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

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

"I strongly condemn the continuing violence and deaths in Syria in the context of protests calling for freedom and democracy. I sincerely regret the loss of life, particularly in the Southern city of Daraa, and extend my condolences to the families of the victims.

I urge in the strongest terms the Syrian authorities to immediately put an end to the violence. I cannot emphasise enough the responsibility of the state to protect all citizens and respect the right of peaceful protest and free speech.

The announcements made by the Syrian authorities to launch reforms must be backed by credible action on the ground. The Syrian people must be allowed to express their grievances without fear of intimidation, repression and arrest. Meaningful political reforms guaranteeing freedom of expression, fundamental rights and the rule of law must begin now."

P R E S S

FOR FURTHER DETAILS:
Michael Mann +32 498 999 780 - +32 2 299 97 80 - Michael.Mann@ec.europa.eu
Maja Kocijancic +32 498 984 425 - +32 2 298 65 70 - Maja.Kocijancic@ec.europa.eu
COMM-SPP-HRVP-ASHTON@ec.europa.eu
www.eeas.europa.eu

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