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## BURMA Regime continues brutal campaign against ethnic civilians

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Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) is concerned by reports that despite the welcome release of Burma's democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, and a high-level visit by UN Burma envoy Vijay Nambiar, the regime continues to perpetrate grave violations of human rights against ethnic civilians, including military attacks and forced labor.

During Burma's sham elections on November 7, fighting broke out between the Burma Army and a faction of the pro-junta Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), which had refused to become part of the Burma Army, as required under the Generals' new constitution for Burma. The violence resulted in more than ten thousand civilians fleeing across the Burmese border into Thailand.

CSW has learned that in the last two weeks, thousands more ethnic Karen are have fled to the Thai border following a new Burma Army military offensive in Karen State, thought to be targeting villages in areas under the control of the DKBA faction.

As part of this offensive the Burma Army fired mortars into Palu village in Kawt K'Rate Township, Doo Pla Ya district, without warning on 27 November, wounding one man and forcing more than 200 villagers to seek refuge in Thailand. The mortar attack on the civilian village, which is in breach of the Geneva Convention and constitutes a war crime, took place on the same day that UN Burma envoy Vijay Nambiar visited Rangoon.

CSW has also received reports of attacks within days of the election, in which a 17-year-old girl was killed when the Burma Army shelled Kya Inn Sikkyi village, central Karen State. A Bible School dining room was hit by mortar bombs in the same village, and a school was bombed in Ta Ka Klo village. In Noe Neh village, a 60 year-old man was arrested and shot dead. At least 400 villagers in Dooplaya District were forced to flee, several were wounded from mortar attacks and some were forced to become porters for the soldiers, carrying their food and supplies.

CSW's East Asia Team Leader Benedict Rogers said, "For decades, Burma's military regime has been conducting a campaign against ethnic civilians which involves severe human rights violations amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity. This campaign has continued and in some areas intensified in the last month, even during the sham elections. By these attacks, the regime is showing that there is no meaningful change in Burma. The release of Aung San Suu Kyi, while welcome, is by itself no sign of progress. Unless and until the regime ends its attacks on ethnic civilians, stops its policies of forced labor, rape and torture, declares a nationwide ceasefire and enters into meaningful dialogue with the democracy movement and the ethnic nationalities, international pressure must be maintained. There is an urgent need for the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to facilitate a dialogue process, to secure a permanent peace and an end to these attacks."