

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>
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Subject: EU's Ashton condemns attack on Turkish soldiers (Reuters)

BRUSSELS, Oct 19 (Reuters) - European Union foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton on Wednesday accused Kurdish separatist rebels of launching "shameful terrorist attacks" on Turkish soldiers and said the EU was ready to help Ankara deal with the violence.

Kurdish guerrillas killed 24 Turkish soldiers in attacks on military posts in southeastern Turkey early on Wednesday, security sources told Reuters, the biggest single death toll for Turkish security forces in years.

"I was appalled to learn of today's shameful terrorist attacks in Turkey by the PKK. I condemn them in the strongest terms, and deeply regret the loss of life," Ashton said in a statement.

She said the EU continued to view the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) as a "terrorist" organisation.

"I stress once again that the EU stands with Turkey in its resolve to fight against terrorism. We should all be clear that nothing justifies such indiscriminate violence," she said.

"The PKK remains on the EU's list of terrorist organisations, and the EU has recently stated its readiness to intensify its dialogue with Turkey in combating terror."

Turkey launched air and ground assaults on Kurdish militants in Iraq on Wednesday, vowing to take "great revenge".

Turkish security officials said about 100 fighters from the PKK mounted simultaneous attacks on seven remote army outposts in Cukurca and Yuksekova districts of Hakkari province, on the rugged southeastern border with Iraq.

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