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Statement by the spokesperson of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the situation in Egypt ahead of the Presidential elections 23-24 May

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

"The EU is following closely the domestic situation in Egypt ahead of the Presidential elections planned for 23-24 May 2012.

The EU welcomes the Egyptian Supreme Presidential Election Committee’s decision to invite members of other countries’ election authorities to witness the presidential elections. This is a very encouraging step in Egypt’s transition to an open and democratic society to which the EU is responding positively.

However, the EU is very concerned about last week’s outbreak of violence and deeply regrets the loss of life and the many injuries. It calls on all parties to show restraint and to focus on the achievement of a peaceful transition as the country moves to elect its President and to hand over power to the new civilian authorities by the end of June.

The EU reiterates the interim authorities’ responsibility during the transition to uphold the full respect for fundamental human rights, including fair trial rights, in the interest of developing deep democracy, and to respond to the legitimate demands and aspirations of the Egyptian people. The trial of Asmaa Mahfouz is a case in point and is of great concern, as have been other instances of pressure on peaceful civil society actors."

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