



Yousafzai, Malala

Malala Yousafzai <<mah LAH lah yoo sahF ZAY>> (1997-...) is a Pakistani schoolgirl. She became internationally known as a campaigner for girls' education. In October 2012, at the age of 15, Yousafzai survived an assassination attempt by the Taliban, a militant Islamic group. Following the attack, Yousafzai underwent surgery and a period of recovery and rehabilitation. People around the world voiced support for Yousafzai and her cause.

In 2009, Yousafzai had begun writing a *blog* (web log) for the Urdu-language website of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). In the blog, she promoted her views on education and reported on life in the Swat district, an area of northwestern Pakistan that had come under Taliban control. The Taliban had banned girls in Swat from attending school and forced many schools to close. In mid-2009, the Pakistani military launched a campaign that drove the Taliban from power in Swat. After that, some schools reopened. However, the Taliban has remained active in the region. On Oct. 9, 2012, two Taliban gunmen opened fire on Yousafzai as she returned home from school in a school bus. Yousafzai survived a gunshot wound to the head. Two other schoolgirls were also wounded in the attack. The attackers were not caught.

Yousafzai was born on July 12, 1997, in the town of Mingaora in the Swat district. Her father is Ziauddin Yousafzai, a school owner and activist who encouraged her education. At the age of 11, Malala began blogging for BBC Urdu under the name Gul Makai. She soon gained attention in the media. Yousafzai served as chairperson of the District Child Assembly, made up of students from Swat. The assembly meetings addressed the human rights concerns of young people in the district. In 2011, the government of Pakistan awarded Yousafzai its first National Youth Peace Prize for her efforts to promote girls' education in Swat. The award—later renamed the National Malala Peace Prize—recognizes the contributions of people under the age of 18. Soon after Yousafzai's attack, former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, a United Nations (UN) special envoy for global education, launched a UN petition in Yousafzai's name. The petition demanded that all children worldwide be enrolled in school by the end of 2015. The United Nations declared Nov. 10, 2012, Malala Day. It was later changed to July 12, 2013, to mark Yousafzai's 16th birthday. Yousafzai wrote an autobiography, *I Am Malala* (2013, with Christina Lamb).

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