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**Statement by High Representative Catherine Ashton on behalf
of the EU on EU action following the escalation of violent
repression in Syria**

The EU condemns in the strongest terms the brutal campaign Bashar al-Assad and his regime are waging against their own people. In recent weeks the Syrian leadership has stepped up its violent crackdown against peaceful protesters and resorted to large-scale use of military force in the cities of Hama, Deir al-Zour and Lattakia. This has led to the killing or injury of many Syrian citizens. Further casualties and new refugees were reported after the Palestinian camp of al-Ramal was attacked. These developments are unacceptable and intolerable.

The EU has repeatedly emphasised that the brutal repression must be stopped, detained protesters released, free access by international humanitarian and human rights organizations and media allowed, and a genuine and inclusive national dialogue launched. The Syrian leadership, however, has remained defiant to calls from the EU as well as the broad international community including Syria's own neighbours. This shows that the Syrian regime is unwilling to change. The President's promises of reform have lost all credibility as reforms cannot succeed under permanent repression. The EU notes the complete loss of Bashar al-Assad's legitimacy in the eyes of the Syrian people and the necessity for him to step aside.

At the same time, the EU is proceeding to further action. We have been reaching out to our partners in the region and calling for a Special Session of the UN Human Rights Council on Syria. The addition of further names to the list of those targeted by the EU restrictive measures is under preparation. Moreover, the EU is moving ahead with discussing further restrictive measures that will broaden its sanctions against the Syrian regime. By these efforts we continue to aim at assisting the Syrian people to achieve their legitimate aspirations.

P R E S S

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