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BURMA CSW calls for aid and action for Eastern Burma to address growing humanitarian crisis

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) is today calling for international action to end the growing humanitarian crisis in eastern Burma, where there is an acute food shortage in Karen state, and attacks on civilians in Shan State continue.

As UN Special Adviser on Burma Vijay Nambiar visits the country this week, CSW urges him to address the crisis directly in his talks with the regime. CSW also calls for the international community to provide emergency aid to affected communities and increase funding for the refugee camps on the Thailand-Burma border.

According to the Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG), at least 8,885 villagers in 118 villages in northern Karen State are facing acute food shortages. Villagers claim to have run out of food or fear they will do so before the harvest in October this year. Limited financial resources mean local humanitarian organizations have been unable to provide emergency assistance.

The unfolding humanitarian crisis is a result of recent attacks on villagers by the Burma Army, causing displacement and food insecurity compounded by a recent drought. Tens of thousands of civilians in Lu Thaw Township, northern Papun District, Karen State have gone into hiding, and are in urgent need of assistance.

In Shan State, an offensive by the Burma Army against the Shan State Army-North (SSA-N) has forced more than 3,000 people to flee from their homes. Many are in hiding in the jungle. The regime's offensive has broken a ceasefire with the SSA-N which has lasted 22 years.

CSW's East Asia Team Leader Benedict Rogers said, "The regime's offensives against civilians in eastern Burma amount to crimes against humanity, and have caused a grave humanitarian crisis. With thousands of people displaced and in hiding, with no food or medical assistance, and with the military continuing to shoot, torture, enslave, rape and kill villagers, it is time for the international community to take action. We urge the United Kingdom, the European Union and other major donors to provide emergency humanitarian assistance, and to continue to provide much-needed support for refugees on the Thailand-Burma border. We call on the UN Special Adviser on Burma to raise this situation with the regime during his talks this week, and to urge the regime to end its attacks and declare a nationwide ceasefire. We urge the UN to implement the recommendation of its own Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Burma, and establish a Commission of Inquiry to investigate war crimes and crimes against humanity. The world cannot sit by and claim that there is change in Burma, while the regime continues to perpetrate gross violations of human rights, inflict severe suffering on its people and flout international law."