EUROPEAN UNION

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Statement by the High Representative, Catherine Ashton, on the crackdown of demonstrations in Syria

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

"I am deeply concerned by the events in Damascus on 16 March whereby peaceful demonstrators demanding the release of prisoners of conscience were violently dispersed by police and many of them arrested and referred to justice.

I am calling on the Syrian authorities to ensure the protection of peaceful demonstrators and to uphold the right to freedom of expression and assembly.

The detained peaceful demonstrators must be released immediately and unconditionally. Dialogue, human rights and fundamental freedoms must prevail in accordance with Syria's international commitments."

P R E S S

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