



Photo credit: Partners Relief & Development

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## BURMA Thousands flee clashes within hours of sham elections

More than ten thousand civilians have fled across the Burmese border into Thailand today to escape fighting between the Burma Army and a faction of the pro-junta Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA). The clashes broke out within hours of Burma's sham elections on 7 November. The refugees are being held in a Thai military camp and a Buddhist monastery in Mae Sot, and many more are expected to arrive in the next few hours.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) has received reports that the Burma Army is sending large numbers of troops to Myawaddy. There have also been reports of explosions and gunfire, with at least 20 civilians injured and three killed. Sources on the Thai-Burmese border are expecting the fighting in Myawaddy to intensify tonight. Fighting has also been reported further south in the Three Pagodas Pass area.

The DKBA has been allied with the Burma Army for the past 15 years, and had agreed to become a Border Guard Force under the Burma Army's control. However, a faction broke away from the DKBA and refused to join the Border Guard Force. Yesterday, this faction reportedly seized the Friendship Bridge between Myawaddy and the Thai town of Mae Sot, as well as the Myawaddy police station, post office and local township offices, in protest against yesterday's elections and the proposed Border Guard Force.

CSW's East Asia Team Leader Benedict Rogers said, "We predicted that these sham elections and the regime's new constitution would only increase conflict, instability and suffering, and within hours our prediction has become a reality. The international community now has a responsibility to act quickly to reject the regime's elections, which will perpetuate military rule, and to urge the regime to enter into a meaningful dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi, the democracy movement and the ethnic nationalities. Burma's neighbors, particularly China, India and Thailand, have a responsibility to urge the regime to release Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest and enter a dialogue process, because increased conflict will cause further instability on their borders. The UN Secretary-General must seize the moment and lead a revived effort to start a meaningful dialogue. The alternative to dialogue is further conflict, which will cause further instability and more suffering for Burma's people."

### ***Notes to Editor:***

1. Photographs are available from the CSW Press Office. We kindly request that the credit for the photographs be attributed to Partners Relief & Development.