Catherine Ashton appoints Jean De Ruyt to advise on the EU's response to Camp Ashraf

High Representative / Vice-President Catherine Ashton announced today that she has appointed Jean De Ruyt to advise on the European Union's response to Camp Ashraf.

Ambassador De Ruyt is an experienced diplomat who was until now Belgium's Permanent Representative to the European Union. Taking up his new duties with immediate effect, and based in Brussels, he will work with the Member States, MEPs, the Government of Iraq, the United Nations, the United States and other partners to advise the High Representative on how to solve the situation in Camp Ashraf in line with humanitarian and human rights principles.

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Statement by the spokesperson of the EU High Representative, Catherine Ashton, on the arrest of 6 independent film-makers in Iran

The spokesperson of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice President of the Commission Catherine Ashton issued the following statement today:

"The High Representative condemns the recent arrest in Iran of six documentary film-makers, who are accused of working for the BBC Persian service, and calls for their immediate release. She is equally concerned at reports of harassment of several other people alleged to have links with the BBC Persian service.

This disturbing trend of arresting journalists, film-makers and artists in Iran on political grounds suggests that the Iranian authorities are determined to crack down on independent thought.

The High Representative calls on the Iranian authorities to respect the right to freedom of expression in line with their international human rights obligations and to stop the systematic prosecution and intimidation of journalists and artists."

P R E S S

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Statement by High Representative Catherine Ashton
on the execution of a juvenile offender in Iran

Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the Commission, issued the following statement today:

"I condemn in the strongest terms the public execution today of Mr Alireza Molla-Soltani in Iran. Mr Soltani was under 18 at the time of his alleged offence. This execution therefore stands in clear contravention to Iran's international obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The EU has expressed several times its concern at the alarming rate of executions in Iran this year and utterly condemns the practice of carrying them out in public or by suspension hanging. I reiterate the EU's call on Iran to declare a moratorium on the death penalty in line with the growing global trend towards abolition of this punishment."

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Statement on Iran by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton

on behalf of the E3/EU+3

Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the Commission, issued the following statement today:

"Today, I met with the Political Directors of China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States in order to assess the situation concerning the Iranian nuclear issue. We reaffirmed our determination and commitment to seek a diplomatic solution to this issue and focused our discussion on further practical steps to achieve it at an early date.

We discussed the recent developments of the Iranian nuclear programme as reflected in the latest IAEA report. In particular, we noted with grave concern Iran’s installation of centrifuges in its facility near Qom as part of plans to increase the capacity to enrich uranium to near 20% and the IAEA’s increasing concern about the possible military dimensions to Iran’s nuclear programme.

We remain determined and united in our efforts to work towards a comprehensive, negotiated, long-term solution – involving the full implementation by Iran of UNSC and IAEA Board of Governors Resolutions - which restores international confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme, while respecting Iran's legitimate right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy consistent with the NPT. In this regard, we reaffirmed the need for Iran to co-operate fully with the IAEA and to satisfactorily address all its concerns, including those on possible military dimensions to its nuclear programme, as reflected in IAEA reports.

For this purpose, over the past year we have made concrete and practical proposals for initial confidence building measures to Iran. We deeply regret that Iran has failed to respond in kind.
We reaffirm our offer of June 2008 and the proposals we made to Iran in Istanbul in January. We are ready to engage with Iran in a constructive dialogue on the basis of reciprocity and a step-by-step approach and we look to Iran to make clear that it is prepared to engage in the same spirit, in particular by demonstrating willingness to address the international community’s concerns about its nuclear programme, without preconditions.

We reaffirm our unity of purpose and collective determination through joint diplomatic efforts based on these principles and in the context of our double-track strategy to resolve our shared concerns about Iran’s nuclear programme. Against that background we will continue to evaluate situation.

In this context, if Iran is prepared to engage more seriously in concrete discussions aimed at resolving international concerns about its nuclear program, we would be willing to agree on a next meeting with the Iranian side at an early and mutually convenient date and venue.”
Statement by High Representative Catherine Ashton on the human rights situation in Iran

Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and Vice President of the European Commission, made today the following statement:

"I remain deeply concerned by the human rights situation in Iran. Just over a year ago, human rights lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh, who is now serving an 11-year prison sentence, was arrested. The EU maintains its concerns about her case, which have not met with any convincing response when raised with the authorities. On the contrary, I am now informed of the recent arrest of Mr Abdolfattah Soltani, a prominent human rights defender and Ms. Sotoudeh’s own lawyer. This illustrates the erosion of political and civil freedoms in Iran and is indicative of the increasingly difficult conditions for human rights activists in Iran. I welcome the release of Dr. Arash Alaei, an Aids doctor imprisoned since 2008, in connection with the end of Ramadan pardon. But I remain worried that, despite the overall release of 1200 prisoners, many are still detained on grounds which appear above all political.

The ongoing persecution of human rights lawyers and activists in Iran is in breach of the international obligations that Iran has itself signed up to. I therefore call on Iran to release them immediately and to allow them to exercise their rights freely."

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Statement by the Spokesperson of EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the persecution of the Baha'i community in Iran

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 yesterday:

The High Representative wishes to express her serious concern about the recent wave of arrests of Baha'i citizens, and the shutting down of an educational centre of the Baha'i community in Iran.

The European Union recalls that freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief are fundamental rights which must be guaranteed under all circumstances according to article 18 of the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights, which Iran has signed up to and ratified.

The European Union calls on Iran to immediately release all individuals detained on religious grounds, to put an end to the ongoing persecution of the Baha'i community, including in the field of education, and to refrain from all forms of discrimination against religious minorities, so as to guarantee the full respect for freedom of religion or belief in Iran.
Statement by the High Representative Catherine Ashton on recent arrests of women journalists, artists and women's rights defenders in Iran

Catherine Ashton, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, made the following statement today:

"I am profoundly worried over the many arrests of women journalists, artists and women's rights defenders in recent weeks in Iran. These include photographer Maryam Madi, film-maker Mahnaz Mohammadi, journalist Zahra Yazdani, women's rights advocate Maryam Bahrman and Mansoureh Behkish.

I call on Iran to respect the right to freedom of expression, in accordance with its international human rights obligations, and to release these women and other detained women's rights defenders immediately."

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