



Baroness Catherine Ashton of Upholland
Vice-President/High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Rue de la Loi 200
1049 Brussels

Brussels, 7 December 2012

Honourable Baroness Ashton,

The internet blackout in Syria from 29 November to 1 December led to serious concern by the international community. Fears arose of massive military reprisals by the Syrian government against armed opposition strongholds and the civilian population of cities and villages under opposition control. Besides the impacts such as limited access to information, and the inability to contact family or emergency services, cut off from the world and with very few international journalists on the ground, the shelling, bombardments and other war crimes against the civilian population would easily go unnoticed. The documenting and sharing of human rights violations increasingly happens with the help of technologies and internet.

While internet access and mobile communications have been partly restored, impunity remains for all the gruesome violence that has been documented, shared online and globally distributed for the past two years. Images and videos, often captured by brave Syrians risking their lives by shooting the footage and smuggling USB sticks to neighbouring borders, have made the world eyewitness to often unimaginable brutal acts of violence. Experts believe the atrocities committed in Syria amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity. The EU should work relentlessly to hold those responsible accountable and to fight impunity.

The European Parliament has consistently supported various calls by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Navi Pillay, to mandate the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate the situation in Syria and to formally investigate human rights violations. We believe that the formal involvement of the ICC and possible future indictments of those responsible for the violence against the Syrian people, accountability for President Bashar al-Assad and his inner-circle, can further delegitimize the Syrian regime while simultaneously sending a warning to the opposition forces to abide by international legal standards.

We call on you to ensure that the Foreign Affairs Council, convening on Monday 10 December, the International Day of Human Rights and the day the EU will receive the Nobel Peace Prize, will conclude that the EU and all its 27 Member States will join the Swiss-initiated global effort that seeks the referral of the violence in Syria by the UNSC to the ICC. We consider the office of the HR/VP the responsible focal

point to lead this European effort and urge you to personally engage in building a large and inclusive international coalition to impel all permanent members of the UNSC to support such a referral. We consider that EU delegations should also be conducive to this important effort.

Finally, we ask you to financially support initiatives, either outside or in Syria, which help end impunity by facilitating the documentation of violence and human rights violations. This documentation will be instrumental in the gathering of evidence that may be used in international courts in the future. These efforts will be essential for justice to take its course.

Marietje Schaake (ALDE)
Franziska Kahtarina Brantner (GREENS)
Hans van Baalen (VVD)
Frieda Brepoels (S&D)
Tarja Cronberg (GREENS)
Mario David (EPP)
Anne Delvaux (EPP)
Leonidas Donskis (ALDE)
Andrew Duff (ALDE)
Ana Gomes (S&D)
Jelco Kacin (ALDE)
Veronique De Keyser (S&D)
Jorg Leichtfried (S&D)
Barbara Lochbihler (GREENS)
Sarah Ludford (ALDE)
María Muniz De Urquiza (S&D)
Edward McMillan-Scott (ALDE)
Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck (ALDE)
Joanna Senyszyn (S&D)
Niccolo Rinaldi (ALDE)
Rui Tavares (GREENS)
Ivo Vajgl (ALDE)
Graham Watson (ALDE)
Renate Weber (ALDE)
Boris Zala (S&D)