



1.19.2011

BURMA CSW renews call for UN inquiry into crimes against humanity following new evidence of violations in Chin State

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) welcomes the release today of a major new report highlighting human rights violations against the Chin people in Burma, just over a week before Burma is due for a Universal Periodic Review of its human rights record at the United Nations.

The report, *Life under the Junta: Evidence of Crimes against Humanity in Burma's Chin State*, published by Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), winners of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize, provides further evidence of crimes against humanity perpetrated by Burma's military regime. A survey of 702 households in all nine townships of Chin State in 2010 found that almost 92 per cent of those surveyed had experienced forced labor at least once in the previous year. Evidence of rape, torture, arbitrary detention, disappearances, the recruitment of child soldiers and chronic food insecurity is also documented in the report, as well as ethnic and religious persecution. Some Chin households surveyed report a campaign by the regime in Burma to convert Chin Christians to Buddhism, forcing Christians to build Buddhist pagodas in every major village. In some areas, government authorities persecute Chin Christians using violence and intimidation, destroying churches or threatening to destroy homes and kill family members.

With a foreword by the Nobel Laureate Bishop Desmond Tutu and the former UN Chief Prosecutor at the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, Richard Goldstone, the report concludes that at least eight of the violations documented "fall within the purview of the International Criminal Court and may constitute crimes against humanity".

CSW believes the PHR report completely confirms and corroborates evidence it has gathered during five fact-finding visits to the Chin people on the India-Burma border since 2004.

CSW's East Asia Team Leader Benedict Rogers said, "Having travelled to the Chin areas ourselves, and worked to highlight the plight of the Chin, we welcome this new report which places a much-needed spotlight on a long-forgotten and much-overlooked humanitarian and human rights crisis. Combined with the regime's offensives against ethnic nationalities in eastern Burma, persecution of the Muslim Rohingya people, and abuses in other parts of the country, we believe the evidence of possible crimes against humanity is now overwhelming and further strengthens the case for the establishment of a UN Commission of Inquiry to investigate these crimes, as recommended by the UN's own Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Burma. It is now time to end the culture of impunity in Burma."

Notes to Editors:

1. To obtain a copy of the PHR report, please see www.lifeunderthejunta.org
2. To obtain a copy of CSW's submission for Burma's Universal Periodic Review at the United Nations, please contact the CSW press office.