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European Council conclusions on Middle East, 26 October 2023

II. MIDDLE EAST

15. Reaffirming the Statement of its Members of 15 October 2023, the European Council reiterates its condemnation in the strongest possible terms of Hamas for its brutal and indiscriminate terrorist attacks across Israel. The use of civilians as human shields by Hamas is a particularly deplorable atrocity.

The European Council strongly emphasises Israel's right to defend itself in line with international law and international humanitarian law. It reiterates its call on Hamas to immediately release all hostages without any precondition.

The European Council reiterates the importance of ensuring the protection of all civilians at all times in line with international humanitarian law. It deplores all loss of civilian life.

The European Council reviewed the state of play and the follow-up on the different strands of action, including concerted efforts to assist EU citizens.

16. The European Council expresses its gravest concern for the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza and calls for continued, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access and aid to reach those in need through all necessary measures including humanitarian corridors and pauses for humanitarian needs. The European Union will work closely with partners in the region to protect civilians, provide assistance and facilitate access to food, water, medical care, fuel and shelter, ensuring that such assistance is not abused by terrorist organisations.

17. The European Council recalls the need to avoid regional escalation and to engage with partners in this respect including with the Palestinian Authority.

18. The European Union is ready to contribute to reviving a political process on the basis of the two-state solution, including through the Peace Day Effort, and welcomes diplomatic peace and security initiatives and supports the holding of an international peace conference soon.

19. The European Council stresses the need to fight dissemination of disinformation and illegal content, and highlights the legal responsibility of platforms in this context.

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