

СЪОБЩЕНИЕ ЗА ПЕЧАТА

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Invitation letter by President Charles Michel to the members of the European Council ahead of their video conference of 17 October 2023

Hamas' brutal terrorist attacks against Israel last Saturday resulted in the tragic loss of over a thousand innocent Israeli civilians. Hostages must be released immediately and without any preconditions. There is no justification for terror.

We stand in full solidarity with the people of Israel and the victims of the terrorist attacks. Israel has the right to defend itself in full compliance with international law, in particular international humanitarian law.

The unfolding tragic scenes in the Gaza Strip resulting from the siege and the lack of basic needs combined with the destruction brought by significant shelling, are raising alarm bells in the international community.

In light of this, I would like to convene an extraordinary European Council meeting, to be held by video conference on Tuesday, October 17 at 5:30 pm. It is of utmost importance that the European Council, in line with the Treaties and our values, sets our common position and establishes a clear unified course of action that reflects the complexity of the unfolding situation.

This conflict has many consequences, including for us in the European Union.

First, the Union has always been and must always be a steadfast advocate for peace and respect for international law, as in the case of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The Union must work towards providing humanitarian assistance and avoiding a regional escalation of the conflict and any breaches of humanitarian law.

Second, strong engagement with regional actors is key as they are the most impacted by the conflict and can play an effective role. We should never lose sight of the importance of seeking a lasting and sustainable peace based on a two-state solution through reinvigorated efforts in the Middle East Peace Process.

Third, the conflict could have major security consequences for our societies. If we are not careful, it has the potential to exacerbate tensions between communities and feed extremism.

Finally, there is a major risk of migration and movements of a large number of people to neighboring countries which already have a significant number of refugees on their territory. If not handled carefully, there is a risk of onward migratory waves to Europe.

It is imperative we address all these challenges together. Our unity is our strength;

I look forward to our exchange.

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