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USA | CSW to Testify Before US House Committee

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) will give evidence before the US House of Representatives Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations on the persecution of Christians in East Asia and Africa today.

Dr. Khataza Gondwe, CSW's Team Leader for African and the Middle East, and Benedict Rogers, CSW's East Asia Team Leader, will join Mr. Jorge Lee Galindo, Director of Impulso 18, a non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting and defending freedom of religion and belief in Mexico and one of CSW's partner organizations, to give evidence at the open hearing, titled "The Persecution of Christians as a Worldwide Phenomenon."

Galindo will focus on religious freedom violations in Latin America, in particular Mexico, Cuba and Colombia. In both Mexico and Colombia, a parallel legal system for indigenous communities, which allows for the promotion of collective cultural rights over individual rights, has led to severe violations of religious freedom. In addition, criminal networks often threaten or kidnap priests who refuse to co-operate with criminal activities.

Rogers said, "This is a very valuable opportunity to highlight rising religious intolerance, the closure of churches and increasing harassment and violence against Christians in Indonesia, ahead of the launch of CSW's major new report, Indonesia: Pluralism in Peril later this month. It is also an opportunity to draw attention to violations of freedom of religion or belief in Burma, particularly affecting Christians in Chin and Kachin ethnic states. I also intend to highlight continuing abuses in Vietnam."

Gondwe's testimony will focus on the trends of hostility, harassment, repression, restrictions or violence experienced by Christians on account of their faith in sub-Saharan Africa, with reference to a range of countries, including Eritrea and Tanzania. She will identify two main reasons for this: militant Islamist ideology and insurgencies that have taken advantage of pre-existing local issues, weak application of the rule of law, or power vacuums caused by the chronic failure of state structures; and the authoritarian regimes whose governing political ideologies or religious dogma include an inherent hostility to pluralism in any form.