

STATEMENT
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**Joint statement by the President of the European Council,
Herman Van Rompuy, and the President of the European Commission,
José Manuel Barroso in the name of the European Union
on the situation in Gaza**

Gaza has been suffering from intolerable violence for more than three weeks already. We deplore the terrible loss of lives, including innocent women and children. Many have been injured, property and livelihoods have been destroyed. This needs to stop immediately. We strongly condemn continued rocket fire over Israel. It constitutes an unacceptable threat to its citizens. Israel has the right to live in peace in its recognised borders. Legitimate defence needs to maintain proportionality. We have all seen these cycles in the past and we know that there are limits regarding what military operations can achieve. Only a negotiated solution, based on two States, living side by side and respectful of each other, will bring lasting peace. The bloodshed needs to stop. Today we join our voice to those of the Secretary General of the United Nations and other international leaders that are calling on both sides to put an end to hostilities. We are ready to support actively negotiations, confidence building measures, reconstruction and reconciliation efforts. No more lives should be wasted. Palestinian and Israeli leaders need to exercise courage by putting an end to this senseless violence. They also need to exercise courage and wisdom to move beyond these cycles of violence and advance towards arrangements that will ensure peaceful and dignified coexistence, based on mutual respect.