Statement by the High Representative, Catherine Ashton, on Yemen

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 gravely concerned by reports of violent repression, including live ammunition, against demonstrators in some of Yemen's major cities on 3 and 4 April which have caused many deaths and injuries.

Contrary to earlier commitments, freedom of expression and security of peaceful demonstrators is not being guaranteed. I spoke to President Saleh last week and urged him to honour these commitments and instruct the forces responsible to cease all violence immediately. This must be done without delay. The Government and the security forces must respect and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

I am also very concerned about the deterioration of the security and economic situation. I reiterate my call for an orderly political transition to begin without delay in order to resolve the current crisis and pave the way to reforms. This is the message I personally conveyed to the President last week. Transition must begin now."

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