



EUROPEAN UNION

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Statement by the Spokespersons of Catherine Ashton, EU High Representative, and Hillary Rodham Clinton, U.S. Secretary of State

"Catherine Ashton, EU High Representative, and Hillary Rodham Clinton, U.S. Secretary of State regret the decision by the Government of Belarus to terminate the mission of the OSCE's Office in Minsk. The mandate of the mission is not completed, as the OSCE's critical assessment of the presidential elections indicates. The elections and their aftermath -- particularly the continuing detention of presidential candidates and new detentions and raids targeting the media -- represent a step backwards in the development of democratic governance in Belarus. They call for the immediate release of all detained.

They also reiterate their call on the Belarusian authorities to fulfill their commitments to the OSCE by reforming the election process and providing greater respect for human rights. The OSCE has carried out valuable work in the country, in particular in promoting institution building and the rule of law and supporting the development of civil society. The EU and U.S. remain willing to assist Belarus in meeting its OSCE commitments in the field of human rights and fundamental freedoms."

P R E S S

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