectarian, ethnic, religious, or criminal reasons—against students, educators, and education institutions.

Attacks on education may be perpetrated by:

- State security forces, including armed forces, law enforcement, paramilitary, and militia forces acting on behalf of the state.
- Non-state armed groups.

Attacks on education include attacks on:

- Students of all ages.
- Educators, including school teachers, academics, other education personnel, members of teacher unions, and education aid workers.
- Education institutions: *any* site used for the purposes of education, including all levels of education and non-formal education facilities, and buildings dedicated to the work of ministries of education and other education administration.

Attacks on students and educators include:

- Attacks directed at students and educators at education institutions, including abduction, recruitment into armed groups, forced labor, sexual violence, targeted killings, threats and harassment, and other violations.
- Attacks while going to or coming from an education institution or elsewhere because of their status as students or educators.
- Attacks on pro-education activists, including teacher unions or any teaching group, because of their activism.
- Attacks on education personnel, such as administrators and maintenance workers, and education aid workers.

The occupation or use of education institutions by armed forces or other armed groups can lead to attacks on education institutions and can displace educators and students, denying students access to education.



What international law is violated by attacks on education?

Attacks on education violate the right to education and other internationally protected human rights applicable at all times:

- Attacks on education undermine, prevent, or deter realization of the fundamental right to education, a right enshrined in key international human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Attacks on education may also entail other violations of other human rights, including the rights to life; freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment; freedom of expression; and freedom of association enshrined in international treaties including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

During situations of armed conflict, attacks on education may violate international humanitarian and criminal law and constitute war crimes (or crimes against humanity during war or peacetime) as set out in the 1907 Hague Regulations, the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and customary international humanitarian law, which include the following prohibitions:

- Deliberate attacks on civilians, including students and educators.
- Deliberate attacks on civilian objects, which include education institutions not being used for military purposes.
- Failing to take all feasible precautions to minimize harm to civilians, such as using education institutions for military purposes while students and teachers remain present.
- Using students and educators as human shields by preventing civilians from leaving from education institutions that are being controlled by a military force.
- Other actions that may result in violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

The occupation or use of education institutions by armed forces and other armed groups may:

- Undermine, prevent, or deter students from realizing their right to education.
- Place students and educators at unnecessary risk of attack in violation of international humanitarian law.
- Place students and educators at unnecessary risk of abuses of their fundamental rights to personal security by occupying forces.

Advocacy messages by goal:

To **highlight the incidence and impact** of attacks on education in conflict-affected and fragile situations among key actors and cultivate public support for education in safe and secure environments.

- The international community, states, non-state groups, and other actors should acknowledge that conflict limits educational opportunities for millions of students worldwide, and that attacks on education are a common tactic in conflict that requires a concerted response at both the country and international levels. When educators, students, and education institutions are attacked and education institutions are used for military purposes, the damage to societies as well as individuals is severe and long-lasting.

To promote the strengthening of existing **monitoring and reporting systems** as well as the creation of new systems where needed.

- States, local organizations, and relevant international agencies should rigorously monitor attacks against education and use that information to devise effective, coordinated responses, including preventive interventions, rapid response, and both legal and non-legal accountability measures for perpetrators.
- The UN Security Council should establish attacks on schools and hospitals as a trigger for the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict, and request improved monitoring and reporting of attacks on schools and hospitals by MRM country task forces



- UN human rights monitoring mechanisms, including the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights; the Human Rights Committee; the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, including the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, should give greater attention to monitoring and reporting on attacks on education.

To promote effective, coherent, timely and evidence-based **programmatic measures**, including prevention and response;

- Relevant ministries and education actors in countries where attacks on education occur should establish preventive measures, such as early warning systems, and a rapid response system for attacks. International organizations should offer support for these efforts.
- Education service providers and education policy practitioners should be encouraged to develop best practices in protecting education from attack.
- States and other relevant actors should ensure that educators and their families whom attacks force to flee are offered protection, that the impact on education systems of their departure is addressed, and that, when possible, they are able to return.

To encourage **adherence to existing international law** protecting education and the **strengthening of international norms and standards** as needed:

- All parties to an armed conflict should abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and not commit attacks against education. Redress should be provided where violations have occurred.
- Government officials and leaders of non-state armed groups should take all necessary steps to prevent attacks on education, including making clear public statements that attacks on education are prohibited, issuing clear military orders to this effect, and refraining from using education institutions for military purposes.
- States should ensure that their domestic law criminalizes all elements of attacks on education in line with international humanitarian and human rights law, and institute policies, formalized in military and law enforcement manuals, training, and rules of engagement, that prohibit or at least minimize the use of education buildings and sites for military or law enforcement purposes. Similarly, UN and regional peacekeepers should ensure that their rules of engagement in military manuals include such prohibitions.
- All parties to peace agreements and mediators should ensure that issues concerning the right to education be included in any post-conflict agreement, and that international legal protections for education are explicitly articulated.

To fight impunity for attacks on education by promoting a range of **accountability** measures.

- States should systematically investigate and prosecute in accordance with international standards those individuals responsible for ordering, taking part in, or bearing command responsibility for the range of violations of international human rights, humanitarian, and criminal law that constitute attacks on education.
- Tribunals at the domestic, regional, and international levels should give specific consideration to violations that constitute attacks against education during relevant investigations and pursue and prosecute cases of sufficient gravity over which they have jurisdiction.
- Informal and transitional justice mechanisms, such as commissions of inquiry and truth and reconciliation commissions, should, where relevant, specifically recognize and concretely address attacks on education.