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## BURMA CSW urges international community to reject sham elections

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CSW is urging the international community to reject Burma's upcoming election, which the military regime announced today would be held on 7 November. Election laws issued earlier this year and Burma's new constitution both make any hope of a free and fair election impossible. With imprisoned democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi excluded, the election constitutes a whitewash for the ruling military junta.

The new constitution was introduced in a sham referendum in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis two years ago and does not remotely meet international standards. It provides immunity for the military's crimes, guarantees the military 25 per cent of the parliamentary seats, and offers the ethnic nationalities no hope of protection for human rights.

The laws also ban anyone with a criminal conviction, including political prisoners, from being a member of a political party. This excludes most leading pro-democracy activists, including Aung San Suu Kyi. Her party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), refused to register under the new rules, was excluded from the elections and forced to disband. Members of religious orders, such as the monks who led anti-government protests in 2007, are denied a vote.

CSW renews its call for a universal arms embargo to be imposed on Burma, and for the establishment of a United Nations Commission of Inquiry, as recommended by the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Burma Tomas Ojea Quintana, to investigate the regime's crimes against humanity.

Benedict Rogers, CSW's East Asia Team Leader and author of *Than Shwe: Unmasking Burma's Tyrant*, said: "These fake elections represent nothing more than an opportunity for Than Shwe and his regime to entrench their rule, and offer no prospect of real meaningful change. The world must make it abundantly clear that the election on 7 November is unacceptable and does not have any legitimacy or credibility whatsoever. It will be nothing more than a change of clothing, from military uniforms to civilian suits, without any meaningful change of policy, personnel or government. The world must reject the sham election and urge the Generals to engage in a meaningful dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi, the democracy movement and the ethnic nationalities."