

P R E S S R E L E A S E

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**Declaration by the European Union
on the situation in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**

The European Union strongly condemns the renewed acts of violence by ethnic Albanian extremists in the northern region of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, including the killing of two soldiers, the occupation of several villages and the taking of hostages. The European Union calls upon the extremists to stop the violence, to release the hostages and withdraw immediately.

The European Union emphasises its continuing strong support for the process of inter-ethnic dialogue that was recently launched by the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia authorities. The latest provocations underline the need for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia government to continue to show restraint and for leaders of all political parties to support the process of peaceful dialogue, to isolate extremists, to condemn the violence and to urge their supporters to remain calm. The European Union condemns the vicious circle of violence and counter-violence from whatever quarter.

The Union also urges ethnic Albanian leaders in Kosovo and political leaders in Albania to condemn unambiguously these acts of terrorism and to use their influence to prevent the violence, which threatens the stability of the whole region.

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