

Foreign Affairs Committee and International Development Committee

House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP
Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
By email

23 March 2021

Dear Foreign Secretary,

Situation in Tigray

We are alarmed at the deteriorating situation in Tigray. Last week, the International Development Committee heard distressing evidence about the situation on the ground, with reports of many thousands of people displaced and widespread hunger. Basic services have collapsed, with limited access to water and health services. There are a worryingly large number of reports of serious human rights violations, including some very distressing reports of systematic sexual violence. Children have no access to education and there are fears of a mass outbreak of disease.

Access to the region remains extremely difficult, restricting the delivery of vital supplies needed to meet basic humanitarian needs. The extent of the instability, coupled with poor communication, means assessing the baseline need for assistance in some areas is highly challenging.

Minister Duddridge told the Committee that UK aid efforts to address the crisis were being impeded by poor communication and insecurity, and that the conflict was fundamentally a problem of politics and diplomacy. Whilst no resolution to the conflict remains likely, and aid remains blocked, civilians will continue to suffer. The situation is grave and the consequences of inaction dire.

The international community needs to take urgent action to find a resolution to the crisis. As a force for good, we believe that the UK should reinforce and build upon its existing efforts and show global leadership through active engagement with parties to the conflict, including the Ethiopian Government, to seek an urgent resolution to the crisis and prevent this becoming another protracted conflict in the region. This should include working with our international partners at bilateral and multilateral level to reinforce this work.

To understand how the UK is seeking to respond to this worsening crisis, we would be grateful if you could answer the following questions:

Humanitarian access to the region

- What steps is the FCDO taking to work with the Ethiopian Government and other regional actors to secure safe access to Tigray for humanitarian organisations as a matter of urgency?

- What actions has the FCDO taken to put pressure on the Ethiopian Government in order to secure safe access for humanitarian supplies and personnel and what further steps it plans to take if such access is not forthcoming?
- How is the FCDO working with; (i) regional partners, and (ii) international partners (including at multilateral level) to facilitate and coordinate the humanitarian response to the crisis?
- What funding and resources will the UK make available as the scale of the need becomes evident once access and communication improve?
- What plans does the FCDO have to help and support local and regional authorities in Tigray restore essential services as a matter of urgency?

Conflict resolution

- What steps is the FCDO taking to secure an end to the conflict in Tigray and to prevent an escalation into a broader conflict in the region?
- How is the FCDO using its diplomatic relationships with regional actors (such as the Ethiopian, Eritrean and Sudanese Governments and the African Union) to stabilise the situation in Tigray?
- How does the FCDO intend to amplify efforts by others, such as the work of US Senator Chris Coons, to seek an urgent resolution to the crisis?
- Does the FCDO intend to play a coordinating role in international efforts to resolve the crisis and, if so, how?
- How will the FCDO seek to facilitate a meaningful and inclusive conflict resolution dialogue which includes women and girls?

Evidence collection of human rights abuses

- In line with calls from the UN Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, what steps is the FCDO taking to ensure that evidence of atrocities and human rights abuses in Tigray can be collected (including collection of evidence of mass rape)?

The conflict in Tigray is an early test of the merged department's combined diplomatic and development capability; it must not fail at the first hurdle.

We would be grateful if you could respond to this letter by 9 April 2021. The Committees intend to publish your response.



Tom Tugendhat MP

**Chair,
Foreign Affairs**



Sarah Champion MP

**Chair,
International Development**