



EUROPEAN UNION



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**Declaration by High Representative Catherine Ashton
on behalf of the European Union on Syria Human rights cases**

The EU strongly condemns the sentencing of Mr. Haitham Al Maleh and Mr. Muhannad Al Hassani, two Syrian lawyers, to three years in prison respectively, on charges that appear to be in breach of their fundamental rights and freedoms.

The EU also deeply deplores the renewed arrest on 17 June of Mr. Ali Al-Abdullah, a Syrian writer, a day after his release from prison having completed his previous sentence.

The EU is in particular gravely concerned by the situation of Mr. Al Maleh, due to his fragile health and advanced age.

The EU calls for the immediate release of MM. Al Maleh, Al Hassani and Al-Abudullah.

The EU calls on the Syrian Government to reconsider all cases of prisoners of conscience in accordance with its national Constitution and its international commitments and to immediately release all such prisoners.

The EU considers that the above convictions undermine the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of association and calls on Syria to abide by the international commitments it freely entered into, in particular under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which guarantees freedom of opinion and of expression and the right to a fair trial.

P R E S S

The EU also recalls that, in line with the United Nations “Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms” Syria has a prime responsibility and duty to protect and promote the work of human rights defenders.

The EU reiterates its commitment to the protection and support to Human Rights Defenders, according to the EU guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the European Council in June 2004.

The Candidate Countries, Croatia*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* and Iceland⁺, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and the EFTA countries Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

⁺ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.
