

8 April 2017



I'm writing this open letter to provide an update 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.

The British Government continues to take Mr Tsege's case very seriously and it remains a high priority in our bilateral discussions with the Ethiopian Government. The UK Government strives to offer the finest consular support to British nationals overseas. This particular case is no different, and we continue to be committed to offering the best consular support to Mr Tsege and his family.

I have personally raised Mr Tsege's case on numerous occasions with the Ethiopian Government, most recently last month, when I met Prime Minister Hailemariam and Foreign Minister Workneh during my visit to Ethiopia. I obtained a commitment from Prime Minister Hailemariam that Mr Tsege's partner and children could visit him in prison.

I have heard continued requests that the UK Government should directly call for Mr Tsege's release. However, I continue to judge that calling for his release would not be helpful at this stage. It could in fact damage the progress we have made, including on consular access to Mr Tsege. Our priorities are Mr Tsege's wellbeing, his access to legal representation, and to ensure that the death sentence is not carried out. 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.

Furthermore it is Mr Tsege's right and wish to have access to legal advice, which is why we have pursued this for him. Prime Minister Hailemariam committed to Mr Tsege having legal access and I am pleased that Mr Tsege had an introductory meeting with a lawyer on 15 March. It is important that Mr Tsege can consider his options under Ethiopian law, including whether he might choose to seek clemency. Our Ambassador last visited Mr Tsege on 30 March to check on his welfare, discuss his legal access and pass on messages from his family.

We are in close contact with Mr Tsege's family, and continue to keep our approach to this case under review.

**THE RT HON BORIS JOHNSON MP**