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## BURMA CSW condemns religiously motivated violence and calls for religious freedom, tolerance and harmony

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Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) today condemned rising religious intolerance in Burma, and the killing of ten Muslims in Arakan State on June 3, and called on the government, democracy movement and all the people of Burma to work to improve inter-faith relations, protect religious freedom and promote religious harmony.

Tensions escalated in Arakan State after three Muslim men were accused of raping and killing a Buddhist Arakanese (Rakhine) woman. A mob of Arakanese Buddhists attacked a bus carrying Muslim pilgrims. The mob beat ten people to death, set the bus on fire and defiled some of the corpses.

Yesterday, Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD), met representatives of the Muslim community and condemned the attacks, calling on the Buddhist majority to protect the rights of minorities.

The recent outbreak of anti-Muslim violence follows a steady increase in racist propaganda against Muslims generally, and the Rohingya people in particular. The Rohingyas are an ethnic minority in Arakan State, who have been denied citizenship despite living in Burma for generations.

CSW's East Asia Team Leader Benedict Rogers said: "The reports and images of the attack on Muslims last Sunday are horrific and shocking. People of all religions and none are appalled by such brutality and intolerance and no one who cares about human rights can stay silent. Burma is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious nation and as it continues its struggle for democracy and human rights, it must work to build a nation in which people of all religions and ethnicities are included, involved and given a stake. Religious freedom is a core human right, as set out in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and yet in Burma Buddhist monks have been jailed, Christian churches attacked, crosses destroyed, and Muslims subjected to inhumane discrimination and violence. We call on the government, the democracy movement and the people of Burma to stop rising racism, end intolerance and unite with religious minorities to promote inter-faith dialogue, harmony and religious freedom for all."