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## TANZANIA | Two Churches, Restaurant Bombed in Zanzibar

Bomb attacks on the island of Zanzibar targeted Christ Church Anglican Cathedral and a well-known restaurant on Feb. 24, and an Evangelistic Assemblies of God Tanzania (EAGT) church on Feb. 23.

Two bombs were detonated at the main entrance of Christ Church Anglican Cathedral and the Former Slave Market in the center of Stone Town at around 1 p.m. on Feb. 24. Another bomb exploded at Mercury's, a restaurant named after Freddie Mercury the late lead singer of the rock group Queen who was born in Zanzibar. According to eyewitnesses, the bomb at the Cathedral consisted of dynamite and was detonated remotely.

On Feb. 23, a homemade bomb reportedly containing a mixture of ball bearings and chemicals was detonated at an EAGT Church. The bomb exploded as the church service was coming to a close, shaking the building and causing alarm amongst the congregation. It is unclear whether anyone was injured or to what extent the church building was damaged.

The bomb attacks come as Tanzania's political parties prepare for elections in which a key issue will be the legal relationship between the mainland and the semi-autonomous Zanzibar archipelago. A Zanzibari separatist group Uamsho (Awakening) is calling for an end to the union and for Zanzibar to become an independent nation.

Uamsho is alleged to be behind an upsurge in religious violence in Zanzibar. Since December 2012, when a Catholic priest was wounded by unknown gunmen, there have been several major attacks on church leaders on the Island. In February 2013, the murder of a Protestant pastor was followed a week later by the killing of a Catholic priest. In September 2013, a retired Catholic priest was seriously injured in an acid attack.

In January 2014, a mob invaded the Sunday service of a Pentecostal Evangelism Fellowship of Africa (PEFA) in Kisauni with the intention of killing the senior pastor, and beat up a visiting clergyman after failing to find him. Local Christians report receiving threats via text message or in leaflets naming church leaders who have been targeted for assassination, and in some instances, referring to a prospective date. In addition, at least 20 churches have been looted and either burnt or demolished by mobs. Although police are investigating recent attacks, perpetrators of previous incidents of religious violence have yet to be brought to justice even when identified or caught in the act, and investigations are generally extended indefinitely.

CSW Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "We are thankful no lives were lost in these bomb attacks. However, the use of a remote device during Monday's bombing indicates that perpetrators of religious violence are attaining new levels of sophistication and planning, while

the use of ball bearings in the earlier attack highlights their desire to inflict maximum injury. The Government of Tanzania must undertake swift investigations in order to ensure that those responsible for these attacks are brought to justice. It is also vital for the Tanzanian Government to uphold freedom of religion or belief for all its citizens, including the Christian minority in Zanzibar, in line with its international obligations under article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.”