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## BURMA Facing first-ever review of human rights record at UN

Burma's human rights record will come under scrutiny at the United Nations in the country's first Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on January 27. Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) and representatives from the Burma Forum on the Universal Periodic Review (BF-UPR), a coalition of fourteen human rights and civil society organizations, will host a public event from 1-3pm in Room 22 at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, immediately following the UPR Working Group session.

The UPR is a process under the auspices of the UN Human Rights Council, which involves a review of the human rights records of all 192 UN member States once every four years. It will provide a unique opportunity for the international community to put pressure on the military regime in Burma to take concrete and genuine steps to implement legislative and institutional reforms and fully cooperate with the international human rights mechanisms.

Despite the release from house arrest of pro-democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on November 13<sup>th</sup> last year, the military regime in Burma has formed a new parliament and introduced a new constitution based on the results of sham elections on November 7. The elections were heavily rigged, with reports of widespread intimidation and harassment. Military offensives against the Karen people in eastern Burma intensified immediately after the elections, forcing thousands to flee to the border with Thailand. The regime has continued its brutal campaign of oppression against its citizens using tactics such as forced labor, torture, arbitrary detention and rape as a weapon of war. The new constitution, drafted in a process that excluded Burma's democracy movement and ethnic non-ceasefire groups, provides the military with immunity for its crimes and places the army above the law.

CSW's East Asia Team Leader Benedict Rogers said, "Burma's military regime has one of the world's worst human rights records, and stands accused of crimes against humanity. We urge the UPR Working Group to examine the evidence submitted during the review process, hold the regime accountable and urge the regime to make significant changes. In particular, we hope the UPR Working Group will ask the regime to enter into a meaningful dialogue with the democracy movement and the ethnic nationalities, as proposed by Aung San Suu Kyi, amend its Constitution to provide protection for human rights and end impunity, cease its offensives against the ethnic nationalities, end the use of force labor and rape as a weapon of war, tackle the issue of human trafficking, and sign key international human rights documents such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. This is a rare opportunity to send a strong message to the regime in Burma, which must not be lost."

### **Notes to Editors:**

1. The UPR Working Group session on Burma will be held in Geneva at 9am-12 noon on 27 January 2011.
2. The BF-UPR public event is open to local and international media, members of diplomatic communities and civil society.
3. The joint submission by the BF-UPR for Burma's UPR at the UN can be viewed at [http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session10/MM/JS3\\_JointSubmission3\\_eng.pdf](http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session10/MM/JS3_JointSubmission3_eng.pdf)
4. To obtain a copy of CSW's submission for Burma's UPR at the UN, please contact the CSW press office.