



## Submission by Human Rights Watch to the Committee on the Rights of the Child on Panama

*82<sup>nd</sup> pre-sessional, 2018*

This submission relates to the review of Panama under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. It focuses on the issue of the protection of students, teachers, and schools in situations of armed conflict.

In June 2015, Panama became the 41<sup>st</sup> country to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration<sup>1</sup> and thereby committed to using the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict* as a practical tool to guide their behavior during relevant security operations.<sup>2</sup>

Panama has also been very supportive of the rights of children in armed conflict and has promoted the protection of students, teachers, and schools. In December 2017, Panama hosted the 'Latin America Regional Implementation Workshop' on how to protect students, teachers, and schools from attack and schools from military use, that was attended by representatives from ten Latin American states that had already endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration. The state representatives comprised of the ministries of defense, foreign affairs, public security, and national armed forces, together with regional and international peacekeeping and education experts. They exchanged practices and

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<sup>1</sup> Safe Schools Declaration, May 28, 2015, [https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/departementene/ud/vedlegg/utvikling/safe\\_schools\\_declaration.pdf](https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/departementene/ud/vedlegg/utvikling/safe_schools_declaration.pdf) (accessed November 6, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*, March 18, 2014, [http://protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/guidelines\\_en.pdf](http://protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/guidelines_en.pdf) (accessed November 6, 2018).

discussed ways in which their governments can meet the commitments made in the Safe Schools Declaration.<sup>3</sup>

Human Rights Watch recommends that the Committee:

- Commend Panama for its endorsement of the Safe Schools Declaration and the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict;
- Encourage Panama to continue to develop and share examples of its implementation of the Declaration's commitments with this Committee and with other countries that have endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration—particularly during the 2019 Third International Safe Schools Conference—as examples of good practice in protecting students, teachers, and schools during armed conflict.

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<sup>3</sup> Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), “Ten Latin American Countries Convene to Protect Education,” <http://www.protectingeducation.org/news/ten-latin-american-countries-convene-protect-education> (accessed November 7, 2018).