

Arrests in the Shooting of a Pakistani Schoolgirl

From VOA Learning English, this is IN THE NEWS in Special English.

Pakistani police have arrested suspects in the shooting of a fourteen year old school girl. Officials say the arrests took place in northwest Pakistan's Swat Valley. The Taliban has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Malala Yousafzai was shot in the head and neck Tuesday as she left school. The following day, doctors successfully removed a bullet from her neck. She is being treated at the country's top military hospital. Doctors say she has a seventy percent chance of surviving.

Malala Yousafzai became famous for speaking out against the Taliban. Witnesses say gunmen who came to her school asked for her by name. The gunmen open fired as she was entering a school bus. Two other students also were wounded.

The Taliban says Malala Yousafzai was targeted for what it called her "pro-West" ideology. It says she denounced the Taliban and called President Obama her hero. On Friday a spokesman for the group said Taliban leaders decided a few months ago to kill the school girl, and told gunmen to carry out the attack.

The girl's uncle, Ahmed Shah Yousafzai, is head of the Swat Valley Peace Council. He told VOA that no one expected that such a fierce attack would be carried out against her.

"People once again are terrified; they are scared that the situation is getting worse. Until now, people were hopeful that peace has been restored. Yes, in Swat we witnessed targeted killing time after time, but no one was expecting a ninth-grade student would be targeted this brutally."

The Taliban led a violent campaign for control of the Swat area in two thousand eight and two thousand nine. The campaign included attacks on schools. The Taliban had banned girls from attending school.

It was in this period that then eleven year old Malala Yousafzai began to document the abuses by the Taliban. Using the name Gul Makai, she wrote

about them in a blog published by the BBC.

Her blog told about her experiences in areas controlled by the Taliban. She and her friends had disobeyed the ban by attending school.

In twenty eleven, the Pakistani government recognized Malala Yousafzai with the National Peace Award. But attacks on girls’ schools continued in the country’s northwest. Last October, a Pakistani official told VOA that about one thousand two hundred schools had been destroyed over the past few years.

Pakistani political and religious leaders have condemned the attack. So have Afghan President Hamid Karzai and President Obama. American Secretary of State Hillary Clinton praised the work of the young activist and said Islamic militants feel threatened by powerful women.

On Friday, Pakistanis at Islamic centers across the nation prayed for the girl’s recovery. And in Switzerland, United Nations experts urged Pakistan’s government to make sure that school children, especially girls, are protected.

And that's IN THE NEWS in VOA Special English. I'm Steve Ember.

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