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Statement by the High Representative, Catherine Ashton, on violent repressions 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 condemn the use of brutal force against demonstrators across Syria, which is resulting in high numbers of victims. The Syrian authorities must immediately stop their violent response and fully respect citizens' right to peaceful demonstrations.

I deeply regret the death of many protesters on Friday 21 April, and offer my condolences to their families. The killings are appalling and intolerable. All those responsible for these crimes must be brought to justice and held accountable for their actions.

I noted President Assad's announcement of three decrees on Thursday 20 April, related to the lifting of the state of emergency, abolition of the Higher State Security Court and a right to peaceful protests. However, credible reform can only be measured by real improvements on the ground. I call on the Syrian government to carry out profound political reforms, starting with the respect for basic rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. It is essential that these reforms begin now and follow a concrete timetable.

I reiterate that the EU stands ready to support, once launched, a genuine reform process in Syria. That process can only be made possible by putting an immediate end to all repressive violence."

P R E S S

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