STATEMENT

by the Spokesperson of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on Guinea-Bissau

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

"The High Representative expresses her grave concern at the serious incident of 10 December 2013 in which a TAP-Air Portugal crew was compelled by a senior member of the transitional authorities of Guinea Bissau, accompanied by military personnel, to carry 74 presumed Syrian nationals with illegal passports from Bissau to Lisbon, in complete disregard of international law. This raises serious questions about the effectiveness of the rule of law in Guinea-Bissau and the willingness of the authorities themselves to respect it.

The High Representative calls on the transitional authorities to take urgently the appropriate measures to avoid any repetition of such incidents and to comply fully with their international and national legal obligations.

The High Representative also calls on the transitional authorities to honour their commitments to combat impunity and to organize free, fair and inclusive elections on 16 March 2014 allowing for the return to constitutional order, democracy and rule of law in Guinea-Bissau."

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