



ASIA/PAKISTAN - More than 200 Muslim girls enrolled in the Catholic school in Swat, hit by Taliban

Sangota (Agenzia Fides) - The Catholic girls' school of the Sisters of the Presentation in Sangota, in the heart of the Swat valley (province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa), "reopened a few months ago, has more than 200 enrolled, and is in the process of complete reconstruction": This is what is reported to Fides Agency by Sister Riffat Sadiq, part of the team of educators, formerly headmistress of the same school, talking about the "Day for Malala," the commitment of the women religious.

The institute, founded in 1962, was forced to close in 2007 and in 2009 was destroyed by the Taliban, who then ruled the valley. In the campaign against female education, Taliban groups forced the closure of more than 400 schools and 150 were destroyed or affected by the bombings. In the spring of 2012, the school of the Sisters of the Presentation – whose specific charism is to work for education - has reopened (see Fides 11/04/2012). In a few months enrollment has risen up to 200 "but as soon as more classrooms are completed, they will become a lot more," notes Sister Riffat, remembering that before the forced closure, the school had over 1,000 girl students. "The girls enrolled are almost all Muslims, of tribal families and very poor. The local population is happy, sustains and encourages us a lot for this work which is being carried out. We trust in God's Providence. I think this is a sign of hope, even thinking about the story of Malala Yusufzai: in the Day dedicated to her we send our solidarity and our affection. Education is the heart the Sisters of the Presentation's mission, "it is fundamental for the growth and development of the country: in this way we give a contribution to our nation," she concludes. The Sisters of the Presentation, have been present in the Indian subcontinent for over 100 years, managing nine schools in three provinces of Pakistan (Sindh, Punjab, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa), providing education to more than 7,000 girls and young women, mostly Muslim (PA) (Agenzia Fides 10/11/2012)