

# Attacks on Girls' Schools in Afghanistan



Will fundamentalist extremists be allowed to stop girls' education again?

Afghan girls returned to school in March 2002 with great enthusiasm. However, threats against girls' education surfaced that April. In Kandahar leaflets were distributed with the message, "Stop sending your women to offices and daughters to schools. It spreads indecency and vulgarity. Stand ready for the consequences if you do not heed the advice." Violent attacks on girls' schools began 5 months later.

More than 16 girls' schools have been attacked by fundamentalist extremists since September 2002. Some schools have suffered rocket attacks. Others have been set on fire. Gunmen forced another school to close. These attacks have occurred in Kandahar, Sar-E-Pol, Zabul, Logar, Ghazni, and Wardak provinces.

The consequences of these attacks have been devastating. In addition to the damage and to interference with school operation, girls' school attendance overall has decreased because many parents will not allow their daughters to attend classes until the security situation gets better.

## Feminist Majority Urges Action to Stop Attacks on Girls' Schools

Despite promises to restore the rights of Afghan women and girls and girls' education in particular, the Bush Administration has remained virtually silent about the attacks on girls' schools. In addition, the Administration has not supported the expansion of international peace keeping forces within and beyond Kabul, which the Afghan government, Afghan women leaders, the United Nations, and women's rights and humanitarian groups say is necessary for security and for women's rights, human rights, reconstruction, peace and democracy.

Call or e-mail President Bush today to ask that he take action immediately in support of the expansion of international peacekeeping forces beyond Kabul, condemn the attacks on girls' schools and support investigations to bring the perpetrators to justice, and request full funding for the Afghan Freedom Support Act, which includes \$1 billion for peace troop expansion and funding earmarks of \$60 million for the Ministry of Women's Affairs and \$20 million for the Human Rights Commission over 4 years. Call the White House at 202-456-1414. Visit [www.feminist.org](http://www.feminist.org) to Take Action today.

## Chronology of Attacks

### September 2002

A girls' school was bombed in the Ghazni province. (Chicago Tribune 11/01/02)

### October 2002

An explosion at a girls' school in Kandahar injured one staff member. Anti-women's rights pamphlets were found at the scene of the explosion. (BBC 10/31/02)

A group of gunmen forced a girls' school to close in the Wardak province in early October. (Reuters 10/14/02)

Three girls' schools were burned down in the southeastern province of Zabul. (Reuters 10/14/02)

On the weekend of October 26, four schools were attacked in the Wardak province. Two were hit by rockets and the other two were set on fire. One of the rockets ripped a hole in the wall of the Deh Afghani primary school in Maidan Shahr, while another rocket struck the roof at the Fatima Tul Zokhura primary school setting the building on fire. Blackboards and mats were dragged outside and set on fire in the Charaka village. A hand grenade was left outside a mosque that was being used as a girls' school. (BBC 11/10/2002, 10/31/2002; Washington Post 10/30/2002; AP)

The principal of the Deh Afghani school said a letter left at his school stated that the attackers "were old Mujaheddin, who had been fighting Jihad for a long time. And they had not done that to have Americans in the country, and girls in school." (BBC 10/10/2002).

Two girls' schools in the north were burned to the ground shortly after pamphlets had been distributed around mosques in the Sar-E-Pul province that told women to continue wearing their burqas. (BBC 10/31/2002)

### August 2003

Three schools attended by girls in Logar Province were set on fire. After their attack on one of the schools - located only 25 km from Kabul, the arsonists left photocopied leaflets urging people to keep girls away from school and to wage war on the central government in Kabul. (AP 8/23/03; IRIN 8/25/03).

### September 2003

A fire set at a co-ed elementary school in Logar Province destroyed two rooms and two tents. Leaflets saying girls should not go to school and threatening teachers were found at the site. (AP,

