



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

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Secretary of State

I'm writing this open letter to all those who have contacted the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in recent months concerning the case of British national, Andargachew Tsege, currently detained in Ethiopia.

First of all, I would like to state that Mr Tsege's case remains a high priority for the British Government and that we take his welfare very seriously.

My predecessor as Foreign Secretary, Philip Hammond, raised this case with both the Ethiopian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister during his visit to Ethiopia on 1 June 2016. During his meetings, he made it clear that while progress has been made, with regular consular access now in place following his transfer to a federal prison, further steps are required. Prime Minister Hailemariam assured the then Foreign Secretary that Mr Tsege would be allowed access to independent legal advice to allow him to consider his options under the Ethiopian legal system. We will continue to press the Ethiopian Government as necessary to ensure that Mr Tsege has access to the promised legal representation. This was a point that I reiterated during my call with my Ethiopian counterpart, Dr Tedros - one of my first calls as Foreign Secretary.

I am aware of the suggestion that the UK Government should directly call for Mr Tsege's release. As my predecessor has previously stated, Britain does not interfere in the legal systems of other countries by challenging convictions, any more than we would accept interference in our judicial system. We do, however, lobby strongly and consistently against the application of the death penalty, and against the carrying out of such sentences when they are imposed. Our consular priority at this time is to ensure Mr Tsege's well-being and access to legal advice, and to ensure that the death sentence is not carried out.

During the former Foreign Secretary's visit, a senior Foreign Office official travelling with him was given access to Mr Tsege in prison. This was the tenth visit to Mr Tsege by British Government officials. Following that visit, the then Foreign Secretary stated that he was satisfied that Mr Tsege was not being ill-treated and that he was receiving regular visits from family members in Ethiopia. We will continue to monitor Mr Tsege's welfare closely and to support him and his family.

THE RT HON BORIS JOHNSON MP