

Call for Inclusive Education: The Need for a Security Council Resolution Redefining Attacks against Girls' Education in Afghanistan as a Tactic of Terror



The Taliban takeover of Afghanistan is part of an ongoing war against girls' education. Malala's intrepid support of girls' rights to education made her a target of a violent attack from the Taliban in Pakistan. From Malala to the girls of Chibok in Nigeria, in many parts of the world, there is a war being waged against girls' education.

In Afghanistan school wells have been poisoned by extremists who are opposed to girls' education, and girls traveling to school are subject to acid attacks. Two months ago, a bomb attack that killed scores of schoolgirls at Sayed Ul-Shuhada High School in Kabul. School teachers in girls' schools check the well water for poison on a daily basis.

Attacks by violent extremists compound parents' fear of sending their daughters to school. The widespread and systemic attacks on girls' access to school amounts to a tactic of terror. In the two decades after Taliban rule, women's enrollment in primary school rose to 33 percent and 39 percent in secondary schools. Although this is a major improvement from 2001 when Taliban banned girls' education, there is still a sixty percent of missing Afghan girls in education.

During Taliban rule, my friend (name omitted) ran secret schools. Because of her and other intrepid women, a new generation of Afghan women have come of age in the last two decades as leaders in politics, diplomacy, law and science. As schools are once again shut down, it reminds us of what Malala wrote in her school-girl blog: "Five more schools have been destroyed one of them was near my house. I am quite surprised, because these schools were closed so why did they also need to be destroyed?"

“M” described to me an attack in January 2016 against her girls’ school in Afghanistan’s Nangarhar province. Taliban had left a “night letter” letter in the schoolyard: “They said they put the bombs because you have to stop sending your girls to school. “Night letters” are a tool of Taliban communication in rural communities in Afghanistan, often threatening teachers and students. In meetings with Afghan women leaders, I was told that: “Taliban will stop at nothing to keep girls from receiving an education.” As a woman member of parliament told me: “The Taliban are scared that when these girls get an education, they will become aware of their rights as women and as a human being.”

The UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in Article 10 calls upon “States Parties ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women.” General Recommendation 35 of the CEDAW recognizes that “Gender-based violence against women occurs in all spaces and spheres of human interaction, including “educational settings...”

Since 2000, international law has recognized both the gender specific impact of conflict and the central part women play in building peace and resolving conflict. Referee to the as the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, the landmark Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1325 (2000) called on member states to increase the participation of women in the “prevention and resolution of conflicts” and in the “maintenance and promotion of peace and security.” To date, nine other resolutions are part this corpus of women peace and security agenda. Despite the breadth of these resolutions not one addresses attacks against girls’ education as a security issue. Below I map out the language of each of the resolutions that invoke education, but none go far enough to address the attacks against girls’ education as part of the WPS oeuvre. SCR 2442 mentions that women and girls may be targets of violent extremism in the context of education but does not go into ways in which the international community can respond to attacks against girls’ education or safeguard girls’ access to education though security measures.

<p>SCR Resolution 1889 (2009)</p>	<p><i>Remaining</i> deeply concerned about the persistent obstacles to women’s full involvement in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and participation in post-conflict public life, as a result of violence and intimidation, lack of security and lack of rule of law, cultural discrimination and stigmatization, including the rise of extremist or fanatical views on women, and socio-economic factors including the lack of access to education, and in this respect, recognizing that the marginalization of women can delay or undermine the achievement of durable peace, security and reconciliation,</p> <p>10. <i>Encourages</i> Member States in post-conflict situations, in consultation with civil society, including women’s organizations, to specify in detail women and girls’ needs and priorities and design concrete strategies, in accordance with their legal systems, to address those needs and priorities, which cover inter alia support for greater physical security and better socio-economic conditions, through education, income generating activities, access to basic services, in particular health services, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights and mental health, gender-responsive law enforcement and access to justice, as well as enhancing capacity to engage in public decision-making at all levels;</p> <p>11. <i>Urges</i> Member States, United Nations bodies and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, to take all feasible measures to ensure women and girls’ equal access to education in post-conflict situations, given the vital role of education in the promotion of women’s participation in post-conflict decision-making;</p>
<p>SCR Resolution 2242 (2015)</p>	<p><i>Recognizing</i> the differential impact on the human rights of women and girls of terrorism and violent extremism, including in the context of their health, education, and participation in public life, and that they are often directly targeted by terrorist groups, and <i>expressing deep concern</i> that acts of sexual and gender-based violence are known to be part of the strategic objectives and ideology of certain terrorist groups, used as a tactic of terrorism, and an instrument to increase their power through supporting financing, recruitment, and the destruction of communities, as described in the Secretary-General’s Report on Sexual Violence in Conflict of 23 March 2015</p>

	(S/2015/203), and <i>further noting</i> the Global Counterterrorism Forum’s good practices on Women and Countering Violent Extremism,
SCR Resolution 2467 (2019)	16. Encourages Member States to adopt a survivor-centered approach in preventing and responding to sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations, ensuring that prevention and response are non-discriminatory and specific, and respect the rights and prioritize needs of survivors, including groups that are particularly vulnerable or may be specifically targeted, and notably in the context of their health, education, and participation, and in this regard the Council.
SCR Resolution 2493 (2019)	. Calls on Member States to promote all the rights of women, including civil, political and economic rights, urges them to increase their funding on women, peace and security including through more aid in conflict and post-conflict situations for programmes that further gender equality and women’s economic empowerment and security, as well as through support to civil society, and to support countries in armed conflict and post-conflict situations, including through access to education, training and capacity-building, in their implementation of women, peace and security resolutions, further calls for increased international development cooperation related to women’s empowerment and gender equality and invites aid providers to continue to track the gender focus of aid contributions and provide further information and assessment on this progress;

In 2017, then UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova led UN SCR 247 on the protection of heritage. “Maintenance of international peace and security: destruction and trafficking of cultural heritage by terrorist groups and in situations of armed conflict,” [resolution 2347 for the protection of heritage](#).

“The deliberate destruction of heritage is a war crime, it has become a tactic of war to tear societies over the long term, in a strategy of cultural cleansing. This is why defending cultural heritage is more than a cultural issue, it is a security imperative, inseparable from that of defending human lives,” Director-General Bokova told the Security Council. The same argument must be made in the case of Taliban’s brutal history of denial of education for girls. Given the Taliban’s widescale action to prevent girls’ education, the destruction of schools and the terrorizing of girls (and their families) in schools demand that threats to girls’ education be reframed as a security issue. Weapons and soldiers are not enough to defeat the Taliban or any other force of terror. Ideas are transmitted and carried down generation to generation through education. Shukria Barakzai, former Member of Parliament, member of the Afghan Constitution drafting committee, and diplomat who ran underground schools for girls during the Taliban, once asked President Obama for "30,000 scholars or engineers" instead of that many soldiers.

A Security Council Resolution targeting violence against girls’ education must address ways in which girls education can address structural forms of violence against women. Three areas that can address the underlying power dynamics of violence against women are: (1) curriculum and textbook reform, (2) engagement of men and boys in addressing violence against women, and (3) intersectional educational reform (with a specific focus on the inclusion of minority women). As part of my study on inclusion in laws on girl’s education for the World Bank, I have identified provisions in anti- violence against women laws that address these three pillars. In this blog post, I include some of the legal provisions that address men’s and boys’ engagement in combating violence against women.

Engagement of Men and Boys

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<i>Country</i>	<i>Legislation</i>	<i>Relevant Language</i>
Nicaragua	<p>Integral Law on Violence against Women and to Reform Law No. 641 “Penal Code”, 2012</p> <p>TITLE III MEASURES OF ATTENTION, PROTECTION, SANCTION, PRELIMINARY AND PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES Chapter I Measures of attention, protection and sanction</p>	<p>Art. 19. Measures of attention and prevention The measures of attention and prevention that are established are the set of measures and actions to protect victims of violence, as part of the obligation of the State, to guarantee women their safety and the full exercise of their human rights. These models must take into consideration:</p> <p>b) “Provide integral, specialized and free reeducation services to the aggressor, to eradicate violent behavior, through an education that eliminates the stereotypes of male supremacy and the macho patterns that generated their violence.”</p>
United States	<p>Violence Against Women Act, 1994 (As Amended)</p> <p>Subtitle M—Strengthening America’s Families by Preventing Violence Against Women and Children</p>	<p>(3) ENGAGING MEN AS LEADERS AND ROLE MODELS.— “To develop, maintain or enhance programs that work with men to prevent domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking by helping men to serve as role models and social influencers of other men and youth at the individual, school, community or statewide levels.”</p>

<p>Peru</p>	<p>Act to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence Against Women and Members of the Family Group, 2015</p> <p>TITLE III PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE, ATTENTION AND RECOVERY OF VICTIMS AND REEDUCATION OF AGGRESSORS</p> <p>CHAPTER I PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE, ATTENTION AND RECOVERY OF VICTIMS</p>	<p>Article 27. Promotion, prevention and recovery services for victims of violence</p> <p>“...It is the State's policy to create care and prevention services against violence. The creation and management of temporary shelter homes, programs aimed at men to prevent violent behavior and other protection services in favor of victims of violence against women and members of the family group will be in charge of the local and regional governments and the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations.”</p>
<p>Laos</p>	<p>Law on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Children, 2014</p> <p>Part III Prevention of Violence against Women and Children</p>	<p>Article 27. Responsibilities of Men</p> <p>“Men have responsibilities and [shall] take ownership in preventing violence against women and children, adapt-change the violence behavior and stop using violence, have a good attitude, respect the rights of individual women and children, aware of and implement their obligation in realizing the gender equality rights and children’s rights. In addition men should not hold customs, traditions or beliefs to justify violence against women and children. Men should take ownership in raising awareness, build knowledge on preventing and combatting violence against women and children.”</p>
<p>Argentina</p>	<p>Law on the Comprehensive Protection of Women, 2009</p> <p>CHAPTER III - BASIC GUIDELINES FOR STATE POLICIES</p>	<p>Article 10. - Technical strengthening of jurisdictions. The national State must inter-institutionally promote and strengthen the different jurisdictions for the creation and implementation of comprehensive services to assist women who experience violence and the people who use it, and must guarantee:</p> <p>7-Re-education programs aimed at men who use violence.</p>

Italy	<p>Law No. 119/2013 (converting into law, with amendments, Law Decree No. 39/2013 containing urgent provisions, inter alia, on the fight against gender-based violence), 2013</p> <p>Chapter I - PREVENTION AND FIGHT AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE</p> <p>Art. 5 Extraordinary Action Plan Against Sexual and Gender-based Violence</p>	<p>“The Plan, which aims to ensure homogeneous actions in the national territory, has the following objectives:</p> <p>a) to prevent the phenomenon of violence against women through public information and awareness raising, as well as by increasing the engagement of men and boys in the process of eliminating violence against women and in resolving interpersonal conflicts...”</p>
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As we watch the unfolding tragedy in Afghanistan, we are heartened by a new generation of young men coming forward pledging their support for the rights of girls and women. It is important that a Security Council Resolution addressing attacks against girls’ education can envision the role that men and boys in Afghanistan can play in supporting the rights of women. After all, Malala’s father was her first teacher and her greatest champion against the Taliban’s fatwa against girls’ education.

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