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## BURMA Kachin churches attacked, women raped and civilians killed by military while regime talks of reform

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) is deeply concerned by reports that the Burma Army are directly attacking churches in Kachin State, beating pastors and church members, setting homes alight and raping, torturing and killing civilians.

According to CSW's sources, on October 16 soldiers from Light Infantry Battalion 438 seized control of a Roman Catholic Church in Namsan Yang village, Waimaw township, where 23 worshippers, mostly women and elderly people, had gathered for the 8am Sunday service. The worshippers took refuge from the gunfire behind the Maria prayer sanctuary. When the troops saw them, they shot several rounds of bullets into the sanctuary. The Catholic assistant to the priest, 49 year-old father-of-four Jangma Awng Li, decided to speak to the troops as he is fluent in Burmese. He was beaten in his head with a rifle butt, and injured his forehead when he hit a concrete wall. He and four other men were handcuffed and detained by the soldiers.

The troops, who were later joined by soldiers from Light Infantry Battalion 121, continued to march through the village shooting, and reached the Baptist church compound in the evening. During the march the detainees, including four from other villages who had been with the troops for two weeks, were used as forced labor. The detainees had to stay with the troops overnight and were temporarily stationed in the Baptist church compound. The whole northern part of village was burned and both church properties were destroyed.

Two days ago, Light Infantry Battalion 121 shot 72 year-old Maru Je Hkam Naw in the arms and legs while he was erecting a fence around his house in Namsan Yang village. Houses in Namsan Yang were burned by the Burmese Army and Mr. Jangma Awng Li and other detainees, too afraid to return home, fled the village. At least 21 villagers were detained and used for forced labor, and a 19 year-old Rakhine boy was shot dead. His body was burned and thrown into the mine in Namsan Yang where he worked.

On October 18, a 19 year-old girl, Maran Kawbu, was detained, tortured and gang-raped by soldiers from the same battalion in Namsan Yang. Her body was left on the river bank.

In Momauk, approximately 500 internally displaced persons (IDPs) have fled the conflict and are seeking temporary accommodation in the church. On October 19, one man, a Shan farmer named Mr. Tintun, was shot dead by soldiers from Light Infantry Brigade 601, while fishing.

CSW's East Asia Team Leader Benedict Rogers said, "These brutal attacks on religious communities and peaceful civilians stand in stark contrast to the regime's recent rhetoric about reform and peace building. CSW has received numerous reports of rape, torture and killing of civilians in Kachin State by the Burma Army this year. According to international humanitarian law, including the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, intentionally directing attacks on religious buildings constitutes a war crime and a violation of international law. Rape, forced labor and killing civilians on a widespread and systematic basis constitute crimes against humanity. We urge President Thein Sein to call a halt to the military's attacks on civilians throughout Burma, stop the widespread and systematic violations of human rights, declare a nationwide ceasefire, and enter into a meaningful dialogue process with all the ethnic nationalities and the democracy movement led by Aung San Suu Kyi, in pursuit of genuine national reconciliation. We urge the international community to mobilize the

mechanisms of the United Nations, through the General Assembly, to hold the regime in Burma accountable for these violations of international law, and end these war crimes and crimes against humanity which the regime is perpetrating with impunity.”