

Burma Hostilities Demand International Intervention

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) is calling on the international community to invoke the “Responsibility to Protect” principle, in light of the Burmese Government’s failure to end the conflict in Arakan State, western Burma, between Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims.

Under the principle of “Responsibility to Protect,” which is aimed at halting Mass Atrocity Crimes such as ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, the international community has a responsibility to help states fulfill their responsibility to protect their citizens.

In the past week, thousands of homes in Arakan State have been destroyed, hundreds of people killed and over 100,000 displaced. Mosques have been attacked, and religious clerics arrested. Although violence has been committed by both communities, the Rohingyas have been the primary victims of what increasingly appears to be a systematic campaign of ethnic cleansing.

Reports indicate that some elements among the security forces are acting in collusion with Rakhine mobs, attacking, arresting and killing Rohingyas, and it is widely believed that elements of the government are directing a policy to eliminate the Rohingyas. CSW urges the international community to put pressure on the Government of Burma to allow international observers to maintain a presence in the affected areas. CSW also calls for urgent humanitarian aid, and for unrestricted access for U.N. agencies and international non-governmental organizations to the affected areas.

The Rohingyas are among the most persecuted peoples in Burma. In 1982, a new citizenship law removed their citizenship and

rendered them stateless. Violence erupted in June, lasting several weeks, and broke out again last week.

“This crisis is a cause for very grave concern, and poses a serious threat to peace and democratization in Burma,” said Andrew Johnston, CSW’s advocacy director. The recent violence is especially troubling because it appears to have escalated into a wider anti-Muslim campaign, with Muslims generally, not only Rohingyas, facing attacks.

“There is an urgent need for international action and aid to bring an end to this violence, which has caused so much death, destruction and displacement. Longer-term, questions of citizenship and inter-racial and inter-religious harmony and reconciliation must be addressed, but right now the priority must be restoring peace and providing urgently needed aid to the affected areas.”