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BURMA CSW welcomes US support for commission of inquiry and urges EU action

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) today welcomed the decision by the United States to support the establishment of a United Nations Commission of Inquiry to investigate crimes against humanity in Burma. CSW is calling on members of the European Union to pledge their support at the UN.

The United States is the fifth nation to support the proposal for an investigation into crimes against humanity in Burma, following the United Kingdom, Australia, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. In March, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Burma, Tomas Ojea Quintana, concluded that human rights violations in Burma may amount to crimes against humanity and recommended the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry.

Yesterday CSW wrote to Foreign Ministers of EU member states, urging them to support the initiative. In a letter to the British Foreign Secretary William Hague, CSW welcomed the United Kingdom's support and urged the new British Government to work proactively within the UN to secure wording in the UN General Assembly resolution later this year.

Benedict Rogers, CSW's East Asia Team Leader and author of *Than Shwe: Unmasking Burma's Tyrant*, said: "We warmly welcome the decision by the United States to support a Commission of Inquiry. This now gives significant momentum to the international campaign to end impunity in Burma. The military regime in Burma has one of the worst human rights records in the world, and is accused of crimes against humanity and war crimes, including the widespread and systematic use of rape as a weapon of war, forced labor, the forcible recruitment of child soldiers, killings, torture and the destruction of over 3,500 villages in eastern Burma alone. The UN has spent twenty years urging the regime to end its violations, which it has described in numerous resolutions as violating international humanitarian law. It is time now for the UN to act, and for the EU, including the United Kingdom, to work closely with the United States to build support in the General Assembly for a Commission of Inquiry."