

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

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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
on the situation in Afghanistan**

The EU is deeply concerned by international reports of massacres of innocent civilians, of mass executions of prisoners of war in northern Afghanistan and of air and rocket attacks on residential areas. Of particular concern are reports of killings of Hazaras in Mazar-e-Sharif.

The EU recalls the Common Position on Afghanistan and the EU's condemnation of the killing of Iranian diplomats during recent fighting in Mazar-e-Sharif.

The EU calls upon the Taliban to provide security guarantees to permit an international investigation of these crimes, which should be carried out as soon as possible.

The EU asks all parties involved to fully respect international humanitarian law and human rights in all parts of Afghanistan and would welcome an international presence, particularly in Bamyan province, to observe compliance with these rights. The non-compliance with the basic principles of international law is a major factor in an alarming situation of tensions in the region, in particular between Iran and the Taliban.

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The EU will continue to give its full support to UN efforts to promote peace and stability in Afghanistan as well as to further action deemed necessary by the Security Council. The EU welcomes the intention of the UN to send an evaluation team to Bamyan province to assess the humanitarian needs of the civilian population.

The EU welcomes the proposal of the UN-Secretary General to send his Special Envoy, Lakhdar Brahimi, back to the region for further negotiations.

The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union, the associated country Cyprus and the EFTA countries, members of the European Economic Area align themselves with this declaration.