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**EU Presidency statement on the recent violent clashes between Israelis and Palestinians**

The Presidency of the European Union is deeply concerned about the ongoing breach of the cease-fire agreed on 25 November 2006 by President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert. It condemns the missile attacks on Israeli cities launched from the Palestinian Gaza Strip and calls upon the Palestinian Government to do everything it can to stop them.

The Presidency is shocked by the death of innocent civilians on both sides caused by the violence during the last few days. It renews with urgency its demand that the Kassam attacks be ended immediately and calls upon the Israeli Government to avoid inflicting civilian casualties when retaliating and to exercise proportionality.

The Presidency has noted with concern the arrest of members of the Palestinian Government and the Legislative Council. Such measures are liable to make the dialogue between the two sides, which is so urgently needed, more difficult.

The Presidency calls upon the two sides to do everything in their power which could help calm the situation.