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## BURMA CSW renews calls for UN inquiry into crimes against humanity on Aung San Suu Kyi's 65<sup>th</sup> birthday

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Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) is marking the 65<sup>th</sup> birthday of Burma's democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi by renewing its call for the establishment of a United Nations Commission of Inquiry, to investigate crimes against humanity and war crimes in Burma. CSW is also calling for a universal arms embargo on the regime.

In March, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Burma, Tomás Ojea Quintana, recommended a Commission of Inquiry. The recommendation followed his report to the UN Human Rights Council which concluded that the human rights violations perpetrated by the military regime against Burma's ethnic nationalities may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. The United Kingdom, the Czech Republic, Australia and Slovakia have expressed support for the initiative. CSW urges other countries to publicly support the idea.

Aung San Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace Prize recipient who will celebrate her birthday on 19 June, has been held under house arrest for almost 15 years. The latest judgment by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention is that her ongoing detention is in violation of international law. Her party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), won 82% of the parliamentary seats in the election in 1990, but the regime rejected the results, imprisoned the victors and intensified its grip on power with a campaign of violence. The NLD is boycotting the regime's upcoming elections, planned for later this year, following the introduction of new electoral laws.

CSW's East Asia Team Leader, Benedict Rogers, author of *Than Shwe: Unmasking Burma's Tyrant*, said: "CSW calls for the immediate release of all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, an end to military offensives against civilians, and an end to violations of religious freedom. In addition to a commission of inquiry, CSW urges the UN Security Council to introduce a universal arms embargo on the regime. CSW calls on the international community to reject the regime's sham elections, and to increase pressure on the regime to engage in a meaningful tripartite dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi, the democracy movement and the ethnic nationalities."

### Notes to Editors:

1. New election laws introduced in Burma by the regime this year effectively barred Aung San Suu Kyi and other prisoners from taking part in the elections, and as a result her party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), refused to register as a political party and thus became a banned organization. The law, based on a constitution imposed after a sham referendum in 2008, introduced conditions that left the NLD little alternative but to boycott the elections.
2. The human rights situation in Burma is among the worst in the world. Over 2100 political prisoners remain in jail subjected to torture, denial of medical treatment, and dire living

conditions. In eastern Burma, over 3,500 villages have been destroyed and at least half a million people internally displaced. Civilians in Karen, Karenni and Shan states are sometimes killed at point-blank range. Forced labour and rape as a weapon of war are widespread and systematic, and the use of child soldiers and human minesweepers is common. In western and northern Burma, the predominantly Christian Chin and Kachin peoples, and the Muslim Rohingyas, are subjected to severe religious discrimination and persecution. Christians and Muslims in urban areas also face serious restrictions and discrimination. Buddhist monks who led peaceful pro-democracy demonstrations in 2007 have been beaten, tortured and sentenced to long prison terms.

3. CSW's **Change For Burma!** Campaign, with Partners Relief and Development, is calling for a UN Commission of Inquiry into Burma's crimes against humanity. Further details can be found on <http://www.changeforburma.org>
4. Benedict Rogers has written the first ever biography of Burma's dictator, Senior General Than Shwe, titled *Than Shwe: Unmasking Burma's Tyrant*, and published in 2010 by Silkworm Books. The book will be launched on 1 July at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand, and on 14 July at the House of Commons in London.