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## BURMA Violations and humanitarian crisis continue in eastern Burma according to new report

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Serious violations of human rights continue to be committed by the Burma Army in eastern Burma, while humanitarian conditions deteriorate due to a lack of international funding, according to a new report released today by Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW).

Last month CSW conducted another fact-finding visit to the Thailand-Burma border, visiting Karen refugees in camps on the Thai side of the border as well as internally displaced people (IDPs) across the border in Karen State. CSW also had meetings with former political prisoners, exiled activists, representatives of the democracy movement, non-governmental organizations and diplomats.

CSW interviewed several recently arrived refugees, who had fled fighting between the Burma Army and ethnic armed groups. One Karen IDP told CSW, "Whenever the Burma Army comes, they burn villages or shoot people. So whenever the Burma Army comes we run away because we know what will happen if we don't." Reports of forced labour, looting, extortion and torture remain widespread. One IDP said, "We feel very tired in our hearts and minds. We cannot think about what we're going to do. We're very tired."

Conditions in the IDP camp are particularly severe, due to cuts in international support for humanitarian assistance along the border. The IDPs now receive only rice and salt, and the rations have been reduced significantly. They have received no new clothing, blankets or mosquito nets since 2008, and at least ten children under the age of five are suffering malnutrition. People are relying on foraging for bamboo shoots, raw leaves and roots in the forest.

CSW's East Asia Team Leader Benedict Rogers said, "President Thein Sein and the regime in Burma have made some welcome gestures in recent months, potentially creating the conditions for some changes to be made. However, as long as the gross violations of human rights in the ethnic states continue, and political prisoners remain in horrific conditions in jail, we cannot speak of real change in Burma. It is clear from our visit to the Thailand-Burma border that there is a real need to maintain international pressure on the regime to match its rhetoric with action, and undertake substantial, significant and long-lasting change. This includes a nationwide ceasefire, an end to the attacks on ethnic civilians, the release of all political prisoners, and a more meaningful dialogue process between the regime, the democracy movement led by Aung San Suu Kyi and the ethnic nationalities. If the regime takes these steps, the international community should be ready to respond positively, but until the regime takes these steps, targeted pressure must be maintained. The international community must also respond to the dire humanitarian situation along Burma's borders, by increasing humanitarian assistance to the internally displaced peoples and refugees who have been forced to flee the Burma Army's brutal offensives. The international community has a responsibility to protect people from a dire humanitarian, as well as human rights, crisis."