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Answer given by High Representative/Vice President Ashton
(18.3.2014)

The HR/VP deplores the ongoing imprisonment of Bassel Safadi Khartabil, shares the concerns at his situation and follows it very closely. The HR/VP has issued several statements condemning the arrests of human rights defenders and media activists and asking for the immediate release of all political prisoners. She also stressed the need to respect the freedom of expression and the freedom of human rights defenders and media activists to carry out their work in line with Syria's international obligations. Moreover, Syria must protect the human rights of all persons held in its detention facilities and ensure that the conditions of detention comply with applicable international law and minimum standards.

The EU will continue to defend human rights and will remain active in ensuring accountability for the widespread and systematic violations and abuses of human rights perpetrated in Syria. It recalls that all those responsible for such violations must be held accountable. The EU reaffirms its support to the Independent Commission of Inquiry established by the Human Rights Council.