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BURMA CSW welcomes UK Government support for UN inquiry into crimes against humanity

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) warmly welcomes the decision by the British Government to support the establishment of a UN Commission of Inquiry to investigate crimes against humanity and war crimes perpetrated by the Burmese regime.

Britain's Ambassador to the United Nations, Mark Lyell Grant, said yesterday that Britain would support the referral of a case to the International Criminal Court (ICC). Responding to the recommendation made by the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Burma earlier this month, for the establishment of a commission of inquiry, the Ambassador said: "Because Burma is not a state party to the ICC it would require the Security Council to make a reference, and I don't think the Security Council is sufficiently unanimous in its view to allow such a reference to happen. We of course would support such a reference."

Speaking in the House of Lords yesterday in response to a question from Lord Alton of Liverpool, Government minister Lord Brett said: "We strongly support the rapporteur's recommendation, but if we are to press the issue it is important to do so in a way that carries support within the Security Council and not to fall victim to veto or lack of support, as that will be seen in Rangoon as a victory for the military junta. But we are strongly supportive of it and are seeking support."

CSW has advocated a UN commission of inquiry for several years, and earlier this month released fresh evidence of the regime's gross violations of human rights in eastern Burma following a fact-finding visit to the Thailand-Burma border. CSW reiterated its call for a UN investigation into crimes against humanity and war crimes in its report released earlier this month.

CSW's East Asia Team Leader Benedict Rogers said: "We are delighted that the United Kingdom is showing leadership on this issue, and has pledged strong support for the Special Rapporteur's recommendations. We urge the British Government now to devote energy and resources to building an international coalition to take this forward, working with countries such as Australia which have already expressed support. It is vital that in the run-up to the regime's fake elections, its crimes against humanity and the prevailing culture of impunity in Burma are addressed by the United Nations, and action is taken to end the regime's campaign of rape, forced labour, torture, destruction, killing and terror."