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BURMA Crisis in Arakan State highlighted in British Parliament

The human rights and humanitarian crisis in Arakan State, western Burma, was highlighted today in the British Parliament at a meeting chaired by Baroness Kinnock, Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Democracy in Burma.

Speakers included Benedict Rogers, East Asia Team Leader at Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), Maung Tun Khin, President of the Burmese Rohingya Organization UK, and Chris Lewa of the Arakan Project.

The meeting follows the historic visit of Burma's democracy leader and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to the United Kingdom, and was arranged to highlight the human rights and humanitarian crisis in western Burma, particularly resulting from recent sectarian violence between Buddhist Rakhine and Muslim Rohingyas and questions over the citizenship of the Rohingya people.

Benedict Rogers said, "CSW appeals, as a matter of utmost urgency, to the security forces, authorities and people in Arakan State to stop the violence immediately and to begin the long, hard work of addressing the underlying issues, rebuilding shattered lives and engaging in inter-faith and inter-ethnic dialogue and reconciliation. We urge the international community, including the British Government, the European Union and the United States, to provide urgently needed humanitarian assistance to all the victims of the recent violence, regardless of ethnicity or religion and without discrimination. We join others in the international community in calling upon the Government of Burma, the National League for Democracy and all political parties in Burma to support the repeal of the 1982 Citizenship Law, which does not recognize the citizenship of the Rohingya people, who have lived in Burma for generations, and for it to be replaced with a new law based on principles of human rights and equality and in accordance with international law. We call on the Government of Burma to protect and defend religious freedom and to ensure that the human rights of all the peoples of Burma are protected and respected."