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BURMA | CSW Calls for International Action to Stop Attacks In Kachin State

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) has called for international action following the Burma Army's bombardment of Laiza, on the China-Burma border, in which three civilians, including a 76 year-old Christian pastor and a 15 year-old boy, were killed and four others injured.

According to reports from Kachin sources, the Burma Army attacked Laiza, where the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) is headquartered, at 08:15 a.m. local time on Jan. 14, firing 105 and 155mm artillery shells three times. It is the first time Laiza itself has been directly attacked.

Among the injured were a two-and-a-half year-old girl, Jangma Bawk San, her mother Lagoi Sau Nam, 38, an eight-year-old girl, Langjaw Nu Jai, and a 56 year-old woman, Nang Zing Roi Ji. The three civilians who were killed were Pastor Malang Yaw, 76, Hpauyu Doi San Awng, 15, and Nhkum Bawk Naw, age unknown.

In Kahtan village, Phakant area, 117 miles from the Kachin state capital Myitkyina, the Burma Army opened fire on civilians the morning of Jan. 14. An unknown number were killed and several injured. The Kachin Independence Army (KIA), the armed wing of the KIO, does not have a post in this village, and there was no armed conflict with the KIA in the area.

These attacks follow three weeks of aerial bombardment by the Burma Army using jet fighters and helicopter gunships. 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, and the Burma Army has been accused of grave human rights violations, including rape, torture, destruction of villages, looting, desecration of churches, and killing civilians.

The crisis was raised in the British House of Commons last week, and CSW has written to the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton, urging her to raise the situation as a matter of urgency with the Burmese government.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "The Burma Army has long been accused of crimes against humanity in the ethnic conflict areas, and the time has come for the international community to speak out clearly and unambiguously against what may amount to war crimes. Today's bombardment of Laiza and the direct attacks on civilians are inconsistent with President

Thein Sein's promises of reform. We call for urgent international action to pressure the government to stop these attacks immediately, to allow unhindered international humanitarian access to all affected areas, and to engage in a genuine peace process to rebuild trust, begin a political dialogue and move towards national reconciliation."