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## BURMA CSW renews call for inquiry into crimes against humanity on 23<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of 1988 massacre

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) today renews its call for the establishment of a UN Commission of Inquiry into war crimes and crimes against humanity in Burma, as the people of Burma mark the twenty-third anniversary of the brutal crackdown on pro-democracy protestors on August 8, 1988 in which at least 3,000 people were killed.

CSW has written to European Union (EU) Foreign Ministers, urging them to work to secure the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry in this year's UN General Assembly resolution on Burma, as recommended by UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Burma, Tomas Ojea Quintana. In particular, CSW joins other campaign groups in calling on Germany not to oppose this initiative. A protest will be taking place at the German Embassy in London today.

In 1988 a major movement for democracy developed in which Aung San Suu Kyi emerged as the leader, although thousands were killed in several massacres unleashed by Ne Win's military regime. Since 1988, the situation in Burma has deteriorated further. In 1990, elections were overwhelmingly won by Aung San Suu Kyi's party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), but the junta refused to recognize the results, and most of those elected were imprisoned or exiled. Twenty years later, in November, 2010, the regime held a new round of heavily rigged sham elections, and in the past nine months the human rights and humanitarian crisis has continued. On June 9 the regime ended a 17-year cease-fire agreement with the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), resulting in the displacement of over 20,000 civilians, and the rape of at least 32 women and girls. Of the cases of rape, at least 13 victims were then killed.

At least 16 countries have expressed support for a Commission of Inquiry, including 12 EU member states as well as the United States, Canada and Australia. Democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi has repeatedly expressed her support, particularly when she addressed the US Congress by video link in June, and it has been recommended by the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Burma.

In its letter to EU Foreign Ministers, CSW writes, "Since 1992, the UN General Assembly has been calling on the regime in Burma to respect the Geneva Conventions. Since 1997, the UN General Assembly has made 18 calls for inquiries. In its 20 resolutions, the General Assembly has detailed at least 15 possible categories of war crimes and crimes against humanity perpetrated by the regime in Burma. Recent resolutions have described the regime's human rights abuses as "major and repeated violations of international humanitarian law ... As the UN Special Rapporteur has concluded, 'failing to act on accountability in Myanmar will embolden the perpetrators of international crimes and further postpone long-overdue justice.' A Commission of Inquiry is not only necessary if the UN General Assembly's authority and credibility are to be upheld, it may also serve to prevent future human rights violations in Burma, and may well contribute towards establishing a meaningful dialogue between the regime, the democracy movement, the ethnic nationalities and the international community. It is a vital step towards national reconciliation."

CSW's East Asia Team Leader Benedict Rogers said, "For over half a century Burma has been ruled by brutal military regimes, and for the past twenty-three years the suffering of the people of Burma has intensified further. The UN General Assembly has called for an end to the culture of impunity in Burma on numerous occasions. If

the regime is allowed to continue violating international law with no consequence, what message does that send to dictators around the world? The European Union has a responsibility to abide by its own principles and ensure that an inquiry is carried out. As an influential member of the EU, Germany has a special responsibility to ensure that war crimes and crimes against humanity carried out by a brutal military dictatorship are not allowed to go unchecked. Today's focus on Germany in particular, and our call for EU member states to support a Commission of Inquiry, is particularly appropriate as we remember the massacre of 3,000 civilians twenty-three years ago. It is surely now time to investigate the regime's crimes."