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9th European Day in Remembrance of Victims of Terrorism

On 11 March 2013 the European Union commemorates the 9th European Day in Remembrance of Victims of Terrorism. On this occasion, the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, Gilles de Kerchove, would like to make the following statement:

Nine years have passed since the Madrid bombings, but Europe is still confronting terrorism. The London bombings, the horrible attacks in Norway and France, the discovery of the atrocities of a right-wing extremist group in Germany, and also the more recent attack in Bulgaria all serve as grim reminders that the terrorist threat - whether it stems from terrorist organisations or lone actors - remains real.

Today, we remember and mourn for all those who have experienced firsthand the pain inflicted by terrorism in Europe and elsewhere in the world.

All acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, wherever they took place or whoever committed them. Therefore, our resolve to defeat terrorism must never weaken or falter even for a day, and our support to victims to meet their needs must remain a priority, as well as our commitment to actively promoting a policy of international solidarity.

P R E S S

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The EU has strengthened the rights of victims, including the victims of terrorism, by adopting in October 2012 the *Directive establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime*, which establishes minimum standards for the level of protection, support and access to justice for victims in all EU countries.

The criminal justice approach towards terrorism is not only effective, but also by a public court hearing provides visible justice to the victims and their families.

In recent years, I have spoken and listened to victims of terrorism. Although shaken to the very core of their souls, many victims managed to turn their pain into positive action, and while always remembering the tragic events of the past, they showed the perseverance and the courage to rebuild their lives and embrace the future. Victims are to be commended for their courage and dignity.

Therefore, we must ensure that those survivors who wish to share their stories have the opportunity to do so, and not only today. We must maintain our efforts to make the voices of victims of terrorism heard. And although such awareness efforts are tainted with pain and suffering, they are a powerful tool in discouraging radicalised individuals and empowering other victims to speak out against violent extremism and terrorism.

Victims' testimonies are indispensable in the recognition of the dangers of terrorism, which unfortunately will not disappear in the near future.

The French military support to the Malian army to win back the North and the deaths of a number of top leaders were a serious setback to Al-Qaida and its affiliates, but we know that terrorists are constantly seeking out new safe havens where they have space to operate, taking advantage of conflict situations.

While the vast majority of people opposing the Assad regime are fighting for their own future, Syria has also turned into a destination for European jihadists, who want to profit from the situation there and who may also pose a threat to our societies upon their return. The situations in Pakistan, Nigeria, Yemen and the Horn of Africa remain unstable. The security situation in the Maghreb and the Sahel has to be watched closely, as recent setbacks such as the assassination of an opposition leader in Tunisia, the attacks against the UK Ambassador and the US consulate in Benghazi and the attack in In Amenas have demonstrated.

We must continue to help vulnerable countries address injustices, to combat terrorist ideology and to develop their law enforcement and counter-terrorism capabilities in a way that complies with human rights and the rule of law. As a democracy we must hold ourselves to the highest standards. We must not only stay committed to our ideas but we must also promote our principles, as well as human rights.

Together, we must continue to fight terrorism in and outside Europe since far too many people have fallen victim to it.
