



Education International
Internationale de l'Éducation
Internacional de la Educación
Bildungsinternationale

Head Office

15, Boulevard Bischoffsheim
1000 Brussels, Belgium
Tel +32 2 224 06 11
headoffice@ei-ie.org
www.ei-ie.org

President

Susan Hopgood

General Secretary

David Edwards

13 October 2023

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan
President of the Republic of Turkey

Urgent Protest Against Attacks on Northern and Eastern Syria and Iraq

Your excellency,

I am writing on behalf of Education International (EI), the Global Union Federation representing 32.5 million teachers and education workers in 180 countries through 380 national affiliates, including the Kurdistan Teachers Union and the Union of Teachers in North and East Syria. We call upon the Turkish authorities to immediately cease cross border airstrikes in Kurdish-controlled locations.

We condemn the recent military actions by Turkey, which appear to be a disproportionate retaliation to a bombing in Ankara claimed by the PKK. To date, 26 civilians in North and East Syria have been directly affected, leading to the loss of 11 lives, including two children. Tragically, in the city of Ain Issa, young schoolgirls Nadia and Ali Ayyash, both elementary school students, lost their lives in a bomb attack.

In the self-governing region of Northern and Eastern Syria, over 224 attacks have struck multiple cities, with profound impact on civilian infrastructure. Vital services such as water supplies, schools and hospitals have been targeted. Forty-eight schools have been rendered inoperative, leaving 8,458 students unable to receive education. In the mountainous areas in the Iraqi Kurdistan, the random strikes have led to the displacement many civilians.

This is a grave injustice and a direct violation of international law. Humanitarian and human rights laws provide protections for civilian infrastructure related to education and health during times of armed conflict or violence. These protections apply to attacks carried out by both state authorities and non-state actors. The Fourth Geneva Convention focuses on the protection of civilians, including those in educational facilities. The International Criminal Court includes provisions for prosecuting individuals for war crimes for intentional attack on civilian objects, which can be educational facilities.

We are also concerned about the potential resurgence of the Islamic State due to the deteriorating security situation. These attacks may provide IS with an opportunity to recruit new members and intensify terrorist activities in the region. The absence of education and prevailing

despair are fostering conditions conducive to extremism, posing a significant threat to global peace and security.

EI and its affiliates will continue to monitor and document violations and will report to the Special Procedures of the United Nations Human Rights Council, including the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education. We believe in your country's commitment to human rights, peace and education, and therefore ask you to act swiftly and decisively to put an end to the suffering and destruction.

We appreciate your attention to this urgent issue and remain hopeful that your efforts will contribute to a safer and more democratic future for the region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Edwards', with a stylized, flowing script.

David Edwards
General Secretary