

Bahrain, Syria and Yemen 'playing with fire' EUobserver Andrew Rettman 7 April 2011 A Hungarian junior minister speaking in the name of EU foreign relations chief Catherine Ashton has said that Bahrain, Syria and Yemen should beware of Libya-type military intervention.

Zsolt Nemeth

, Hungary's deputy foreign minister, made the remarks at a European Parliament debate in Strasbourg on Wednesday (6 April). He spoke on behalf of Ashton, who from time-to-time asks people from the rotating EU presidency to step in when she is busy.

With NGOs reporting that Bahrain has so far killed 23 people, Syria 122 and Yemen 63, Nemeth said: "We've been discussing these three countries, where there are authoritarian regimes which are also playing with fire, and where there is a risk of intervention."

"I think we have sent out a very clear and important signal that came from the high representative [Ashton] and that is a very crucial message to these three countries - they know that in Libya and also in the Ivory Coast there have been military interventions and that's always a possibility."

Referring to UN Security Council resolution 1973 allowing strikes on Libya, he added: "Over the past three weeks both the European and the international community have shaped a very clear philosophy under the motto of 'the

responsibility to protect'

... and that should be a warning sign to Yemen, Bahrain and indeed to all of those countries which maintain authoritarian regimes."

Ashton spokesman Michael Mann told EUobserver that Nemeth's "nuanced" words should not be seen as aggressive. (...)

(...)He said targeted sanctions "are an option" and that the EU has power to shape events in the region: "An awful lot depends on us. How the Arab spring will end depends to a great extent on us."

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