

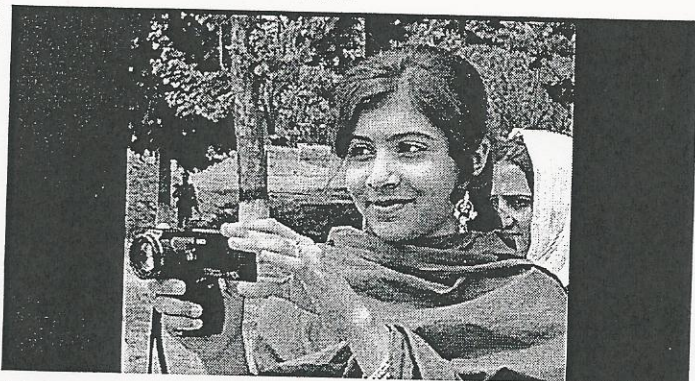
NEWS

WORLD

# An Attack in Pakistan

A teenage girl is harmed for speaking up about the right to go to school

OCTOBER 10, 2012 By Krista Mahr for TIME



Malala Yousufzai, 14, was harmed by the Taliban yesterday on her way home from school in Mingora, Pakistan. HAZART ALI BAGHA—REUTERS

Malala Yousufzai, 14, is recovering after being attacked yesterday on her way home from school in Mingora, Pakistan. She was shot by a group of fighters called the Taliban. The group's members follow a strict version of Islam. They believe girls should not go to school. Yousufzai was targeted because she writes about girls' rights and children's education in Swat Valley, Pakistan.

Mustafa Qadri, a researcher for Amnesty International in Pakistan, said that the attack shows the dangers of speaking up for human rights in northwestern Pakistan. "Female activists live under constant threats from the Taliban and other militant groups," he said in a statement.

Speaking Up

Yousufzai has been an Internet blogger, or writer, since age 11. She writes about girls' education in Pakistan. In December she was awarded Pakistan's National Peace Award for her bravery in writing about the difficulties of living in the 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. In an interview last year she said told al-Jazeera news, "If this new generation is not given pens, they will be given guns by terrorists."



Activists carry posters for victim Malala Yousufzai at an anti-Taliban protest in Islamabad, Pakistan. AAMIR OURESHI—AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Yousufzai's blog entries 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 increase while her personal freedoms shrank. On Jan. 14, 2009, the day before a Taliban rule went into effect closing 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."

Cowardice and Courage

RIZWAN TABASSUM—AFP/GETTY IMAGES  
A young supporter holds a photograph of Malala Yousufzai as she and others pray for the girl's recovery in Karachi, Pakistan.

The Taliban group Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) took responsibility for the attack on Yousufzai. The group says it should serve as a warning to others. "She was speaking against [the] Taliban," a TTP spokesman told the *Express Tribune*, a Pakistani newspaper.



The assault on Yousufzai is one example of children being targeted in some areas of Pakistan. According to Amnesty International, two other activists working on education rights for girls and women have been killed in the region in the past year. The country's army chief has vowed to continue his country's fight against terrorism.

Pakistan's prime minister and president, and the U.S. state department, have all said the attack on Yousufzai was wrong. Support for the girl has poured in over social media and from members of the international human rights community. Many schools in Pakistan's Swat Valley were closed today in protest of the Taliban's attack on the courageous 14-year old.