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S T A T E M E N T

by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the 3rd Anniversary of the Syrian uprising

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

"The horrific conflict in Syria is entering its fourth year. With more than 100,000 dead, 2 million refugees and 9.3 million Syrians in need of humanitarian assistance, half of them children, the tragedy in Syria has no parallel in recent history. The international community has a responsibility to bring it to an end. The only solution to the crisis is a political one: the establishment of a transitional governing body, and a genuine Syrian-led inclusive political process to establish a democratic and pluralistic Syria.

The EU is particularly concerned at the plight of the most vulnerable groups. More than ten thousand women have died in the conflict; 4.3 million children, most of them displaced from their homes, are in desperate need of food, shelter and education. With support now totalling more than €2.6 billion, the EU is the leading donor to the victims both inside and outside Syria. We salute the people and governments of the countries neighbouring Syria for hosting an ever-growing number of refugees. The EU will continue to support the host communities in their efforts to cope with this situation. We call on all parties, especially the Syrian government, which bears the primary responsibility for the humanitarian tragedy, to swiftly fulfil all obligations imposed on them by UNSC resolution 2139, and calls for a robust use of the review mechanism to enforce compliance.

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I am extremely concerned by the findings of the international independent Commission of Inquiry, whose seventh report confirmed the regime's indiscriminate use of murder, torture, rape, hostage-taking, and sexual violence. These are crimes against humanity, war crimes and blatant breaches of international human rights and humanitarian law. A crisis which began with a vicious military crackdown against peaceful protesters has been exacerbated by terrorism and a growing number of foreign fighters. War crimes committed by non-state armed groups which do not seek a free, democratic and prosperous Syria are adding to the ongoing tragedy of the Syrian people. There will be no impunity for such actions by any parties to the conflict.

While there has been some progress on the destruction of chemical weapon materials, it is vital that the Syrian regime complies with the 30 June 2014 deadline as specified in UNSC resolution 2118.

I reiterate the EU's determination to seek a political settlement and to help the Syrian people. The international community will continue to work together for a free, democratic and peaceful Syria."
