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**Statement by the spokesperson of
EU High Representative Catherine Ashton
on the crackdown on independent media in Belarus**

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

“The High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy is deeply concerned by news of the detention of Mr. Andrzej Poczobut, a correspondent for the Polish newspaper Gazeta Wyborcza, during his journey to the EU Delegation to Belarus in Minsk.

This is yet another example of ongoing human rights violations conducted by the authorities in Belarus since the presidential elections on 19 December 2010. The EU strongly condemns all harassment, arrests, and intimidation of representatives of the Belarusian independent media as well as violations of the fundamental human rights such as freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and freedom of the media.

The EU calls upon the Belarusian authorities to end at once the prosecution of independent journalists for slander or other politically-motivated charges. The EU also urges the Belarusian authorities to cooperate fully with the OSCE representative on Freedom of the Media.”

P R E S S

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