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INDONESIA | U.S. Urged to Discuss Religious Intolerance During Visit

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) is calling on United States President Barack Obama to discuss religious intolerance in Indonesia when President Joko Widodo visits the United States on Oct. 25.

On Oct. 21 in Aceh Singkil, a Protestant Christian Church of Pakpak Dairi church and a chapel, Undung-undung Katolik Desa Mandumpang, were destroyed by the government. Also in Aceh Singkil on Oct. 13, a man was killed and a church burnt down in violent clashes which erupted despite the local government agreeing to demands by extremists to demolish at least 13 local churches they believed were built illegally.

The church members, both Catholic and Protestant, have now returned to their homes, but the perpetrators have not been brought to justice.

These events illustrate the trends of religious intolerance and impunity for the perpetrators of attacks on religious minorities in Indonesia, detailed further in CSW's report *Indonesia: Pluralism in Peril*. The report also details the Indonesian government's reluctance to act following instances of religious intolerance and violence.

Key recommendations from the report include the reform or repeal of laws governing the construction of houses of worship, which discriminate against religious minorities, and to revise the curriculum for religious education.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "Indonesia's tradition of religious pluralism and tolerance has been challenged in recent years and CSW urges President Obama to raise the plight of the country's religious minorities with President Joko Widodo when he visits the U.S. We continue to call on President Widodo to ensure the repeal of discriminatory legislation that affects religious minorities and to ensure that violations of religious freedom are properly investigated and the perpetrators are brought to justice."