



European Union

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18th Special Session

(2 December 2011)

Human Rights Situation in the Syrian Arab Republic

Statement by

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**Permanent Representative of Poland
to the United Nations Office in Geneva**

on behalf of the European Union

Geneva, 2 December 2011

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Madame President,

I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro*¹ and Iceland**², the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA country Liechtenstein, member of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

First of all, let me express Madame President, my deep regret over the fact that we meet again in this Council to discuss the grave human rights situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. The initiative is particularly timely, in the context of disturbing facts established by the independent Commission of Inquiry, set up by this Council in the resolution S-17/1.

The information gathered by the Commission is extremely alarming and gives evidence that widespread and systematic human rights violations are being committed by the Syrian authorities and their armed and security forces.

Madame President,

It is each state's primary responsibility to protect its population. However, it is obvious, that the Syrian authorities fail to fulfil this duty and as the Commission of Inquiry has established – the Syrian military and security forces have committed crimes against humanity. In such situation, when a State is manifestly failing to meet its responsibility to protect its population from international crimes, it is the international community, which should step in by taking proactive action in a collective, timely and decisive manner. That is why, the international community has to react and stand up for the rights of Syrians, whose human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to life, are being violated. We must condemn in the strongest terms the brutal campaign the Syrian authorities are waging against their own people. Perpetrators of the human rights violations must be held to account, in particular those who committed crimes that may warrant the attention of the International Criminal Court. This report deserves full consideration not only by this Council, but by all relevant UN bodies, including the Security Council. The international community must do everything in its power to stop the violence in Syria.

¹ *Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

² **Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

Madame President,

In line with the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry, we urge the Syrian government to put an immediate end to the ongoing gross human rights violations and to initiate an independent, impartial investigation of these violations in conformity with international standards with a view to bringing perpetrators to justice.

We are appalled at the cases of torture and sexual violence, excessive use of force, extrajudicial executions and arbitrary detention documented by the Commission. It is shocking that all those violations were committed indiscriminately, also against children. They constitute a blatant breach of Syria's obligations under international human rights law. These repressions must be stopped immediately, detained protesters must be released, and full and free access must be granted to international humanitarian and human rights organizations and the media.

Madame President,

We deeply regret that in spite of numerous attempts of regional organizations, and especially the League of Arab States, as well as repeated calls from the international community, the Syrian authorities have not implemented reforms enabling peaceful transformation of the Syrian social and political life.

Instead, the Government has further restricted freedoms of peaceful assembly and expression which constitute the core of all democratic societies. By its actions, the Government of Syria has made itself illegitimate in the eyes of the population. President Assad must step aside and allow a process of real political reform.

Finally, Madame President,

The European Union expresses deep regret over the fact that the Syrian authorities have not cooperated with the independent Commission of Inquiry. We commend the members of the Commission, who nevertheless have managed to gather invaluable and factual information that did help to ensure informing international community on the human rights situation in the country and to form a basis to ensure that the perpetrators of the ongoing violations will be held accountable.

In this context, the European Union has tabled a resolution proposing a follow-up to the work of the Commission of Inquiry by [the establishment of a mandate of Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Syria, who would continue the work of the Commission, once its mandate comes to an end].

We hope that this Council will adopt the resolution by consensus to convey a strong message to the Syrian authorities and the Syrian people.

Thank you, Madame President.