

PAKISTAN

Malala Yousafzai: The Latest Victim in the War on Children in Pakistan

Thursday 11 October 2012, by [KHAN S.H.](#), [GUERIN Orla](#), [IQBAL Sajid](#), [MAHR Krista](#), [REHMAN BACHA Khalilur](#) (Date first published: 10 October 2012).

The Pakistani Taliban claimed responsibility for a hideous attack on a young schoolgirl they deemed “an infidel” for championing her right to go to school.

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A 14-year-old activist and blogger was shot in the head on her way back from school in Pakistan’s Swat Valley on Tuesday, the latest in a troubling string of incidents involving children in Pakistan. Malala Yousafzai was injured along with two travel companions when Taliban assailants opened fire on their vehicle in the town of Mingora. On Wednesday, Yousafzai, who started blogging about the Taliban’s ban on girls’ education in Swat when she was 11, had undergone successful surgery in a hospital in Peshawar to remove a bullet from her head.

The attack on Yousafzai made news in no small part because the Pakistani government awarded the precocious teenager a National Peace Award in December for her bravery in exposing the difficulties of living in the oppressive shadow of the Taliban. She has spoken publicly about children’s rights in Swat, and had been nominated for an international children’s peace prize. “The people of Swat are not terrorists,” she told al-Jazeera in a 2010 interview, during a period when the Taliban was in retreat. “If this new generation is not given pens, they will be given guns by terrorists.”

The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) quickly claimed responsibility for the attack against Yousafzai, and said that the incident should serve as a warning to other children who participate in “secular-minded” activities. “She was pro-West, she was speaking against Taliban, and she was calling President Obama her idol,” a TTP spokesman told the Express Tribune, a daily in Pakistan.

The assault is yet another disturbing example of children, particularly young girls, being targeted in an increasingly tense atmosphere in conservative regions of Pakistan. The country’s Supreme Court is currently investigating a case in which a tribal council in Balochistan allegedly ordered the barter of 13 girls for marriage as a settlement in a blood feud between two tribes. The tradition of giving away women for marriage in order to settle disputes, called vani, has been in practice for centuries, but was made illegal under a 2011 law and is punishable by up to 10 years in prison and a fine of roughly \$5,200. In August, a 14-year-old Christian girl was arrested in an Islamabad slum for

blasphemy after tearing out and burning pages of the Koran. A court has since found there was no evidence that she was guilty, but her accuser, a local imam, may be charged with tampering evidence in her case.

The attempt on Yousafzai's life was condemned by both Pakistan's prime minister and president, as well as the U.S. state department. Support for the girl has poured in over social media and from members of the international human rights community. "This attack highlights the extremely dangerous climate human rights activists face in north-western Pakistan, where particularly female activists live under constant threats from the Taliban and other militant groups," Mustafa Qadri, a researcher for Amnesty International in Pakistan, said in a statement. According to Amnesty International, two other activists working on women's education have been killed by militants in the region in the past year. "The Pakistani authorities must demonstrate by their actions that they are committed to giving women and girls the same opportunities as men and boys despite threats," said Qadri.

Yousafzai's blog entries for BBC's Urdu site offered a rare window into the lives of an 11-year-old and her friends in one of the most dangerous and remote places in Pakistan. Under the pen name Gul Makai, Yousafzai wrote about watching the violence in Swat escalate while her personal freedoms shrank. On Jan. 14, 2009, the day before a Taliban edict went into effect shuttering her school, Yousafzai wrote: "Since today was the last day of our school, we decided to play in the playground a bit longer. I am of the view that the school will one day reopen, but while leaving I looked at the building as if I would not come here again."

KRISTA MAHR, 10 October 2012

* <http://world.time.com/2012/10/09/malala-yousafzai-the-latest-victim-in-pakistans-war-on-children/>

Malala Yousafzai: Pakistan activist, 14, shot in Swat

Malala Yousafzai was hit in the head, but is reportedly out of danger

Gunmen have wounded a 14-year-old rights activist who has campaigned for girls' education in the Swat Valley in north-west Pakistan.

Malala Yousafzai was attacked on her way home from school in Mingora, the region's main town.

She came to public attention in 2009 by writing a diary for BBC Urdu about life under Taliban militants who had taken control of the valley.

A Pakistani Taliban spokesman told the BBC they carried out the attack.

Ehsanullah Ehsan told BBC Urdu that they attacked her because she was anti-Taliban and secular, adding that she would not be spared.

Malala Yousafzai was travelling with at least one other girl when she was shot, but there are differing accounts of how events unfolded.

The chilling attack on the young peace campaigner has been leading TV news bulletins here. Malala

Yousafzai is one of the best-known schoolgirls in the country. Young as she is, she has dared to do what many others do not - publicly criticise the Taliban.

Malala's confident, articulate campaign for girls' education has won her admirers - and recognition - at home and abroad. She has appeared on national and international television, and spoken of her dream of a future Pakistan where education would prevail.

Even by the standards of blood-soaked Pakistan, there has been shock at the shooting. It has been condemned by Pakistan's Prime Minister, Raja Pervez Ashraf, who sent a helicopter to transfer Malala to hospital in Peshawar.

The head of Pakistan's Independent Human Rights Commission, Zohra Yusuf, said "this tragic attack on this courageous child" sends a very disturbing message to all those working for women and girls.

One report, citing local sources, says a bearded gunman stopped a car full of schoolgirls, and asked for Malala Yousafzai by name, before opening fire.

But a police official also told BBC Urdu that unidentified gunmen opened fire on the schoolgirls as they were about to board a van or bus.

She was hit in the head and, some reports say, in the neck area by a second bullet, but is now in hospital and is reportedly out of danger. Another girl who was with her at the time was also injured.

'Courage'

Malala Yousafzai was just 11 when she was writing her diary, two years after the Taliban took over the Swat Valley, and ordered girls' schools to close.

In the diary, which she kept for the BBC's Urdu service under a pen name, she exposed the suffering caused by the militants as they ruled.

She used the pen-name Gul Makai when writing the diary. Her identity only emerged after the Taliban were driven out of Swat and she later won a national award for bravery and was also nominated for an international children's peace award.

Correspondents say she earned the admiration of many across Pakistan for her courage in speaking out about life under the brutal rule of Taliban militants.

One poignant entry reflects on the Taliban decree banning girls' education: "Since today was the last day of our school, we decided to play in the playground a bit longer. I am of the view that the school will one day reopen but while leaving I looked at the building as if I would not come here again."

She has since said that she wants to study law and enter politics when she grows up. "I dreamt of a country where education would prevail," she said.

Taliban driven out

The BBC's Orla Guerin in Islamabad says that Malala Yousafzai was a public figure who didn't shy away from risks and had strong support from her parents for her activism. Indeed, her father, who is a school teacher, expressed his pride in her campaigning.

In a statement about the attack, Pakistani Prime Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf said: "We have to fight the mindset that is involved in this. We have to condemn it... Malala is like my daughter, and yours

too. If that mindset prevails, then whose daughter would be safe?"

"At that time some of us would go to school in plain clothes, not in school uniform, just to pretend we are not students, and we hid our books under our shawls."

After the Taliban: Swat women on changing life

The Taliban, under the notorious militant cleric Maulana Fazlullah, took hold of the Swat Valley in late 2007 and remained in de facto control until they were driven out by Pakistani military forces during an offensive in 2009.

While in power they closed girls' schools, promulgated their extreme version of Sharia law and introduced measures such as banning the playing of music in cars.

Since they were ejected, there have been isolated militant attacks in Swat but the region has largely remained stable and many of the thousands of people who fled during the Taliban years have returned.

Orla Guerin, BBC News, Islamabad

* 9 October 2012 Last updated at 12:29 GMT

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-19882799>

14-year-old activist shot and critically wounded

MINGORA: Malala Yousufzai, the 14-year-old Swat girl who championed the cause of girls' education and dared to criticise Taliban's attack on schools and schoolgoing girls, was shot and seriously wounded here on Tuesday.

As she struggled for life in a Peshawar hospital, Taliban claimed responsibility for the chilling attack and threatened to target her again and kill her if she managed to survive this time.

Malala's courage was recognised and praised worldwide and she was nominated for several international peace awards. Pakistan decorated her with a gallantry award.

Malala, who has two brothers, wants to be a politician. "I wanted to be a lawyer but I know there is need for good politicians, so I want to be a good politician to make good laws and good legislations. I want to do something for girls' education," she had told a private TV channel.

She was in a van going from school with two other girls. A masked man stopped the van while another jumped into the vehicle and asked who was Malala.

According to Swat's District Coordination Officer Kamran Khan, the driver sensed the danger and tried to speed off but by then the gunman had shot her before jumping off and escaping.

Officials said Malala Yousufzai had been shot in the head. Two other girls also suffered injuries.

Malala was first taken to a hospital in Saidu Sharif and was later airlifted by a military helicopter to

the Combined Military Hospital in Peshawar.

An official at the CMH said her condition was critical. According to late-night TV reports, a medical board will again examine her on Wednesday to decide whether she needed to be sent abroad for treatment.

A military official said a single bullet had gone through her temple and hit her shoulder.

"The bullet has brushed her brain and she is in a semi-conscious state. She is being kept under observation. Her condition is critical," the official said, requesting not to be named.

(According to western news agencies, Taliban spokesman Ehsanullah Ehsan said the group had carried out the attack after repeatedly warning Malala to stop speaking out against them. "We will target anyone who speaks against the Taliban," he said by telephone from an undisclosed location.

"We warned her several times to stop speaking against the Taliban and to stop supporting western NGOs, and to come to the path of Islam.")

Malala won international recognition for highlighting Taliban atrocities in Swat with a blog for the BBC Urdu website three years ago, when Taliban led by Maulana Fazlullah burned girls' schools and terrorised the valley.

A neurosurgeon who examined Malala's CT scan and MRI reports said she was in critical condition. DCO Kamran Khan said the military and police had launched a search operation to arrest the attackers.

Her father, Ziauddin Yousufzai, was optimistic about recovery of her daughter.

"God willing my daughter will be alright," he told reporters at the hospital.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ameer Haider Khan Hoti announced that Malala would be sent abroad for treatment.

The military had cleared the tourist hotspot of Swat of militants in a 2009 operation.

Agencies add: Malala was 11 when she wrote the blog on the BBC website, which at the time was anonymous. She also featured in two New York Times documentaries.

Her struggle resonated with tens of thousands of girls who had been deprived of the right to get education by Taliban.

In a 2011 BBC news report she read out an extract of her diary that gave a sense of the fear she endured under the Taliban.

"I was very much scared because the Taliban announced yesterday that girls should stop going to schools.

"Today our head teacher told the school assembly that school uniform is no longer compulsory and from tomorrow onwards, girls should come in their normal dresses. Out of 27, only 11 girls attended the school today," she said.

"My friend came to me and said, 'for God's sake, answer me honestly, is our school going to be attacked by the Taliban?'

"During the morning assembly we were told not to wear colourful clothes as the Taliban would

object.”

She received the first-ever national peace award from the government last year, and was nominated for the International Children’s Peace Prize by the advocacy group KidsRights Foundation in 2011.

London-based rights group Amnesty International condemned the shocking act of violence against a girl bravely fighting for education.

“This attack highlights the extremely dangerous climate human rights activists face in northwestern Pakistan, where particularly female activists live under constant threats from the Taliban and other militant groups,” it said.

Khalilur Rehman Bacha

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<http://dawn.com/2012/10/10/14-year-old-activist-shot-and-critically-wounded-taliban-threaten-to-attack-again-if-malala-survives/>

Pakistan media condemn attack on Malala Yousafzai

The attack on Malala Yousafzai was uniformly criticised within hours of it happening

The Pakistani media reacted speedily and angrily to Tuesday’s shooting of teenaged campaigner Malala Yousafzai, who was injured on her way back from school in the city of Mingora.

The story was headline news on most Pakistan TV channels immediately after it broke soon after midday. Some prominent TV personalities, including Geo News anchor Hamid Mir, immediately expressed their anger over the attack on the 14-year-old peace campaigner.

“No-one has the right to attack a school girl just because of political differences. The attackers give Islam a bad name,” Mr Mir tweeted soon after the attack. He also tweeted a link to his Capital Talk show on 18 February 2009, when Malala Yousafzai spoke to him at the peak of the Taliban’s control of the Swat valley where she lived.

Mr Mir said that he had even received messages from “sick people” that further efforts would be made to take the teenager’s life.

Such was the saturation coverage of TV channels on the shooting of Malala Yousafzai that some media commentators had to call for restraint.

“Dear Pak media, can you please sacrifice your money-making game for the safety of these girls? Why harassing injured girls with cameras?” tweeted columnist and social activist Marvi Sirmed.

“Shocked, traumatised and injured girls who were with #Malalai, being harassed by the media’s irresponsible behaviour. What shameful creatures,” she added.

‘Barbaric act’

There was likewise a massive reaction to the Malala Yousafzai attack in the social media. “#Malala” and “#Swat”, both hashtags which referred to her, were trending soon after the news broke on the traditional media.

More than 1,000 tweets were sent out under #Malala. Around 62% of those were from female users. However, of 997 tweets under #Swat, More than 50% were from male users.

Shehryar Taseer - the son of Punjab Governor Salmaan Taseer who was murdered last year because of his opposition to the country’s strict blasphemy laws - accused the Taliban on Twitter of being “cowards afraid of a teenaged girl”.

Other Tweets were equally outraged.

“Shouldn’t religious clerics of the majority school of thought come out and protest against this barbaric act by the Taliban?” “@RabeelRarif” asked.

Another Twitter user, “@rizwan_ahmad” wrote: “Dear Malala plz leave the country to save your life as we still have the politicians who are against any action against the Taliban.”

There was also widespread condemnation of the attack from politicians across the board, including President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf.

The attack was condemned in the National Assembly, where legislators from many political parties expressed their outrage.

Among those criticising the attack was cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan - seen by some Twitter users as an apologist for the Taliban following his anti-drone peace march from Islamabad to the border of the South Waziristan tribal area over the weekend.

But supporters of Imran Khan were also very active in defending their leader against such attacks.

“Sad to see some ‘intellectuals’ using #Malala shooting incident to score points against IK [Imran Khan]. Tells a lot how concerned they really are for her,” “@Sanaa_Amir” tweeted.

Another supporter of Mr Khan pointed out that his march “was not pro-Taliban but was pro-people”.

“Those who on one side are victims of Taliban atrocities and on the other [are victims of] of drone attacks,” Sajad Memon tweeted.

By Sajid Iqbal

BBC Monitoring

* 9 October 2012 Last updated at 18:00 GMT

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-19890029>

* <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-19890029>

Anti-Taliban Pakistani girl shot in head

A 14-year-old Pakistani activist may be flown overseas for treatment after she was shot in the head. Source: AAP

PAKISTANI doctors say they have removed a bullet from a 14-year-old children's activist shot by the Taliban in a horrific attack, as they consider flying her abroad for treatment.

Malala Yousafzai, 14, is in intensive care after being shot in the head in broad daylight on a school bus on Tuesday, in an assassination attempt that has appalled a country used to extremist violence.

The attack took place in Mingora, the main town of the Swat valley in Pakistan's northwest, where Malala had campaigned for the right to an education during a two-year Taliban insurgency which the army said it had crushed in 2009.

Malala underwent surgery overnight to remove a bullet lodged in her shoulder at the Combined Military Hospital in the northwestern city of Peshawar, where doctors described her condition as critical.

A military officer said a team of doctors will now decide if Malala needs further surgery or should be flown abroad.

"No decision has been announced so far," he told AFP, adding that the overnight surgery had "removed a bullet from her shoulder".

Provincial government spokesman Mian Iftikhar Hussain said there was a 70 per cent chance that Malala would respond to treatment and not need further surgery.

State carrier Pakistan International Airlines told AFP it was ready to fly Malala abroad if necessary, most probably to Dubai.

Pakistani leaders, human rights activists and prominent journalists have strongly condemned the shooting, with the government and former cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan offering to pay for her medical care.

The powerful army chief General Ashfaq Kayani visited Malala's hospital on Wednesday, the military said. He vehemently condemned the "heinous act of terrorism", according to a statement.

"The cowards who attacked Malala and her fellow students have shown time and again how little regard they have for human life and how low they can fall in their cruel ambition to impose their twisted ideology," Kayani said, vowing to continue the fight against extremism.

Malala won international recognition for highlighting Taliban atrocities in Swat with a blog for the BBC three years ago, when the Islamist militants led by radical cleric Maulana Fazlullah burned girls' schools and terrorised the valley.

Her struggle resonated with tens of thousands of girls denied an education by Islamist militants across northwest Pakistan, where the government has been fighting local Taliban since 2007.

She received the first-ever national peace award from the Pakistani government last year, and was nominated for the International Children's Peace Prize by advocacy group KidsRights Foundation in 2011.

Commentators said the brazen shooting raises serious questions about why the government did not do more to protect Malala and about the Taliban presence in Swat, three years after the army said it had defeated the uprising.

Amid public outrage, the Pakistani Taliban issued another statement seeking to justify the cold-blooded murder attempt on a child, saying Malala had preached secularism “and so-called enlightened moderation”.

Followers of the Taliban, who controlled much of Swat from 2007-09, have destroyed hundreds of girls’ schools across northwest Pakistan.

“It’s a clear command of sharia that any female, that by any means plays a role in war against the mujahedeen, should be killed,” said spokesman Ehsanullah Ehsan, accusing the media of spreading propaganda about the Taliban.

Prime Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf telephoned Malala’s father and President Asif Ali Zardari said it would not shake Pakistan’s resolve to fight Islamist militants.

Taliban bombers have killed thousands of Pakistani soldiers and civilians over the last five years, but many in the country blame the United States and its 2001 invasion of neighbouring Afghanistan for the violence.

Malala’s shooting is likely to revive questions about whether Pakistan should take more military action to eliminate Islamist groups and whether attempts at reconciliation and peace deals in parts of the northwest are flawed.

“We are infected with the cancer of extremism and unless it is cut out we will slide ever further into the bestiality that this latest atrocity exemplifies,” wrote English-language newspaper The News.

The United States, which uses drone attacks to target Taliban and al-Qaeda in Pakistan, condemned the shooting of Malala as “barbaric” and “cowardly”.

BY S.H. KHAN From: AAP October 10, 2012 9:04PM

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<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/breaking-news/pakistan-child-rights-activist-shot/story-fn3dxi x6-1226492467256>

Docs fight to save girl who defied Taliban

A team of doctors on Wednesday removed a bullet lodged near the spine of Malala Yousufzai, a day after the 14-year-old girl was shot at by the Taliban for speaking against militant atrocities.

The team led by Mumtaz Khan, head of the neurosurgery department of Peshawar’s Lady Reading Hospital, carried out a three-hour operation to remove the bullet. They also took steps to reduce the swelling in Malala’s head. Though the bullet was removed, there was “excessive bleeding” during the surgery and Malala was not fully stable as yet, officials said.

Malala's uncle Ahmed Shah told the media in Peshawar that the doctors had advised against sending her abroad for treatment. Doctors said it would not be advisable for her to travel in her condition. The next ten days would be crucial for her, Shah quoted the doctors as saying.

Malala is currently in the intensive care unit of the military hospital in Peshawar.

Army Chief Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, who visited the schoolgirl in the hospital, said Malala has "become a symbol for the values that the army is fighting to preserve for our future generations."

Meanwhile, provincial Information Minister Mian Iftikhar Hussain announced at a press conference that the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa government will give a reward of Rs 1 crore to anyone who helps identify the persons who attacked Malala.

* Press Trust of India : Islamabad, Thu Oct 11 2012, 00:25 hrs

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/docs-fight-to-save-girl-who-defied-taliban/1014990/>
