



Open letter to Catherine Ashton

No arms for Assad!

Cyprus and Germany - Ensure respect of EU Arms embargo!

Honourable High Representative,

Despite a UN brokered ceasefire and the deployment of the first unarmed UN observers violence continues in Syria. Government attacks with heavy weapons on Homs and other opposition strongholds in Syria have caused several deaths in the last days. According to the UN about 9,000 people have died since pro-democracy protests began in March 2011.

On May 9th the EU Council passed sanctions¹ against the Assad regime, that clearly prohibit 'the sale, supply, transfer or export of arms and related materiel of all types' to Syria 'from the territories of Member States' 'whether originating or not in their territories.' Also it is prohibited to participate in all activities that circumvent these prohibitions.

These sanctions are very clear - but EU member states are not doing enough to ensure their respect!

On 10 January 2012 Cypriot authorities allowed the docking and refuelling of Russian ship MS Chariot, carrying more than 59 tonnes of Russian weapons for Assad. Despite initial clear evidence that the shipment was destined for Syria with a 'dangerous cargo' (Kikis Kazamais, Cypriot Finance Minister), the Cypriot authorities neither seized it nor fully inspected it. Instead they merely accepted verbal assurances from the Russian company that the ship would change its stated destination to Turkey. This was demonstrably not the case.

On April 13th 2012 the German cargo ship "Atlantic Cruiser", sailing under the flag of Antigua and Barbuda, was stopped on its way to Tartus, Syria. According to media reports it carries heavy weapons and ammunition from Iran for the Assad regime. After public protests the ship reportedly changed its course to Turkey but then switched off its transponder and could no longer be located. There are concerns that during this time the cargo or parts of it might have been transferred to Syrian government forces. The German government is currently investigating the case.

We call on you to ensure, in close cooperation with the Council and relevant member state authorities, that EU sanctions against Syria are respected to the fullest degree, in letter and in spirit! The EU needs to improve the monitoring and oversight of Member State implementation of sanctions. Member states that do not comply need to be held accountable by the Council.

While unspeakable atrocities and crimes against humanity continue to take place in Syria the EU needs to be seen as unequivocally on the side of freedom and democracy. We thus expect you to do everything in your power to prevent further breaches of sanctions against the Assad regime.

Sincerely yours,

Rebecca Harms and Daniel Cohn-Bendit
Co-Presidents of the Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament

¹ Council decision 2011/273/CFSP