

## EMUS Testimonies by Country

### Chad

- “They didn’t have guns but they had knives and chicottes [whips]. I wanted to get my things together but they said, ‘Leave your things here; you’re not taking anything with you.’ There was one of them on each side of me. They took me by the arms and said, ‘Let’s go.’ I had no choice but to go with them.” - a 26-year-old teacher who was abducted along with a fellow teacher and four students.

### Democratic Republic of Congo

- “The soldiers arrived at the school and said they wanted to meet with the population. Some civilians had already gathered in the classrooms when they instead started killing us. They said we were being punished for being complicit with the FDLR, but there weren’t even FDLR in our village when they attacked.” - a local tribal chief in Ndorumo.

### Georgia

- “On August 9 massive bombing started and the village administration and hospital buildings were destroyed. Bombing took place day and night. It seemed like they were targeting a local school and other large buildings; maybe they thought there were troops hiding there. My house was hit and completely destroyed during the bombing in the afternoon of August 9. My house was next to the village school. The village school was destroyed” - Slava Melanashvili, 32, a construction worker.
- “I was told that I could find shelter in School No. 7. My wife and I went there in the morning. I got there around 11 a.m. and saw that there were Georgian reservist forces in the yard. Suddenly a bomb hit the building next to the school. There was a loud explosion and complete chaos. A large part of the building was destroyed. The school building was damaged.” - Givi Melanashvili, a 50-year-old kindergarten teacher

### India

- “Sometimes they bring culprits back to the school and beat them...I feel very bad when they beat them.” —Indira, Tankuppa student
- “I generally go to a nearby field [to go to the toilet]...I feel ashamed doing this.” —Indira, Tankuppa student
- “When all of the students are at school we are forced to sit outside in the hot sun because there is not enough space.” —Sunil, Tankuppa student

## Israel/Palestine Occupied Territories

- “We had to take over a school which is already a big problem—taking over a school and turning it into a detention facility when it’s actually an educational facility. We took over a school and had to arrest anyone in the village who was between the ages of 17 and 50... It lasted from morning until noon the next day... All sorts of people arrived, shackled and blindfolded... When these detainees asked to go to the bathroom, and the soldiers took them there, they beat them to a pulp and cursed them for no reason.” - A former IDF first sergeant
- “Our battalion was in Hares because many stones were being thrown from that village at Israeli roads, so the army decided to collect information and find out who was in charge and organizing things. So this school was taken over to bring in all those people for Shabak interrogation.” - a former IDF Sergeant
- “Once, we came to a school and heard voices of children inside. The force stopped – no one was supposed to be there, especially not children... The orders were to throw a stun grenade to create panic, so anyone there would creep back to their holes. And that’s what happened. We entered one of the classrooms, we saw they’d left all their notebooks and stuff...” - a former IDF first sergeant

## Iraq

- “There is no domestic legislation, military regulation, policy, or practice binding on the US armed forces that prohibits or regulates the use of schools or other educational institutions by armed forces as short-term shelters or for other purposes not prohibited by the law of war. Decisions on the use of a school and the length of such use are the responsibility of the on-scene commander based on information reasonably available at the time and the commander’s compliance with the law of war.” - a U.S. Representative’s Response to Human Rights Watch
- “The only reason we occupied the school is [that] we were trying to find a location where we could communicate with the people.” - Lt. Col. Eric Nantz, U.S. battalion commander
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## Libya

- “Many stayed behind to gather at makeshift training camps in schools and burned-out barracks... We can give them what they need: training in assault, in defending a position. They should know that we are here to protect the youth revolution.” - Marai Lojeli, a rebel

colonel in his 50s said on a scrubby rain-soaked school field near a busy road in central Benghazi, Colonel Musa Fitouri explained the workings of an anti-aircraft cannon to a dozen fresh recruits.

## **Pakistan**

- “The Taliban do not blow up schools... There are several school buildings in the area which we have never touched. The fact is that the military occupied the buildings and established bunkers. We attacked their positions, not the schools, but the buildings were damaged or destroyed. The irony is that nobody ever says that the army has occupied the school buildings and prevented children from going to school for months. But when the Taliban attack their positions, they are accused of being the enemy of education.” - Pakistani Taliban insurgent in the Swat Valley, 2009
- "The government just gave away our lives to the Taleban. What's the point of having this huge army if it can't even protect us against a group of brutal fanatics? They took over my school and started to teach children about how to fight in Afghanistan. They kicked out the girls from school, told the men to grow their beards, threatened anybody they didn't like. Our government and our military never tried to protect us from this." - resident of Swat Valley, 2009

## **Somalia**

- “Al-Shabaab placed mines at the school gate after the school refused to allow the group to recruit there, including just before Ramadan in 2009, when TFG forces were expected to pass. It was not clear whether the mines were directed at the TFG or the school but, either way, a mine exploded while students were exiting the school at break time. Sixteen students died from the explosion, he said, including four of his classmates, ranging in age from 10 to 21.” - 14-year-old boy
- “They use the school as a shield. They stand outside the school and fire, and then the fighters just melt into the school as students.” - A Mogadishu teacher
- “One day al-Shabaab entered the school and went up to the first floor. They were shooting big guns from the school.... 15 to 20 al-Shabaab entered the first floor and fired. They closed the door and we stayed in the class. We were locked in from 10 or 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.—there was continuous fighting. We heard return fire but it did not hit the school, it hit all around us.” - An 18-year-old student from Hawlwadag, Mogadishu

- “[My] school al-Shabaab had hand grenades, guns, and pistols. The school had a big compound and they hid things in bushes and trees and behind books and lockers. Teachers knew but could not say anything.” – A student
- “Al-Shabaab came into the compound of the school and told us to stay in class. It was noon and they set up a Hobiye [a surface to air rocket launcher] and they started launching from inside the school compound. They set it up in the “playing” area.... Some students tried to get out of the compound but they were turned back by al-Shabaab. We were trapped for two hours and they were firing in the direction of K-4 [TFG/AMISOM-held territory]. There was incoming fire coming back at our direction. There were five rockets hitting around the school compound. One landed as we were released and it killed eight students who were walking home. They came in a series of four rockets. The students killed were 17, 16, 18, and 19 years old.” - Xarid, 18
- “We were told to sit. We were there from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. They were firing rockets at the TFG. The TFG returned fire and it landed outside the school compound.... We found limbs and blood in the school compound after. There were about 200 al-Shabaab fighters in the compound. This happened several times. The school was only separated by a road from AMISOM.” – A student in Al Baraka, Mogadishu.
- “One time they brought a big gun into the school. I tried to tell them not to fire their mortar from here because the reply will kill us. They refused. I asked them to let the students go. They accepted and we ran away. They launched as we were running away. They fired five or six mortars, took their gun and left. There was a reply. Two classes were damaged, burned by the response. The tables and chairs were burned and the walls destroyed.” - A teacher from Mogadishu

### **South Sudan**

- “Soldiers [were] looting Kandakoro school in Pibor in April. Pibor’s separate girls and boys primary schools were looted in May. [There was] wanton destruction of books and cupboards as well as theft of chairs and tables.” - Unidentified civilians

### **Syria**

- “[Our school] used to be a safe place,” she said. “But [during the conflict] we were afraid.... Security informants came to school and asked students, ‘Does your dad watch Arabiya? Does he watch Jazeera?’” - Sahar, a teacher in Homs
- “Government troops used the Ahmad Ghura school, a government school for boys, as a temporary detention center in April 2012. They attacked [our] area, arrested 150 men and

boys, [and detained] them in the school,” - Fadi, a former teacher from Douma in the Damascus governorate

- “Government snipers had been posted on the roof of Bassel al-Assad High School, which was next door to [my] family’s house. It also served as a detention center.” - Iman, a 20-year-old woman from Quneitra in Damascus governorate
- “[While my daughters continued to attend the Abdullah Mahmoud Sweida Girls’ School,] at least two government snipers took up positions on the school roof. The girls were crying all the time... there was a checkpoint directly in front of the school, which put a valid military target at a location that put children at unnecessary risk.” - May, mother from Damascus
- “In Sheikh Meskin, the Free [Syrian Army] was inside a school and the army attacked it with two tanks. Sixteen people were inside it from the Free Army. [The government army] fired on it until the whole school collapsed.” - Malek from Sheikh Meskin, 6/2012

## **Thailand**

- “The children always play with the soldiers in their quarters, so if there was an attack on the grounds, the children would be hit as well. There was no separation between the school and the soldiers’ quarters. And also, apart from the [possibility of] attack, the soldiers brew and drink kratom and I was afraid my children might be encouraged to drink it. My boy is very stubborn; he loves to hang out with the soldiers.”
- “I am afraid of [the soldiers], because the soldiers are very touchy. They love to hold the children, and that’s okay for the boys, but for girls we can’t allow men to touch our body. And I am not happy when the soldiers ask whether I have any older sisters and ask for their phone numbers.” - A 10-year-old girl at the school
- “What scares me is the thought that the school could be attacked because the soldiers are at the school, but that students and teachers would be the ones that get hurt...The school children and teachers could get caught in the middle.” - A nine-year-old student
- “I had nothing against the soldiers when they were outside the school.... But when they moved into the school, I feared there would be an attack on the school, so ... I withdrew my children....[I]f there was a hit on the grounds, then children would be hit.” - The mother of two children whose school was partially occupied by government paramilitary forces
- “The frequency of the raids has disrupted the education and created a feeling of uncertainty for teachers and students because we don’t know when the soldiers will come next.... I feel insecure, and my students feel insecure.” - A teacher at a private Islamic school

## Yemen

- “When they tortured the old man here, we got very scared. They beat him [and] electrocuted him right in the courtyard of the school. It was during recess.” - Ahlam, 13-year-old student
- “They are in two buildings... One is the library, so students can’t go there anymore. Our school has only three buildings.” - A school administrator
- “A week or two ago, we went out for gym class... The sixth grade girls were playing, and the soldiers shot [in the air] twice just for fun. The girls got very scared. One fainted. Now we don’t have gym class anymore.” - A teacher
- “Twenty days ago, they brought some detainees to the school and beat them here. We heard arguments and screams.... In the courtyard they beat a guy really severely.” - A school administrator
- “The moment soldiers enter a school, it becomes a military target and stops being a safe place for students. Commanders who say they’re protecting a school blatantly ignore the serious risk they’re taking with students’ lives.” Priyanka Motaparthi, [children’s rights](#) researcher at Human Rights Watch