



## **ASIA/HOLY LAND - Gaza, the return to class without problems for Christian schools**

Gaza (Agenzia Fides) - The re-opening of the school year for five Christian schools (including three Catholic schools) operating among the population of the Gaza Strip took place with no surprises. "Children and teachers went back to school and everything was done in an orderly manner", confirms to Fides Agency Sister Nazareth, a religious of the female branch of the Institute of the Incarnate Word who is responsible for the pastoral care of the Catholic parish of the Holy Family.

Last spring the alarm had spread with regards to the fate of the five schools that were likely to be severely affected by some measures of the government monopolized by the Islamists of Hamas. A law enacted in April by the local Ministry of Education - and due to enter into force in September - stated that the classes of all schools of every grade should compulsorily be divided according to sex, while teachers - men and women - would no longer be allowed to give lessons to students of the opposite sex over 9 years of age.

The possible application of these provisions seem to have put Christian schools before the prospect of forced closure: "We do not have the space and the money to separate our schools", said, at the time, father Hijazeen Faisal, head of the schools of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. At the moment, such danger is averted, at least temporarily. Sources of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem said that in October father Hijazeen and the general administrator of the Latin Patriarchate, Father Humam Khzouz, will go to Gaza to meet with the Minister of Education.

Christian schools in Gaza are attended by a population of 3500 students and are the only ones - along with those managed by the UN - to have mixed classes. (GV) (Agenzia Fides 27/09/2013)