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Statement by the EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on violence in Syria

Catherine Ashton, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, issued today the following statement:

"I strongly condemn the brutal violence and killing of dozens of civilians yesterday in the villages of Qubair and Maarzaf in Hama province of Syria, many of them women and children. The Syrian government has the responsibility to protect its people. It is important to establish without delay who is responsible for the killings. It is totally unacceptable and unforgivable that any party to the Syrian conflict, either government or opposition forces, continues to commit these heinous acts of violence against innocent Syrian citizens.

The EU strongly condemns all efforts aimed at obstructing the implementation of Special Envoy Kofi Annan's six point plan.

I call for a full investigation of the horrendous crimes and support all efforts to this end. There is an imperative need now, more than ever, to support those working to end this dreadful spiral of violence in which the innocent are the victims. Those guilty of these atrocities must be brought rapidly to justice.

I also call on the international community to unite behind a political process leading to a democratic transition. I have just held discussions on Syria with Russia in the EU-Russia Summit. I also participated in the Istanbul meeting yesterday. The message is clear: it is time for us to agree on a united way forward. There is no time to lose. The UN Security Council must continue to support Kofi Annan and use all its influence to stop the violence.

I also want to recall my strong message of support for the Syrian people in this time of suffering. Humanitarian assistance must be allowed unimpeded access to all those in need of such assistance. The EU remains committed to their struggle for freedom, dignity and democracy."

P R E S S

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