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## STATEMENT

### **by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on political prisoners in Eritrea**

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

*"I remain deeply concerned that the Government of the State of Eritrea continues to violate its human rights obligations, under both domestic and international law. I refer in particular to the continued detention without charge, trial or legal counsel – since 18 September 2001 – of eleven prominent members of Parliament and of the People's Front for Democracy and Justice, and also – since 23 September 2001 – of ten independent journalists, including the Eritrean-EU citizen Dawit Isaak. Despite repeated appeals by the international community, including by the UN Human Rights Council and the EU, these people have been detained for the last twelve years without any contact with the outside world, and with all their rights suspended.*

*While in 2013 some journalists and media operators were freed, there were allegations of new arrests and detention without trial, including following the 21st January 2013 events. I am also very concerned about the reported deaths of some of the political prisoners and the deterioration of the medical situation of others.*

*The continued lack of information on the whereabouts and the access to health care of the detainees is in clear violation of several human rights obligations, such as the prohibition of arbitrary detention and the right of anyone deprived of his or her liberty to be treated with*

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*human dignity. These are enshrined in the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which has been ratified by Eritrea.*

*I strongly urge the Government of the State of Eritrea to release these prisoners immediately and unconditionally, along with other persons detained for their political views. I request the Government of the State of Eritrea to make public all information on the whereabouts of these prisoners and to allow them access to their families and lawyers not least on humanitarian grounds.*

*The Government of the State of Eritrea must honour its international human rights obligations and to co-operate fully with the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Eritrea and to seize the opportunity of the upcoming second cycle of the UN Universal Periodic Review to engage with the international community on the situation of human rights in Eritrea."*

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