



17 March 2011

Mrs Catherine Ashton
High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Bxl 12/202
Rue de la Loi 200
1049 Brussels

Dear Mrs. Ashton,

Violent suppression of peaceful demonstrations in Bahrain

The use of violence by security forces in Bahrain against the peaceful protests of unarmed citizens must be condemned in the strongest possible terms. The reports of indiscriminate use of lethal force against the non violent protests as well as towards doctors and paramedics who are trying to treat the injured, demonstrates a policy of gross intimidation against opponents of the Bahraini regime. The imposition of martial law, the regime's request for military assistance from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates emphasizes further the intentions of the regime to resist any significant changes to the political system.

The acts to suppress the demonstrations are a blatant infringement of international law for which the Bahraini authorities must be held accountable. The peaceful protests are a manifestation of the people's aspirations for reform in the country towards a more democratic and inclusive society. As such they are a legitimate expression of internationally recognized goals and should be allowed to take place, not be met with violence and repressed.

The wave of popular peaceful demonstrations across the Arab region that are calling for political reform and the establishment of more just, democratic and inclusive societies and systems of governance must be welcomed and supported since they are legitimate aspirations and basic Human Rights. These aspirations are completely compatible with the values on which the European Union is founded, and with the principles and values of the EU's external policies.

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We urge you as High Representative of the European Union to make representation to the King of Bahrain and Bahraini Prime Minister in the strongest possible terms calling for an immediate end to the violence being perpetrated by the security forces on peaceful citizens, to take immediate measures to protect civilians in accordance with international and humanitarian law, and to respond to the demands of people through a process of constructive dialogue. We also urge you to call on King Abdulla Ben Abdel Aziz of Saudia Arabia, and Sheikh Khalifa Ben Zayed of the United Arab Emirates to withdraw their troops from Bahrain and to refrain from any involvement in the repression of peaceful expressions by the Bahraini people.

As has been recognised all too clearly in the context of Egypt and Tunisia the credibility of the EU will be judged by its willingness to act in accordance with the values and principles to which it espouses, and which are enshrined in the Treaties of the Union.

Sincerely



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