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BURMA First ever biography of Burmese dictator Than Shwe launched by CSW's Burma specialist

The first ever biography of Burma's dictator Senior General Than Shwe will be launched tomorrow at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand (FCCT) in Bangkok, and on 14 July at the House of Commons in London.

Than Shwe: Unmasking Burma's Tyrant is authored by Benedict Rogers, East Asia Team Leader at Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), and published by Silkworm Books. Former Czech President Vaclav Havel wrote the foreword.

The book tells the story of one of the world's most brutal dictators, and of the suffering of the people of Burma under his rule. Drawing on his own personal travels to Burma and its borders, and interviews with Burmese defectors and international diplomats, Benedict Rogers explores the life of Than Shwe, his developing nuclear program, links with North Korea, arms sales from China, the new capital, Naypyidaw, Than Shwe's skills in psychological warfare and his belief in astrology, and the war crimes and crimes against humanity perpetrated by Than Shwe's regime.

Former UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Burma Yozo Yokota describes the book as "a valuable resource for anyone who wants to understand Burma".

Sean Turnell, a Burma expert at Macquarie University in Australia, says: "In this path-breaking book, Benedict Rogers shines a light into some of the darkest corners of Burma's military dystopia Meticulously researched, powerfully written, and provocatively argued, this book deserves a place on the bookshelf of all of those interested in Burma, in Southeast Asia, and in the eternal struggle against tyranny and injustice".

Tomorrow's launch at the FCCT in Bangkok will be followed by an event in the UK Parliament on 14 July, hosted by the Speaker of the House of Commons, John Bercow MP, in Speaker's House. John Bercow, who travelled with CSW to the Thailand-Burma border in 2004 and the India-Burma border in 2007, was elected Speaker in 2009. "Few people have spent a longer time in Burma, have studied the country in more detail, or have a more instinctive affinity with the plight of the people of that country than Benedict Rogers," said Mr Bercow. The book, he added, "is a hugely important study of a man who has perpetrated many crimes against humanity. It is a book as enlightening as it is chilling."

Benedict Rogers said: "I wrote this book in order once again to turn the spotlight on Than Shwe's brutal regime in Burma and its crimes against humanity, and I hope that in some way this will be a contribution towards galvanizing international opinion for the establishment of a UN commission of inquiry to investigate the regime's war crimes and crimes against humanity."

Notes to Editors:

1. For further information about the book, please see <http://www.silkwormbooks.com/catalog/info/than-shwe/>

2. For further details of the book launch at the FCCT, see <http://www.fccthai.com/>