



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

Vicky Ford MP
Minister for Africa
King Charles Street
London
SW1A 2AH

Tel: 020 7008 5000

Email:
FCDO.correspondence@fcdo.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/fcdo

Sarah Champion MP
Chair of the International Development
Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

16 November 2021

Dear Ms Chapman,

Thank you for your letter of 25 October to the Foreign Secretary about the escalation of conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. It is very timely and I share your concerns about the desperate crisis unfolding.

Firstly, my apologies for missing your requested reply date of 15 November.

The current situation is that after months of a de facto blockade of Tigray by government forces, military forces from Tigray are now pushing south, beyond Tigray, with fighting taking place in Afar and Amhara regions where nearly 2 million require humanitarian aid. The Oromo Liberation Army has recently joined the conflict to fight alongside the Tigrayan Defence Forces. Violence is taking place along major arterial roads. The fighting is causing huge humanitarian suffering.

The situation in Tigray itself is desperate, with more than 5 million people affected by the crisis including 401,000 people in famine conditions. No aid has entered Tigray since 18 October, with only 15% of required aid supplies reaching Tigray since July, owing to blockages by the federal government.

We are extremely concerned that violence in the north of Ethiopia could have devastating national implications, potentially impacting the tens of millions of Ethiopians that are already under huge pressures due to ongoing drought, the COVID-19 pandemic as well insecurity in other areas of the country.

Travel Advice for British nationals was changed on 9 November to advise against all travel to Ethiopia except for Addis Ababa Bole International Airport. British nationals were also advised to leave immediately by commercial means. Following this, draw-down of all British Embassy diplomatic staff in non-core roles, as well as all UK staff dependants, was authorised. A core team of around 15-20 diplomats will remain, supported by Country Based Staff. They will continue to deliver consular

support, ensure the security of the Post, and take forward our political and humanitarian objectives.

You asked a number of questions which I address below:

- **How the FCDO is using its diplomatic relationships with partners at both bilateral and multilateral level to work towards a peaceful resolution to the conflict?**

We have continued to raise the need for a peaceful resolution to the conflict at the UN Security Council, the G7 and the Human Rights Council. The Foreign Secretary discussed Ethiopia with the US, France, Germany, the EU, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development Chair (Sudan) and African Union Special Envoy Obasanjo on 12 October. The Foreign Secretary also spoke to Ethiopian Deputy Prime Minister Demeke on 5 November. I met with the Ethiopian Ambassador in my first week as Minister for Africa. I have also held a number of discussions on Ethiopia, including with AU Envoy Obasanjo on 4 November and the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Bankole Adeoye, on 8 November.

- **What steps the FCDO is taking to ensure independent, transparent and impartial investigation of human rights violations in the region, including an update on the deployment of PSVI experts?**

We have welcomed the joint investigation report from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, published on 3 November. We have called for the report's recommendations to be implemented and for those responsible for the horrific human rights abuses identified to be held to account. We will be pressing for further action in the Human Rights Council.

We have carefully reviewed the recommendations for the international community and will action a number of these through our new Human Rights and Peacebuilding programme, which is due to start implementation in the New Year. This will include working with the Danish Institute for Human Rights to help strengthen the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, including in its investigative capacities. It will also include support to women's rights organisations to provide enhanced services for survivors of gender-based violence. This latter work is being driven by our PSVI expert, who has additionally been providing advice across the FCDO portfolio, and the wider international community, to strengthen our response to conflict-related sexual violence.

- **How the FCDO is embedding early warning mechanisms for atrocities into its work?**

In 2019, we published a paper describing the UK's approach to atrocity prevention. We have continued to publish and circulate training and policy tools for all FCDO staff. This includes guides for desk officers with geographic responsibilities, online training on mass atrocity prevention, peace processes, mediation and conflict prevention and guidance on Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability (JACS) reviews, updated to include a section on atrocity crimes in 2021.

- **The level of funding allocated through bilateral and multilateral channels to respond to the humanitarian crisis over (i) the past six months and (ii) planned**

to be allocated over the next six months?

Since the start of the conflict, the UK has provided £76 million to the humanitarian response. The UK has worked alongside partners to improve coordination and essential services such as logistics, humanitarian air services, and emergency telecommunication. In addition, the UK contributed to the delivery of life saving response including protection, health, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene.

In the next 6 months the UK will work with others to address the causal factors of famine and improve the humanitarian response. Funding will go towards nutrition screening and services; protection monitoring, support to sexual and gender-based violence and child protection services; disease surveillance and delivery of healthcare; supplies to address acute malnutrition and food insecurity and logistics.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vicky Ford', written in a cursive style.

**Vicky Ford MP
Minister for Africa**