



EUROPEAN UNION

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**Statement by the spokesperson of Catherine Ashton, EU High Representative on the killing of the head of Afghanistan's High Peace Council**

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:

*"Catherine Ashton, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice President of the European Commission, today strongly condemned the murder of Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani, the Head of Afghanistan's High Peace Council. She praised his relentless efforts in achieving peace and in reaching out to the Afghan nation.*

*The High Representative expressed her deep concern about the continued violence against Afghan officials and the Afghan Government as they are working hard to take their country towards a more secure and prosperous future. She stressed that such attacks only strengthen the resolve of the EU and international community at large to continue to work with the Afghan people as the nation has embarked on the path of reconciliation.*

*She expressed her heartfelt condolences to Professor Rabbani's family expressed hope for a full and speedy recovery of Masoom Stanekzai, the Head of the Joint Secretariat of the High Peace Council. She also extended her sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims of the attack."*

**P R E S S**

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## **BACKGROUND**

Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani, the head of Afghanistan's High Peace Council and appointed by President Karzai to begin peace talks with the Taliban, was assassinated on Tuesday evening. Professor Rabbani hailed from Afghanistan's Tajik community and was a leading figure of the Mujaheddin fighting against Soviet occupation but also against the Taliban. From 1992-96 he served as President for Afghanistan in Kabul until the city's takeover by the Taliban.

He was seen by many as a controversial choice to lead peace talks with the Taliban but represented an important majority of Afghanistan's northern populations.

In the attack, Mohammed Masoom Stanekzai, the Head of the Joint Secretariat of the High Peace Council was severely injured. He is a well-known and respected official who worked relentlessly with the international community on the reintegration programme for former insurgents.

This incident will not derail peace talks but Rabbani's assassination will harden views of those who are already most strongly opposed to peace talks with the insurgents. President Karzai has already cut short his visit to UNGA and will return to a difficult task finding a successor.

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