



EUROPEAN UNION



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PRESSE 115

**Declaration by the High Representative for Foreign Affairs  
and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, on behalf of the  
European Union, on the unfolding situation in Syria**

The EU expresses its grave concern about the situation unfolding in Syria and the deployment of military and security forces in a number of Syrian cities. It strongly condemns unacceptable violence against peaceful demonstrators, the increasing number of fatalities and calls on the Syrian security forces to exercise restraint instead of repression.

The EU urges the Syrian Government to address the legitimate demands of the Syrian people through political reforms which must be brought forward and implemented without delay in the framework of a process of inclusive national dialogue.

The EU deeply regrets that the lifting of the Emergency Law has not translated into practice.

The EU reminds the Syrian authorities of their obligation to respect Human Rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression and the rights of peaceful assembly, as well as free access of the media and to respect the integrity and dignity of arrested persons and their right to a fair legal process. The EU calls for an immediate release of political prisoners and human rights defenders.

In light of the continuing violence and in order to promote a democratic process, the EU has launched its internal procedures for an embargo on arms and equipment used for internal repression and will urgently consider further appropriate and targeted measures with the aim of achieving an immediate change of policy by the Syrian leadership. In addition, the EU will not take further steps with regard to taking forward the Association Agreement. The EU will review all aspects of its cooperation with the Syrian authorities including under the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument.

**P R E S S**

The EU welcomes the adoption of the resolution by the special session of the UN Human Rights Council on 29 April on the situation in Syria, including the sending by the UN Commissioner for Human Rights of a fact-finding mission to investigate all violations of international human rights and to establish facts. The EU recalls that all members of the Human Rights Council should abide with the highest Human Rights standards.

The Candidate Countries Croatia\*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia\*, Montenegro\* and Iceland<sup>+</sup>, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Albania, and the EFTA country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

\* Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

<sup>+</sup> Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

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