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ASIA/INDIA - Hindu radicals threaten a Catholic school asking for the admission of Hindu children

Khandwa (Agenzia Fides) - The radical Hindu groups have threatened the headmaster and teachers of a Catholic school in the Diocese of Khandwa (in the Madhya Pradesh state) trying to get a Hindu girl admitted to the school by force. "It is not the first time and the phenomenon is spreading", notes a local source of Fides, that had already reported a similar case in recent days, for a school in Belguam in the state of Karnataka (see Fides 7 / 7 / 2011). This is illogical, as Hindu extremist groups contrast with all possible forces, and with a heated propaganda, the commitment of the Church and all Christian communities in education, accusing the Christians of "manipulating the minds and of proselytizing".
The school which is being indimidated is the St. Jude's Higher Secondary School, in Khargone, in Khandwa district. As reported to Fides by the local Church, on July 2 the headmaster, Fr. John Victor, saw a group of militants break into his office, the "Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad" (ABVP), the Hindu extremist youth group, who tried to get a Grade 5 student admitted to the school by force. In previous days the girl's father had come to the school seeking admission for his daughter with a letter of reference from a political figure.
When father Victor said "classes are full" the militants tried creating a disturbance on the school campus activities and lessons, publicly protesting for a week and accusing the school of "little patriotism", because "the school does not expose the national flag and that they did not have a portrait of the Hindu goddess Saraswati", who, for the Hindu religion, is the goddess of Knowledge. Only with the intervention of the police, who are offering protection to the school, has for now put an end to intimidation.
Local Church sources told Fides that several Catholic schools in Madhya Pradesh say that they are being harassed and victimized on some pretext or another. The local Church has also started legal proceedings before the High Court of the state which alleges the unnecessary interference by the State Government of Madhya Pradesh in the management of Catholic schools. In recent days, the Bishops wrote an open letter (see Fides 06/24/2011) complaining that Prabath Jha, President of the state and political leader of the Hindu nationalist party "Bharatiya Janata Party" (BJP), gave public speeches to incite ' religious hatred and violence against Christians (PA)
(Agenzia Fides 13/07/2011)

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