

***Comment***

## **Malala Yousafzai's 2015 Oslo Education Summit Address**

*Bismillah hir rahman ir rahim.*

In the name of God, the most Merciful, the most Beneficent, who is the God of all mankind.

Your Highness, the Crown Prince, honorable Secretary General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon, honorable Presidents, Prime Minister, especially the Prime Minister of Norway, I'm very honored to be here and meet the honorable Prime Minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, for coming here and joining us in this summit. Many thanks to Mr. Gordon Brown for all the work he's done, and continues to do for education.

Dear sisters and brothers, I am humbled to be back in Oslo where, last December, I received the Nobel Peace Prize, and I stood together with Kailash Satyarthi and I received that prize on behalf of children.

I am back here again to ask world leaders to invest more in education and ensure 12 years of quality education, of quality and free, both primary and secondary education for every child.

I am here as the voice of children, as the voice of those 60 million girls who are deprived of education. Girls whose future depends on the chance to go to school. Girls whose future depends on the decisions that will be made by our leaders.

I am here on behalf of those girls - including some of my own friends — who have been denied the right to education. Who have been forced to get married at an early age. And others who are trapped in poverty, child labor, and child trafficking.

I am here on behalf of 146 children and teachers who were brutally killed in an attack by a terrorist in Peshawar in Pakistan. I am here on behalf of those three girls in Afghanistan who had acid thrown in their faces by terrorists for their crime to go to school.

I am here on behalf of those 28 million children who are out of school because of the ongoing and tragic conflicts and wars.

There is a whole generation of children in Syria and many other war affected areas such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Palestine where children have been kept away from the classroom by conflicts.

Last year, I met a girl called Mezon at the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan. To her, the right of education is as basic as food. And is as basic, and as needed as water.

Malala Fund cofounder and education activist Malala Yousafzai urges world leaders to 'be a child for a moment' and 'dream with no limit' for global education.

She believes that being a refugee is not an excuse to learn less: it is motivation to learn more. She knows that there is no tomorrow for the children of Syria unless the children of Syria are educated today.

And it leads me to question: What is Mezon's crime that she stays away from her home, that she stays away from her country, from education, from her school? What is the crime of all those children who are homeless now, and who are refugees?

I myself have not seen my home, have not seen my country for more than two and half years. My crime was to speak up for my right and for girl's rights to go to school.

And it leads me to question: Why do we suffer? Why do children have to suffer, become homeless, and become targets of wars? What crime have they committed?

Dear brothers and sisters, world leaders need to be serious. World leaders need to be serious and think of the world as one country, as the land of all people, where every person deserves equality, equal rights, no matter whether they are black or white, man or woman, rich or poor.

A child should not be kept away from the opportunity of going to school or receiving health care just because that child is from a poor family or is from a poor country. That child has no choice. World leaders need to think of the rest of the world's children as their own children.

No world leader would want his or her child to be deprived of education, or not to have health facilities, or want their children to become victims of war. Now, the world needs a change.

Dear sisters and brothers, only 15 years ago, when the world came together to write the Millennium Development Goals, leaders set goals too low.

The MDGs included the right of a child to primary education only. They remained silent about a child's right to a secondary education, the education they need to succeed in the modern world.

The dream was small, so they achieved small.

But now, we must not repeat this mistake. We must aim higher.

Only nine years of education is not enough. If nine years is not enough for your children, then it is not enough for the rest of the world's children.

We must promise that we will not aim for goals that are easily achievable - but we will aim for goals that are worth working for.

And what I am talking about is not impossible.

It simply requires making a choice.

The good thing is that, in the halls of the United Nations, it has been agreed that basic education is not enough. But a commitment only counts if a commitment is kept. We are going to continue this fight to ensure that quality, free primary and secondary education is ensured to every child. That it becomes a reality for a child rather than a dream.

There will be many tests in the coming months and years. One will come next week, when representatives from around the world will meet in Ethiopia to discuss funding of the new development goals.

My message is that in these goals, secondary education would be ensured.

We must take action this year in 2015, we must finance our future now. The issue is not that there is not enough money. The issue is the lack of commitment of our world leaders to invest in education.

The money to send each child to primary and secondary education for 12 years for free is already there. Educating every Mezon and her brothers would only take \$39 billion extra dollars each year.

It may appear as a huge number, but the reality is that it is not at all. The world spends many times more than this on weapons and military. In fact and unfortunately, \$39 billion are spent on militaries only just in eight days.

If the world leaders decide to take one week and a day off from war and military work, we can put every child in school. Weapons are the tools of destruction, it's very simple. A war can never end a war, and there is always loss of lives and destruction involved.

Books are a better investment in our future than bullets. Books, not bullets, will pave the path towards peace and prosperity.

Dear sisters and brothers, the right to education of millions of children has been ignored. But now it is time to end it, and it should end with us.

I encourage all my sisters and brothers to join me in this mission of 12 years of free, quality primary and secondary education for every child. I urge and am hopeful that world leaders, politicians, NGOs, parents and every person would come together to contribute to this

campaign and ensure that every girl and every boy receives 12 years of quality education.

I am turning 18 soon on the 12th of July, and my life of being a child will come to an end. It's quite hard.

But there is something that I have learnt from being a child that I will not leave behind and I will take on into this new life of adulthood. And that is to dream: In fact, to dream big, to aim higher, without limit.

My message today is very simple to the leaders: be a child for a moment, dream with no limit, and dream bigger, this is how you can achieve bigger.

Thank you.

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