Around the world, armies and rebel groups are taking over schools and universities, turning safe places of learning into places of war. In classrooms, soldiers sleep and store weapons. In school offices, they detain and torture suspects. Playgrounds become training grounds. School grounds become battlegrounds.

The HRW Student Task Force took on the challenge and has urged students and teachers from around the world to call for an end to the military use of schools.

STF EMUS Campaign Highlights:
- Launched the EMUS campaign at the Fall STF Leadership Workshop, co-sponsored by UCLA International Institute.
- Organized speaking events and a leadership meeting with representatives from STF chapters for Bede Sheppard, Deputy Director of the HRW Children's Rights Division, to explore how the military use of schools violates the right to education.
- Presented events at three Santa Clarita Valley libraries to inform the community about EMUS.
- Invited guests to participate in EMUS at the Los Angeles 2013 HRW Annual Dinner, including HRW Defenders Natalia Taubina and Alina Diaz.
- Presented EMUS research to Congressional members Henry Waxman (photo above) and Janice Hahn and staff representatives for Congressmen Howard “Buck” McKeon and Brad Sherman, and requested meetings with consul generals from Los Angeles area consulates.
- Met with UN Ambassador Samantha Power to advocate for United States support for ending military use of schools.
- Collected more than 1,500 photos for emuscampaign.org which were used in meetings with the United Nations, the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attacks' Education Under Attack 2014 report launch and in meetings with Congressional representatives, consul generals and the U.S. State Department. Ongoing.
- Explained EMUS and asked for support in establishing Human Rights Education (HRE) electives in Santa Clarita Valley schools to the William S. Hart District Governing Board on Education.
- Reached out to over 25,000 students and teachers in combined STF school communities.
- In an ABC News Flash, Zama Coursen-Neff, director of the HRW Children's Rights Division, suggested individuals looking to actively help bring home abducted Nigerian school girls, “Press your government to insist on and respect adherence to human rights standards. One way students and teachers can help is through the campaign to End Military Use of Schools. This website, run by students, allows students and teachers to participate in the campaign to make schools off limits to warring parties.”
"Some men came to our village. I tried to escape, but they took me to jail. Except it wasn’t jail—it was my old school . . . they took me there to torture me in the same place I used to go to school to learn. They had taken over the school and made it into a torture chamber." —Khalid, 15, Syria

STF chapters engaged their fellow students in the EMUS campaign through innovative programs throughout the year:

● Santa Clarita Valley STF chapters hosted special screenings of Girl Rising in celebration of the International Day of the Girl at Hart High and provided action tables for audience members to learn about EMUS.

● Hart STF held two assemblies to convey the urgency of EMUS through video and PowerPoint. Participants took action, created slogans and posed for photos. Golden Valley STF compiled the slogans and photos on an EMUS " quilt" which was displayed on campus and used in outreach efforts with public officials.

● Santa Monica STF “occupied” freshmen seminar classes during an EMUS simulation event. Student leaders introduced STF, human rights and the right to education. Suddenly, the lights went off for 90 seconds, an audio track of mortar fire, gun shots and yelling filled the room as two “soldiers” dressed in black “interrogated” the audience, shoving flashlights in their eyes and pulling two students out from the crowd. Once the lights came back on, STFers read testimonies from attacked students, and took photos for the competition.

● Cooperating with College of the Canyons Political Science Club, the Academy of the Canyons STF chapter held an EMUS tabling event at COC. EMUS facts and petitions to Congressman McKeon were offered.

● STFers joined high school interns in the HRW Tokyo office for a Google Hangout session and shared photo-gathering ideas.

● During Palisades HS and Academy of the Canyons faculty meetings, STF presented EMUS to teachers and administrators.

Why Your Voice Matters

At school, students should worry about their studies, not their survival. STF created the EMUS campaign because it wants every country to adopt policies that prevent their armies from using schools for military purposes.

By creating the emuscampaign.org website and collecting, writing and posting messages on this website, STF is showing governments that students and teachers care about the safety of our fellow students worldwide. When governments hear from their own citizens—or even better, their own students—they are more likely to pay attention and take action. Human Rights Watch and the HRW STF are already sharing the photos and messages posted to EMUS, delivering them to government officials who have the power to enact change. UN officials, U.S. Congressional leaders, U.S. Department of State, ministers of defense, and council generals.

STF High School Chapters

● Academy of the Canyons, Santa Clarita
● Canyon HS, Santa Clarita
● Carson HS, Carson
● Crossroads School, Santa Monica
● Golden Valley HS, Santa Clarita
● Hart HS, Santa Clarita
● New Road School, Santa Monica
● Oakwood School, North Hollywood
● Palisades Charter HS, Pacific Palisades
● San Marcos HS, Santa Monica
● Sierra Canyon School, Chatsworth
● Santa Monica HS, Santa Monica
● Sierra Canyon School, Chatsworth
● Valencia HS, Santa Clarita
● Wildwood School, Los Angeles
Human Rights Education Is Essential

United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training
Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly, December 11, 2011

1. Everyone has the right to know, seek and receive information about all human rights and fundamental freedoms and should have access to human rights education and training.

2. Human rights education and training is essential for the promotion of universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, in accordance with the principles of the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights.

Our Student Task Force mission is to provide human rights education and advocacy training for high school students and educators. Since 1999, the Student Task Force has inspired thousands of students to develop an understanding of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948) and participate in the human rights movement. Every year STF students gain a deeper appreciation of human rights and continue to develop advocacy and leadership skills to tackle issues in the world beyond their communities.

In the 2013–14 school year STF promoted human rights education:

• HRW’s Bede Sheppard (photo above) made STF a partner in his ongoing campaign to end military use of schools, by teaching, advising, and encouraging STF—in person and from his travels around the world. The emuscampaign.org website includes teacher resources for further human rights education.

• Santa Monica students held their second human rights education spring training with interested teachers.

• Santa Clarita Valley chapters met with their local school board and successfully promoted EMUS and support for creating elective classes for human rights education in each of the district high schools.

• STF leads outreach in the Southern California region to promote collaboration with HRE USA, the national network of human rights educators. We plan to highlight local best practices in human rights education in future year-end reports.

• In observance of April Genocide Awareness Month, STF chapters at Palisades Charter HS and Golden Valley HS held assembly screenings of The Last Survivor, followed by student presentations of more education about genocide. Many STF chapters reported there had not been any genocide education in their classes.

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Paloma Connolly
Palisades Charter HS ’12
UCSC ’17

I have been organizing at UC Santa Cruz for workers’ rights and against the privatization of the University of California. I was arrested with 21 other students and workers in April at UC Santa Cruz for protesting unfair labor practices at the UC.

Anne Stotler
STF Consultant ’13
M.P.P. Harvard ’15

Right now, I am working on my Masters in Public Policy Program at the Harvard Kennedy School where I am focusing on international human rights policy. This summer, I will be interning with Human Rights Watch’s Children’s Rights Division in New York City. I’ll be researching immigration detention of children with Alice Farmer, a CRD researcher. After graduation, I hope to work on child rights issues for a human rights organization or possibly the U.S. government.

Gabe Barreras
STF Liaison 2010-2012
M.P.L. USC ’14

Since my departure from STF in 2012, I have been working on my Masters in Planning at USC, specializing in urban design and transportation. Some of my recent projects include revising affordable housing policies in Watts and advising the City of Rio de Janeiro on the redevelopment of favelas ahead of the 2016 Olympics. After graduation, I hope to pursue a long career in international rights-based development.

Jessica Arzola
Carson High School ’12
NYU ’16

After graduating from Carson in 2012, I went on to NYU. Through my time in undergrad, I have been given the incredible opportunity to study abroad in Florence, Italy. Here in Florence, I have been able to volunteer at a community play center, ANIMA, for children and adults with autism.

Kanchan Wali-Richardson
Wildwood School ’08
Cooper Union ’12

I am extremely excited and grateful to have received the Fulbright Student award to travel to Varanasi, India. In August, I will start a nine-month art-based project there, focusing on the environmental degradation of the Ganges river, a river worshiped by Hindus as the Goddess Ganga.

Althea Miller
Palisades Charter HS ’07
UW-Madison ’12
M.S. UW-Madison ’17

I am a master’s student studying Multicultural Education at University of Wisconsin-Madison. Currently, I am employed as a GED instructor at Omega School in Madison. I have enjoyed using art as well to promote healing and the advancement of social justice issues.

Laurent Abergel
Valencia HS ’12
UCLA ’16

Currently in my second year at UCLA majoring in Political Science with a minor in Global Studies. I have kept up with my focus of human rights as I was just elected as one of the co-presidents of the Amnesty International chapter at UCLA.

Amy Carnes
STF Intern ’07
STF Consultant ’08
Ph.D. UCLA ’07

As Associate Director of Education at the USC Shoah Foundation I am leading evaluation of all of the Institute’s programs and have overseen educational projects throughout Western, Central, and Eastern Europe, curated two exhibitions of testimony for display at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, and lectured about genocide to high school and undergraduate students, and other educational professionals. Recently I designed an undergraduate course at USC entitled “Rebuilding Rwanda: Memory, Testimony, and Living Together after Genocide.”