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## **BURMA | CSW Urges Government to Stop Military Offensive**

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) urged Burma's military to end its offensive against the majority Christian Kachin people in northern Burma immediately. CSW called on the international community to put pressure on the government of Burma to engage in a meaningful political dialogue with the Kachin and other ethnic nationalities.

According to news reports, four jet fighters and two helicopter gunships were used the morning of Dec. 28 to attack Kachin Independence Army (KIA) troops close to their headquarters at Laiza, on the China-Burma border. The aerial attack follows several days of shelling and a significant increase in troop movement and fighting.

The Burma Army has been conducting a military offensive against the Kachin since June 2011, breaking a ceasefire that had lasted for 17 years. Over 100,000 civilians have been internally displaced since the war began. The Burma Army has been accused of grave human rights violations, including rape, torture, destruction of villages, looting and desecration of churches, and killing civilians. The offensive has intensified severely in recent days.

Andrew Johnston, CSW's Advocacy Director, said, "The dramatic escalation in the Burma Army's assault on the Kachin is deeply disturbing. To launch aerial attacks and deploy fighter jets and helicopter gunships marks the most serious intensification in this conflict since the war began. The government of Burma must be urged to stop this offensive immediately, and engage in a genuine peace process. The KIA, and its political arm, the Kachin Independence Organization, are seeking autonomy and equal rights in a federal, democratic Burma, not secession, and have made clear their desire to talk. But they are demanding a genuine peace process, involving a political dialogue, to find a lasting solution to decades of war, not simply a ceasefire. President Thein Sein and his government present an image of reform to the world, but how can reform be serious if it is accompanied by fighter jets and helicopter gunships? Unless reform is accompanied by a genuine peace process, it will not lead to the lasting change Burma's people desire and deserve. The international community must take this latest escalation very seriously, and must make it clear to Thein Sein that unless the Burma Army's offensive stops and a peace process begins, international pressure will be applied."