

Debate Pack

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Humanitarian situation in Tigray

1	Background	2
2	Press and media articles	7
3	Press releases	9
4	PQs	15
5	Debates	30
6	Early Day Motions	31
7	Select Committee publications	33

1

Background

A debate on the humanitarian situation in Tigray (Ethiopia's northernmost region, bordering Eritrea) is scheduled to take place in Westminster Hall on Wednesday 8 September 2021, from 9:30-11:00am. The debate will be opened by Sarah Champion MP.

The Library published an [update on the situation in Tigray](#) on 18 June 2021. At the time, prospects for an end to the conflict remained dim and there were warnings of impending famine.

There have been several major developments since then.

Election victory for the Prime Minister's party

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's Prosperity party comfortably won the general election held on 21 June 2021. However, voting did not take place in Tigray and, elsewhere, many polling stations were closed either because of insecurity or because of logistical challenges. Voting was held in 436 of the 547 seats in the federal parliament, with the [Prosperity Party winning 410 seats](#). Some opposition parties boycotted the election, including two of the most prominent parties in Oromia region. Further votes will take place in September in some, although not all, of the remaining constituencies that were unable to hold a ballot.

TPLF take Tigray regional capital, Government declares unilateral ceasefire

On 28 June the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) recaptured Mekelle, the regional capital of Tigray. The Ethiopian Government declared a unilateral ceasefire and withdrew Ethiopian National Defence Forces elements the capital. TPLF forces have since made [further gains into the region](#).

On 10 August Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed [issued a national call](#) for citizens to mobilise against the "TPLF terrorist enterprise", calling on "[all capable Ethiopians who are of age to join the Defence Forces, Special Forces and militias and show your patriotism](#)." Kenya, Ethiopia's southern neighbour, warned such a call "[can lead to an uncontrollable spiral of violence and bloodshed](#)."

Reports of Eritrean forces returning to Tigray

The US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, has also suggested large numbers of Eritrean forces have "[re-entered Ethiopia after withdrawing in June](#)" and called on the Eritrean government to withdraw its forces immediately and

permanently. The US has also sanctioned the Eritrean Defence Forces Chief of Staff for his connection with serious human rights abuse committed in Ethiopia. The US Treasury said that under his command Eritrean troops are responsible for massacres and have “[raped, tortured and executed civilians.](#)”

Conflict in other regions

Intra-regional fighting remains a major concern both in terms of ongoing violence and in potentially inhibiting a peaceful resolution. The UN says western parts of Tigray are [under the control of Amhara forces](#), while Tigrayan forces are also believed to be in [parts of Amhara and Afar regions](#).

Separately, there is continued unrest in Oromia, Ethiopia’s largest region. In August the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission said more than [210 people had been killed](#) over a period of several days. The Commission said witnesses described the attackers as gunmen affiliated with the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), although this has been denied by the group. The OLA wants to [overthrow the government militarily](#) and, shortly after Abiy called for a national call-up, announced a [military alliance with the TPLF](#). There were [protests in Oromia last year](#) after the killing of a popular artist and activist and some Oromo political parties [boycotted the recent election](#).

The divisions along ethnic lines risk prolonging and worsening the conflict. The UN Secretary-General has warned “[inflammatory rhetoric and ethnic profiling are tearing apart the social fabric of the country.](#)” The Kenyan government has similarly warned that defining opposing constituencies along ethnic lines is dangerous because people can “[easily conflate political opposition to a struggle between ethnicities](#)” and regard opposition to their own view as illegitimate.

Reports of rape and human rights violations

Reports of rape and sexual assaults have been a consistent feature of the conflict since it began in November 2020. In August Amnesty International [released a new report](#) accusing forces aligned to the Ethiopian Government of targeting women and girls in Tigray for rape and other sexual violence. Amnesty identified some of the perpetrators as members of the Ethiopian National Defence Force, the Eritrean Defence Force, the Amhara Regional Police Special Force, and Fano, an Amhara militia group. Amnesty said the severity and scale of the crimes are particularly shocking, suggesting they amounted to war crimes and possible crimes against humanity. Refugees International has also warned women in Tigray are at [risk of sexual exploitation](#).

A [joint investigation](#) by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission into reports of allegations of abuses is concluding, the UN Secretary-General said on 27 August. It is not known when the report will be made available.

A “humanitarian catastrophe”

The UN Secretary-General says a “[humanitarian catastrophe is unfolding before our eyes](#)” and has warned the unity of Ethiopia and the stability of the region “are at stake.” [At least 400,000 people](#) are living in famine-like conditions and more than 2 million have been displaced from their homes.

Obstruction of aid into Tigray

The humanitarian situation remains dire. The only available route for humanitarian supplies is through one road via the Afar region. Humanitarian organisations estimate 100 trucks of aid are required per day. However, on 26 August OCHA said that since 15 July, only 321 trucks with humanitarian supplies had entered the region and [no trucks had entered Tigray](#) in the previous six days.

Samantha Power, the USAID Administrator, has blamed the Ethiopian Government for blocking aid, saying there is a food shortage “[not because food is unavailable, but because the Ethiopian Government is obstructing humanitarian aid and personnel, including land and air access.](#)” She called on Addis Ababa to immediately allow humanitarian assistance into Tigray, and to restore and maintain fuel deliveries, electricity, telecommunications and banking services. The US is [providing an additional \\$149 million](#) in funding to respond to the crisis.

International response

Mediation offers

The UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, says there is [no military solution](#) to the conflict and says the UN is ready to work with the African Union and other partners to support dialogue. The UK has [echoed his call](#) for talks to begin without preconditions. Kenya is calling on Ethiopia’s parliament to lift the terrorist designation given to the TPLF and other groups to allow for direct talks, arguing “[peace cannot be made with a political movement that has been labelled as a terrorist group.](#)”

However, it is unclear who may act as mediators. Ethiopia has [rejected Sudan’s offer](#) to mediate in the conflict. The leader of Tigray forces, Debretsion Gebremichael, while indicating a willingness to a negotiated end to the war, has [ruled out the African Union](#). Martin Plaut, author of a book on Eritrea and a close follower of events in the region, is pessimistic about the prospect of peace talks and suggests that “[far from there being “no military solution” there appears to be “only a military solution” to this war.](#)”

Turkey may have a role to play; during a visit to Ethiopia, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan offered to mediate between Ethiopia and Sudan to resolve a separate border dispute.

United Nations Security Council

The UN Security Council discussed the situation in Tigray on 26 August. The meeting was [requested by the UK](#), its Troika partners Norway and the US, plus several other countries.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres warned the unity of Ethiopia and the stability of the region are at stake and reiterated his [appeal for action](#) on three fronts:

1. For all parties to immediately cease hostilities
2. Commit to unrestricted humanitarian access and fully re-establish public services
3. Create the conditions for the start of an Ethiopian-led political dialogue to find a solution to this crisis

The African Union

On 26 August the African Union [appointed former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo](#) as its special representative to the Horn of Africa. He has been specifically tasked with working with political actors and stakeholders to entrench durable peace and stability within the region. However, Abiy has resisted previous AU efforts to mediate, and the [TPLF says the AU is biased](#) in favour of the Ethiopian government (the AU is headquartered in Addis Ababa).

UK Government response

During the Security Council meeting on 26 August the UK's deputy permanent representative, Ambassador James Kariuki, [laid out the UK's position](#), calling for:

- Tigrayan forces to immediately cease fighting in Amhara and Afar regions
- Eritrean troops to withdraw completely from Ethiopia
- the Ethiopian Government to fully enable humanitarian access.¹

Kariuki also called on all parties to comply with international humanitarian and human rights reports, and supported the joint investigation by the UN Office for the High Commissioner of Human Rights and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission into allegations of abuses. The Ambassador warned the conflict threatens the “[long term stability and prosperity](#)” of the country and

¹ FCDO, “[Statement by Ambassador James Kariuki at the Security Council briefing on the crisis in Tigray](#)”, 26 August 2021

the region, and called for an inclusive political settlement between the parties, without preconditions.

Parliamentary reports and debates

In April 2021 the International Development Committee, chaired by Sarah Champion, [published a report](#) on the humanitarian situation in Tigray. The Committee called on the government to:

- use all diplomatic means at its disposal to help end the conflict, working multilaterally through the United Nations and the African Union, and bilaterally with the Ethiopian government, neighbouring states, and those involved in the conflict;
- use its relationship with Ethiopia to ensure its government protects the population from violence and ensure immediate protection of communities in the region from human rights abuses, including sexual violence;
- work with the appropriate authorities to enable access for independent monitors to Tigray to ensure that evidence of the crimes that have been committed is secured and to bring those who are responsible to justice; and
- work with the Ethiopian government and the relevant regional authorities to ensure humanitarian agencies have unimpeded access to communities in need in Tigray and neighbouring regions.²

The Committee also said that the UK Government’s response to the situation in Tigray will be an early test of its new approach to integrated diplomacy and development and its commitment to establish the UK as a ‘force for good’, as espoused in its recently published [“Global Britain in a competitive age: the Integrated Review of security, defence, development and foreign policy”](#).

Members discussed the situation in Tigray in a [debate on 14 June 2021](#). James Duddridge, the Minister for Africa, told MPs a region-wide famine is [“now likely”](#) if conflict intensifies and impediments to the delivery of humanitarian aid continue. The FCDO [welcomed the Ethiopian government’s ceasefire](#) announcement at the end of June, but reiterated its call for the government to grant unfettered humanitarian access, for all parties to respect international humanitarian law and for there to be a political process for [“all parties to find a long term resolution to the conflict.”](#)

² International Development Committee, [“Call for aid and accountability in Ethiopia’s Tigray region”](#), press release, 16 July 2021

2

Press and media articles

The following is a selection of press and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the views or accuracy of external content.

[U.S. agency says Tigrayan forces looted aid warehouses in Ethiopia's Amhara region](#)

Reuters

1 September 2021

[Ethiopia's economy battered by Tigray war](#)

BBC News Online

Vivienne Nunis

30 August 2021

[Humanitarian situation worsens in Ethiopia's Tigray region](#)

Deutsche Welle

Isaac Mugabi

27 August 2021

[Tigray forces in Ethiopia support 'negotiated end' to war](#)

Independent

27 August 2021

[Ethiopia – Tigray Region Humanitarian Update Situation Report #17](#)

Relief Web

27 August 2021

[Ethiopia - Tigray Region Humanitarian Update](#)

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

26 August 2021

[Catastrophe 'unfolding before our eyes' in Ethiopia's Tigray region – UN chief](#)

UN News

26 August 2021

[US, EU warn of influx of Eritrean troops in Ethiopia's Tigray](#)

Al Jazeera

25 August 2021

[Caught in the crossfire, Ethiopian minority flees to Sudan](#)

Al Jazeera
22 August 2021

[Ethiopia's Tigray crisis: US accuses Abiy's government of blocking aid](#)

BBC News Online
20 August 2021

[UN says humanitarian conditions 'hellish' in Ethiopia's war](#)

Independent
19 August 2021

[Ethiopia: What do we know about aid going into Tigray?](#)

BBC News Online
Peter Mwai
15 August 2021

[Access restored to Tigray camps sheltering Eritrean refugees](#)

UN News
10 August 2021

[Ethiopia conflict set to escalate after Tigray rebels refuse to withdraw](#)

The Guardian
7 August 2021

[Ethiopia: 'Heartbreaking' devastation in Tigray, says UN humanitarian chief](#)

UN News
4 August 2021

[Genocide fears after Ethiopian PM vows to crush 'weeds' of Tigray](#)

The Times
Tom Collins
19 July 2021

[Ethiopian hospitals trashed by soldiers as Tigray fighting escalates](#)

The Times
Fred Harter
28 May 2021

[Civilians killed in Tigray war identified but thousands remain](#)

The Times
Fred Harter
31 May 2021

3

Press releases

'Over 400,000 people in Tigray are experiencing famine conditions – more than in the rest of the world combined'

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

26 August 2021

Statement by Ambassador James Kariuki at the Security Council briefing on the crisis in Tigray:

Thank you Mr President. Let me also offer the UK's condolences for all those who lost their lives in today's terrorist attack in Kabul.

I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing. You describe a desperate situation, and it is right this Council considers how it can help. So I would like to make three points in response to what we have heard.

First, all parties must cease hostilities and unfettered humanitarian access must be provided to relieve the toll of this conflict on ordinary Ethiopians.

As the Secretary General told us, over 400,000 people in Tigray are experiencing famine conditions. That is more than in the rest of the world combined.

Only a fraction of the 100 trucks of aid required every day are getting into Tigray. Banking, electricity and communications services remain suspended, posing serious obstacles to humanitarian operations.

The spread of fighting into neighbouring Amhara and Afar states, displacing tens of thousands of civilians, will only extend the human suffering and prolong the conflict. We therefore call on Tigrayan forces to immediately cease fighting in Amhara and Afar.

We reiterate that Eritrean troops must withdraw completely from Ethiopia, as the Government of Ethiopia has requested. And we call upon the Ethiopian Government to fully enable humanitarian access. That includes removing bureaucratic barriers to aid delivery and allowing sufficient cash and fuel into Tigray to enable humanitarian operations.

Secondly, Mr President, I want to emphasise the need for all parties to ensure the protection of civilians and to comply with international humanitarian and human rights law. The Secretary-General's briefing gave further weight to the reports we have been receiving of atrocities from all sides. These include brutal and systematic sexual violence, massacres, and indiscriminate shelling of towns. We have also witnessed an increase in hate speech and attacks on the humanitarian community.

The United Kingdom fully supports the joint investigation by the UN Office for the High Commissioner of Human Rights and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission. It is crucial to prospects for peace and reconciliation that this investigation is thorough and robust. And perpetrators of atrocities must be held to account.

Thirdly, Mr President, let me underline the urgency of pursuing political dialogue to end this crisis. The United Kingdom is a longstanding friend and partner of Ethiopia. We have been proud to work alongside Ethiopians to support their progress in reducing poverty and building sustainable economic growth. This conflict is already reversing that progress. It now threatens the long term stability and prosperity of the country and of the region.

We want to see Ethiopia return to a positive trajectory. Ten months in it is clear there is no military solution to this conflict. The only way that Ethiopia can return to peace and prosperity is through an inclusive political settlement. That requires talks between the parties – urgently, and without preconditions.

We support the efforts of the Secretary General and Under Secretary-General Griffiths and by the Africa Union to make this possible, and we therefore welcome the announcement today of the appointment of former President Obasanjo as AU Special Representative for the Horn of Africa.

Mr President, it is abundantly clear what the parties need to do now to end the dreadful toll of human suffering in Ethiopia.

The United Kingdom joins the Secretary-General and other members of this Council in calling on all parties to cease hostilities, allow unfettered humanitarian access, comply with international law, and begin a process of dialogue to resolve the conflict.

Thank you, Mr. President.

'It is time to put the interests of Ethiopian people first'

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

2 July 2021

Statement by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, UK Minister of State for the UN, at the Security Council briefing on the situation in Ethiopia:

I would like begin by thanking Under-Secretary DiCarlo and Acting Under-Secretary Ramesh Rajasingham for their expert insights and briefings today.

Today is an important opportunity. It is right that this Security Council considers how to help end this devastating conflict and support all of the people of Ethiopia.

I shall not repeat the picture of suffering outlined by our briefers. It is stark. It is real. But after eight months of conflict, we remain deeply concerned by all that we have heard and that we are seeing.

Instead, I want to make three brief points: on the immediate humanitarian situation, the need for conflict resolution and in addressing human rights concerns, so that Ethiopia can move on from this most tragic of conflicts.

But before I go any further, I want to pay tribute up front to the twelve humanitarian workers – and I'm sure I speak for every member of this Council – who have been killed since this conflict began. Protection of humanitarian workers, of their offices, of their equipment, is a central tenet of international humanitarian law.

Their work is especially vital in Tigray where, as OCHA have outlined today, and as the IPC data shows, at least 353,000 people are now in famine conditions.

People have died from hunger. People are dying from hunger. People will continue to die unless they get the help they need and get the help they need now. This is a man-made famine and we need to act.

In this regard, the United Kingdom welcomes the unilateral ceasefire declared by the Government of Ethiopia.

All sides – the Federal Government of Ethiopia, Tigray Defence Forces, Amhara militias and Eritrean Defence Forces – have an opportunity to end the cycle of violence and suffering.

We urge them to take it. And we call on Eritrean forces to withdraw, as requested by the Ethiopian government.

Our immediate priority has to be for humanitarian assistance to get through to those that require it. The restoration of basic infrastructure, including electricity, communications and banking services and ensuring food and other needed goods can reach Tigray. It is essential to prevent further loss of life.

Enabling humanitarian agencies to get visas for their staff and import communications equipment so they can operate effectively is imperative. Indeed we've heard that today. Denial of humanitarian access is a direct violation of international humanitarian law.

At the same time, we, the international community, and UN agencies must be ready to respond.

The response to date has frankly been insufficient. The ceasefire gives us the opportunity to address this and urgently increase the amount of aid reaching the starving people of Tigray. And in this regard the United Kingdom has already allocated £47.7 million.

A full and sustained ceasefire will give all parties time and space to address the root causes of this conflict through both dialogue and reconciliation and for an inclusive political process to be initiated.

The United Kingdom welcomes and endorses African Union Commission Chairperson Faki's call for all parties to uphold their responsibilities under international law to protect civilians.

He is of course right that a comprehensive and all-encompassing permanent ceasefire is absolutely necessary to pave the way for sustainable peace in Tigray.

We will support the African Union in its efforts in pursuit of peace and stability in Tigray, Ethiopia, and, indeed, the wider region. And we encourage the United Nations system to consider how it can also assist as the situation develops, as part of a very much joined-up process and coherent strategy.

Finally, Mr President, Special Representative Patten and High Commissioner Bachelet have highlighted serious allegations of human rights abuses and violations. They also described systematic sexual violence which, as the United Kingdom Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, I have been particularly moved by.

The United Kingdom is supporting the ICRC and UN agencies to provide essential services to survivors of sexual violence and an extra £16.7 million of funds we announced in June will support and drive towards accountability.

And this week, Mr President, we have additionally deployed an expert to advise on support for the safe collection – and this is vital, this is imperative – for the safe collection and preservation of evidence, in order to bring the perpetrators of sexual violence to justice at the appropriate time.

The United Kingdom welcomes the proposed inquiry of the African Commission for Human and People's Rights and it fully supports the ongoing Joint Investigation between the UN Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission. We will also co-sponsor a resolution on Tigray at the Human Rights Council in Geneva this month.

Mr President, transparency and accountability will be vital if Ethiopia is truly to move past this tragic conflict. We collectively owe this to the victims. We owe it to the survivors.

Our message is clear: it is time for all sides to put down their weapons; it is time to allow unrestricted access for humanitarian aid; and it is time to put now the interests of Ethiopian people first.

I hope this Council can now work constructively, with the African Union and partners, to ensure progress on these most critical of issues and turn around the situation for the sake of the people of Tigray and the sake of all Ethiopians.

Thank you, Mr President.

Ethiopia: G7 Foreign Ministers' statement on Tigray
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
2 April 2021

A statement from the Foreign Ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK, and the USA and the High Representative of the EU.

We, the G7 Foreign Ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America and the High Representative of the European Union are strongly concerned about recent reports on human rights violations and abuses, and violations of international humanitarian law in Tigray.

We condemn the killing of civilians, sexual and gender based violence, indiscriminate shelling and the forced displacement of residents of Tigray and Eritrean refugees. All parties must exercise utmost restraint, ensure the protection of civilians and respect human rights and international law.

We recognize recent commitments made by the Government of Ethiopia to hold accountable those responsible for such abuses and look forward to seeing these commitments implemented. We note that the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) have agreed to conduct a joint investigation into the human rights abuses committed by all parties in the context of the Tigray conflict. It is essential that there is an independent, transparent and impartial investigation into the crimes reported and that those responsible for these human rights abuses are held to account.

We urge parties to the conflict to provide immediate, unhindered humanitarian access. We are concerned about worsening food

insecurity, with emergency conditions prevailing across extensive areas of central and eastern Tigray.

We welcome the recent announcement from Prime Minister Abiy that Eritrean forces will withdraw from Tigray. This process must be swift, unconditional and verifiable.

We call for the end of violence and the establishment of a clear inclusive political process that is acceptable to all Ethiopians, including those in Tigray and which leads to credible elections and a wider national reconciliation process.

We the G7 members stand ready to support humanitarian efforts and investigations into human rights abuses.

4

PQs

Tigray: Armed Conflict

30 Jul 2021 | HL2159

Asked by: Lord Jones of Cheltenham

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Ethiopia about the alleged use of starvation as a weapon of war in Tigray.

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The Government is deeply concerned about the grave humanitarian situation in Ethiopia and combatants, including Eritrean armed forces, denying access to humanitarian agencies. Over 350,000 people are assessed to be in famine-like conditions - more than anywhere else in the world. The UK's Special Envoy for Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs, Nick Dyer visited Tigray in May and concluded that region-wide famine in Tigray is now likely if conflict intensifies and impediments to the delivery of humanitarian aid continue.

The UK has consistently called for protection of civilians and unfettered humanitarian access, including in our joint statements with the G7 and directly with Prime Minister Abiy. The Minister for Africa raised this with the Minister of Peace in her visit to the UK in July. The UK Ambassador to Ethiopia has also raised our concerns on multiple occasions to the Government. We continue to push for those responsible for atrocities to be held to account including at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) where I set out on 2 July our concerns at the continued lack of progress in delivering humanitarian access to Tigray.

Humanitarian Aid

23 Jul 2021 | 33933

Asked by: Sarah Champion

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment his Department has made of the level of its humanitarian support that reaches the most vulnerable communities around the world.

Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Since 2015, the UK has provided over £11.1 billion in humanitarian funding reaching over 33.7 million people with life-saving humanitarian assistance, with people in need in Africa and MENA regions receiving the most support.

The FCDO has committed to spend £906 million this financial year to support the world's most vulnerable communities suffering in crisis. The FCDO is also uniquely placed to bring together diplomatic clout and humanitarian expertise to drive more effective approaches to crisis prevention, preparedness and response, such as the first ever G7 Compact to tackle the drivers of famine or our ongoing work on Tigray.

Tigray: Food Aid

22 Jul 2021 | 35862

Asked by: Dan Carden

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that humanitarian support reaches the 350,000 people experiencing famine-like conditions in Tigray, Ethiopia.

Answering member: James Duddridge | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK Government is deeply concerned about the grave humanitarian situation in Ethiopia and shares the concerns outlined in the report on 24 June by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification report in June reported high levels of food insecurity in Tigray with 353,000 in 'catastrophe' as per the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) levels. Ensuring assistance gets to those who need it most remains our priority in Tigray. We continue to explore all options with partners to expand humanitarian access by both air and land.

On 14 June I announced that the UK will allocate a further £16.7 million to the crisis in Tigray. This will support civil-military coordination to help aid get to those in need and address famine risk through the provision of healthcare, sanitation, and nutritional support. This allocation is on top of the existing £27 million in 2020-21 already directed to the response, and an additional £4 million allocated to support nutrition and vaccinations in Tigray. This brings UK total funding to support response to the crisis to £47.7 million. We continue to urge all parties to the conflict to protect civilians, allow unfettered humanitarian access and respect international humanitarian law.

Tigray: Humanitarian Aid

13 Jul 2021 | 27019

Asked by: Barry Sheerman

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the findings in the report on the ongoing conflict in Tigray by the acting humanitarian aid chief of the UN, entitled Tigray region humanitarian update, published on 24 June 2021.

Answering member: James Duddridge | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK Government is deeply concerned about the grave humanitarian situation in Ethiopia and shares the concerns outlined in the report on 24 June by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The UK has led calls for a humanitarian ceasefire, joined by all G7 nations and the EU, along with a growing number of other nations. The G7 Summit Communique of 13 June also called for an immediate cessation of hostilities and unimpeded humanitarian access. The Government of Ethiopia has since announced a unilateral humanitarian ceasefire in Tigray. We welcome this but continue to call for all parties to cease fighting, grant urgently needed unfettered humanitarian access to Tigray, respect international humanitarian law and prevent their forces from hindering the critical work of the UN and NGOs.

On 14 June I announced that the UK will allocate a further £16.7 million to the crisis in Tigray. This will support civil-military coordination to help aid get to those in need and address famine risk through the provision of healthcare, sanitation, and nutritional support. This allocation is on top of the existing £27 million in 2020-21 already directed to the response, and an additional £4 million allocated to support nutrition and vaccinations in Tigray. This brings UK total funding to support response to the crisis to £47.7 million. As mentioned in my statement of 23 June, we urge all parties to the conflict to protect civilians and respect international humanitarian law.

Tigray: Refugees

06 Jul 2021 | 24126

Asked by: Andrew Rosindell

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions his Department has had with its counterpart in Sudan on support for refugees from the conflict in the Tigray Region of Ethiopia.

Answering member: James Duddridge | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The conflict in Tigray has had significant consequences and displaced hundreds of thousands of people, over 60,000 moving into Sudan, as well as impacting those that were already in need of humanitarian assistance. We speak regularly with Sudan about the situation in Ethiopia. The Foreign Secretary has discussed the issue with both Prime Minister Abiy of Ethiopia and Prime Minister Hamdok of Sudan, and our Embassies in Addis Ababa and Khartoum have raised with host governments.

On 14 June, I announced the UK will allocate £16.7 million to the crisis in Tigray. This will support civil-military coordination to help aid get to those in need and address famine risk through the provision of healthcare, sanitation,

and nutrition. This allocation is on top of the existing £27 million in 2020-21 already directed to the response which includes £5m provided for Ethiopian refugees in Sudan, over 60,000 that have fled the conflict from Tigray.

Tigray: Homicide

06 Jul 2021 | 24125

Asked by: Andrew Rosindell

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department has made an assessment of reports of extrajudicial killings in the Tigray region of Ethiopia.

Answering member: James Duddridge | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We are deeply concerned at human rights violations and abuses in Ethiopia's Tigray region, including those of extrajudicial killings. The UK's Special Envoy for Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs, Nick Dyer, visited Tigray in May. Our Ambassador in Addis Ababa also visited in the week of 14 June. During these visits we have heard many harrowing reports of atrocities committed by all parties to the conflict.

We welcome the joint Inquiry of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR) and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) into human rights violations and abuses in Tigray, and continue to press for unfettered access to the region and victims. The UK will support the UNOHCHR to ensure that their joint investigation into atrocities in Tigray with the EHRC is independent, transparent and impartial. The UK further welcomes the proposed African Union Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights Inquiry into Tigray and calls for the Government of Ethiopia to allow access to the region. We are in touch with the African Union on how we might support this effort.

Ethiopia: Humanitarian Situation

06 Jul 2021 | 23380

Asked by: Feryal Clark

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent representations he has made to the (a) African Union and (b) United Nations on humanitarian access, food insecurity and allegations of serious human rights abuses and atrocities in Ethiopia.

Answering member: James Duddridge | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

I have discussed the situation in Tigray with the African Union's Peace and Security Commissioner Bankole on several occasions. I also expressed my

concerns about Tigray to the speaker of the Ethiopian House of Peoples Representatives when we met in Zambia last week. We are supporting the African Union Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights Inquiry into Tigray and are calling on the Government of Ethiopia to allow the Inquiry's access to the Tigray region.

The UK has made clear at the UN Security Council our concerns over the continued lack of progress with humanitarian access, and ongoing human rights abuses and violations. We are seeking a full discussion of Tigray at the Security Council. We are supporting a joint investigation of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR) and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) into human rights violations and abuses in Tigray to ensure the investigation is independent, transparent and impartial. The UK is also working with partners to raise the situation in Tigray at the Human Rights Council. The Government of Ethiopia has announced a unilateral humanitarian ceasefire in Tigray. We welcome this and continue to call for all parties to respect international humanitarian law and prevent their forces from doing anything to hinder the critical work of the UN and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

Ethiopia: Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid

30 Jun 2021 | 22157

Asked by: Lisa Nandy

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of (a) humanitarian access, (b) food insecurity and (c) allegations of serious human rights abuses and atrocities in Ethiopia.

Answering member: James Duddridge | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK Government is deeply concerned about the grave humanitarian situation in Ethiopia. Over 350,000 people are assessed to be in famine-like conditions - more than anywhere else in the world. The UK's Special Envoy for Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs, Nick Dyer visited Tigray in May and concluded that region-wide famine in Tigray is now likely if conflict intensifies and impediments to the delivery of humanitarian aid continue. The UK with other G7 leaders have called for an immediate cessation of hostilities and unimpeded humanitarian access as set out in the G7 Summit Communique of 13 June. All G7 nations and the EU, along with a growing number of other nations have joined the UK's call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire.

We are appalled by systematic killing of civilians, widespread rape, including of children, indiscriminate shelling and the forcible displacement of ethnic Tigrayans. Those responsible for such abuses and violations need to be held

to account. We welcome the joint Enquiry of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR) and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) into human rights violations and abuses in Tigray, and continue to press for unfettered access to the region and victims. The UK will support the UNOHCHR to ensure that their joint investigation into atrocities in Tigray with the EHRC is independent, transparent and impartial. The UK further welcomes the proposed African Union Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights, calls for the Government of Ethiopia to allow access to this inquiry and is in touch with the African Union on how we might support this effort.

Tigray: Armed Conflict

25 Jun 2021 | 16957

Asked by: Alyn Smith

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the relevance of (a) the Responsibility to Protect doctrine and (b) the UK Government's Protection of Civilians policy to the ongoing situation in Tigray.

Answering member: James Duddridge | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK Government has been at the forefront of the international response throughout the conflict in Tigray, engaging directly with the Government of Ethiopia, and that of Eritrea, to press for protection of civilians, unfettered humanitarian access and an end to the conflict, in line with our approach to protection of civilians and commitment to Responsibility to Protect. We have continued to engage core international partners and raise concerns in international fora, most recently through the G7 leaders' communique of 13 June. We have also raised the issue in UN Security Council open discussions on conflict and famine, the annual Open Debate on Protection of Civilians, in five 'AOB' items on the UNSC agenda, and the Interactive Dialogue of the UNSC of 16 June. The UK's longstanding position is that any determination of genocide is an issue for competent courts, rather than governments. Our focus is always on securing an end to violence and protecting civilians.

Tigray: Humanitarian Aid

14 Jun 2021 | 10359

Asked by: Paul Blomfield

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he has taken to ensure unfettered access to humanitarian aid for people in Tigray.

Answering member: James Duddridge | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK has been consistent in calling for the protection of civilians in Ethiopia, unfettered humanitarian access, and respect for human rights, and continues to do so. Currently 5.2 million are in need of food aid. We are deeply concerned about the impact of the conflict on food security and nutrition in Tigray, including reports of people dying from hunger. We have raised these points with the Government in Addis Ababa consistently and at the highest levels, most recently during the visit of the UK Special Envoy for Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs, Nick Dyer, from 19-25 May. He has called for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, a call joined by 14 other nations including the US, Germany and France. I also discussed the issue on 9 June with development ministers from leading donor countries, including G7 nations.

UK-funded aid agencies in Tigray are delivering support in challenging circumstances, including food, shelter, water and healthcare. Teams from the British Embassy in Addis Ababa have visited Tigray on six occasions since March, meeting with humanitarian agencies working in the region. To date the UK has provided £22 million of badly needed support to people in Tigray.

Tigray: Internet and Telecommunications

10 Jun 2021 | 11566

Asked by: Stephen Doughty

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent assessment he has made of the availability of telecommunications and internet access to (a) civilians, (b) media organisations and (c) humanitarian organisations in the Tigray region of Ethiopia.

Answering member: James Duddridge | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We are concerned about limitations to access to telecommunications in Tigray. Some humanitarian agencies have reported a recent improvement in the numbers of satellite phones and radios they have been allowed to import into Ethiopia. However, this is not across the board and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in particular note ongoing challenges. Internet access remains very problematic with NGOs, for example, reliant on services provided by the UN.

We continue to call for improved access to communications in Tigray as vital for an effective humanitarian response and in shining a light on the grave human rights atrocities that continue to be committed there.

Tigray: Humanitarian Aid

08 Jun 2021 | 8686

Asked by: Helen Hayes

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to help ensure that (a) UNHCR and (b) other humanitarian agencies have full access to Eritrean refugees in Tigray.

Answering member: James Duddridge | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK has been consistent in calling for the protection of civilians in Ethiopia, unfettered humanitarian access, and respect for human rights. We are concerned at reports that Eritrean troops entered Ethiopian refugee camps in Tigray and forced a number of refugees to return to Eritrea. If proven, this would be a serious violation of international law. Alleged violations of international law must be investigated and we have consistently called for independent investigations into such allegations, and that perpetrators are held to account. We will continue to do so and support the efforts of the joint investigation between the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission.

The British Ambassador in Eritrea raised our concerns with the Eritrean Foreign Minister in December 2020, who denied that Eritrean forces had forcibly returned Eritrean refugees to Eritrea. We are extremely concerned that humanitarian agencies, including the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), do not have access to refugee camps in Tigray, meaning our understanding of the humanitarian and protection context in camps and refugee hosting areas is limited. It is the responsibility of the host state to protect refugees on their territory and this was acknowledged by the Government of Ethiopia when we raised the matter.

There are numerous shocking reports of atrocities committed by Eritrean forces in Tigray, and their continued presence is fueling insecurity. These forces must leave Ethiopia immediately. We continue to press hard for this commitment to be delivered.

Tigray: Rape

07 Jun 2021 | HL421

Asked by: Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of allegations reported in the Europe External Africa Report on Tigray, published on 19 May, that killings, abductions, and rape are still occurring in Tigray, and that soldiers "are raping and destroying women to ensure that they cannot raise a community in the future. They are using rape and food as weapons of war."

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK has led calls on the parties to the Tigray conflict to place the survival and welfare of the affected people above political and military goals. We are deeply concerned about the impact of the conflict on food security and nutrition in Tigray, including reports of people dying from hunger. We have raised the points with the Government in Addis Ababa consistently and at the highest levels, most recently during the visit of the Special Envoy for Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs from 19-25 May. To date the UK has provided £22 million of badly needed support to people in Tigray.

Tigray: Humanitarian Situation

01 Jun 2021 | HL274

Asked by: Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the report by the World Peace Foundation Starving Tigray, published on 6 May; and what plans they have to raise the humanitarian situation in Tigray at the next UN Security Council meeting.

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK shares the call made in the World Peace Foundation report for all parties to the conflict to place the survival and welfare of the affected people above political and military goals. We also share concerns about a continued lack of information about the humanitarian situation and lack of access. The UK has been consistent in calling for the protection of civilians in Ethiopia, unfettered humanitarian access, and respect for human rights. We are deeply concerned about the impact of the conflict on food security and nutrition in Tigray, including reports of people dying from hunger. To date the UK has provided £22 million of badly needed support to people in Tigray. UK-funded aid agencies in Tigray are delivering support in challenging circumstances, including food, shelter, water and healthcare. A joint humanitarian and political team from the British Embassy in Addis Ababa visited Tigray 4-5 March, 4-7 April and the week of 19 April.

We have spoken about the situation in Tigray in the five 'AOB' discussions on that subject at the UN Security Council and will do so again in the upcoming open debate on Protection of Civilians. We will continue to support discussion in the UN on this pressing matter.

Tigray: Overseas Aid

27 May 2021 | 6267

Asked by: Pauline Latham

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much Official Development Assistance has been allocated to programmes based in the Tigray; and for what purposes that funding has been allocated.

Answering member: James Duddridge | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK provided £241 million of bilateral Official Development Assistance in 2020/21. The UK made the decision in November 2020 to pause financial aid payments to the Government of Ethiopia destined for Tigray but we continue to provide support to people in Tigray via UN and NGO partners. £22 million has been allocated to the humanitarian response in Tigray to support those in need.

UK-funded partners such as UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN's World Food Programme (WFP) and International Committee of the Red Cross are providing food, shelter, water and healthcare in challenging circumstances. The UK is in the process of allocating budgets for programmes this financial year. As we do this, we will continue to review and adapt to the context.

The UK is also supporting civil society partners in Tigray to deliver gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health response, which includes helping rape survivors. Final budgets are under review but we are also planning to support the documentation and investigation of such crimes.

Ethiopia: Human Rights

27 May 2021 | 4609

Asked by: Sarah Champion

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps he is taking to ensure that the British Embassy in Ethiopia is resourced to quickly respond to concerns relating to human rights abuses in that country.

Answering member: James Duddridge | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We are deeply concerned at human rights violations and abuses in Ethiopia's Tigray region. We condemn violations as consistent with an apparent policy of collective punishment of Tigrayans. We have and continue to press hard for unfettered access for independent international human rights organisations.

Staffing at the British Embassy Addis Ababa was supplemented by three extra humanitarian staff in late 2020, but is now returning to pre-Pandemic levels. Tigray is one of the Embassy's top priorities and staff from across the Mission, from Political to Humanitarian, are working together to respond to the fast moving situation. Staff at the British Embassy in Addis Ababa are making frequent visits to the Tigray region and have heard first hand testimony from survivors. Further to this, preparations are underway to deploy expertise from the UK Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative Team of Experts to the region, building on a specific protection mission to Shire, in the Tigray region, conducted by British Embassy staff.

Ethiopia: Humanitarian Situation

12 Apr 2021 | HL14650

Asked by: The Marquess of Lothian

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the remarks made by the Prime Minister of Ethiopia on 23 March that "reports indicate that atrocities have been committed in Tigray region", and (2) the humanitarian situation in northern Ethiopia.

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We welcome Prime Minister Abiy's statement on 23 March that the perpetrators of human rights atrocities in Ethiopia's Tigray region should face justice - whoever they are. We need to see action now to stop further atrocities and to allow for the independent investigation of those that have occurred. Since the conflict started, the UK has consistently called for an end to fighting, and for all parties to the conflict to prioritise the protection of civilians.

The UK has also been consistent in calling for free and unfettered humanitarian access to the 4.5 million people in Tigray in need. The Foreign Secretary raised the need for humanitarian access to Tigray with Prime Minister Abiy during his visit to Ethiopia and pressed for a political dialogue to bring lasting peace to the region. The Minister for Africa re-enforced the urgency of the need for humanitarian access when he spoke with the Ethiopian Ambassador on 24 February. The presence of Eritrean troops in Tigray is one the main barriers to humanitarian access and they should leave Ethiopia immediately. Humanitarian providers must be protected to ensure they can help those in need. UK-funded aid agencies in Tigray are delivering support in challenging circumstances, including food, shelter, water and healthcare. A joint humanitarian and political team from the British Embassy in Addis Ababa visited Mekelle on 5 March. They heard harrowing accounts of human rights violations, the challenges of aid delivery and how some of the £15.4m of UK Aid is helping to support those affected by the Tigray conflict. The Government of Ethiopia must act now to protect its people.

Tigray: Overseas Aid

19 Mar 2021 | 167331

Asked by: Fleur Anderson

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how much and what proportion of the £11.4 million of UK aid to the Tigray region has been distributed; and what assessment he has made of the accessibility of that aid to civilians in Tigray.

Answering member: James Duddridge | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

In response to the crisis in Tigray the UK has allocated £15.4m to humanitarian agencies. All funds have been disbursed to partners. We continue to work with the UN to promote and monitor access and the delivery of humanitarian support to all those who need it, including to civilians in contested areas. We do not think that civilians have sufficient access to that aid. I re-enforced the urgency of the need for humanitarian access when I spoke with the Ethiopian Ambassador on 24 February. The Government of Ethiopia must act now to protect its people.

Tigray: Crimes against Humanity

16 Mar 2021 | HL13782

Asked by: Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International of atrocities in Tigray; what steps they are taking in response to the report by Amnesty International Ethiopia: The massacre in Axum, published on 26 February, which asserts that mass killings of civilians in Axum may amount to crimes against humanity; and what steps they are taking (1) to collect evidence of any such crimes, and (2) to bring those responsible to justice.

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

On 26 February the Minister for Africa stated that we are deeply saddened by the reports from Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch on the human rights violations of civilians in Axum, Ethiopia. While the Government of Ethiopia have said that the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission will lead an independent investigation with support from the UN, we will continue to call for independent, international investigations into these and other crimes reported in Tigray, and for the Government of Ethiopia to ensure full access for human rights organisations.

In a joint statement on Ethiopia with 41 other countries at the 46th Session of the Human Rights Council, we condemned in the strongest terms the reported killings of civilians. We have raised our concerns with Ethiopian Ministers,

making clear the overriding need to protect civilians and adhere to international law and to international human rights law. The Minister for Africa re-enforced the urgency of the need for humanitarian access when he spoke with the Ethiopian Ambassador on 24 February.

Tigray: Gender Based Violence and Sexual Offences

09 Mar 2021 | 160709

Asked by: Patrick Grady

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to support people affected by sexual and gender-based violence in the Tigray region of Ethiopia.

Answering member: James Duddridge | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We condemned in the strongest terms the reported killings of civilians and acts of sexual violence via a joint statement on Ethiopia with 41 other countries at the 46th Session of the Human Rights Council. We also note the statement on 21 January by Pramila Patten, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. We support the UN's call for a "zero tolerance" policy for such crimes and we continue to call for independent, international, investigations into allegations of human right abuses. The UK is particularly concerned about the increased risks that conflict presents for women and girls in relation to gender-based violence and to the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. We continue to lobby for the protection of women, girls and boys at official level. We encourage the Government of Ethiopia to invite an independent UN fact finding mission to support their current accountability effort on international law compliance.

We note that the Government of Ethiopia has declared a zero policy on sexual violence and the stated intention to establish a national joint taskforce (including the Ministry of Defence with the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth) to investigate alleged cases of sexual violence against women in Tigray. We will monitor the effectiveness of this taskforce in bringing perpetrators to justice. UK-funded aid agencies in Tigray are working hard to deliver support in challenging circumstances, including food, shelter, water and healthcare. The UK is currently working closely with its partners to ensure that survivors have an increasing access to specialised services and justice. I [Minister Duddridge] re-enforced the urgency of the need for humanitarian access when I [Minister Duddridge] spoke with the Ethiopian Ambassador on 24 February.

Tigray: Armed Conflict

03 Feb 2021 | HL12328

Asked by: Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the statement from the UNHCR on 19 January concerning the impact of the conflict in Tigray on Eritrean refugee camps in the region.

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We note the statement from the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) on 19 January, and welcome the news that they have regained access to the Mai Aini and Adi Harush refugee camps in Tigray. It is clear that the conflict in Tigray has had significant consequences and has displaced hundreds of thousands of people, internally and externally, as well as adversely impacting upon those that were already in need of humanitarian assistance. We have raised our concerns with Ministers in both the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments, making clear the overriding need to protect civilians and adhere to international law and international human rights law. UK-funded aid agencies in Tigray are working hard to deliver support in challenging circumstances, including shelter, water and healthcare. We continue to work with the UN to promote and monitor access and the delivery of humanitarian support to all those who need it, including to civilians in contested areas. The UK continues to press, at the highest levels, for sustained, free and unfettered humanitarian access across Tigray, so that the UNHCR can uphold its mandate towards refugees.

Tigray: Human Rights

01 Feb 2021 | HL12270

Asked by: The Lord Archbishop of York

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of reports of human rights abuses in Tigray; and what support they are providing (1) to the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, (2) to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and (3) to the African Union, to (a) investigate, and (b) document, such abuses.

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We are shocked and saddened by further reports from Tigray of massacres of civilians, sexual violence, and attacks on humanitarian facilities and places of worship. An ongoing lack of access to the Tigray region for human rights organisations, means that it remains difficult to confirm these reports. We will continue to work with partners to seek further information. The UK has, alongside the UN and international partners, called on all sides to ensure the protection of civilians and adhere to international law and international

human rights law. We support the call by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission for the independent investigation of human rights violations and unfettered access to Tigray - points the Foreign Secretary discussed with PM Abiy in Addis Ababa on 22 January. We also continue to call for the perpetrators of those incidents that are proven to be held to account, whoever they may be. We will continue to make this point in upcoming conversations with the Government of Ethiopia. The UK has welcomed the efforts to date of the three distinguished Special Envoys from the African Union (AU). Prime Minister Abiy met with the three AU Envoys on 27 November 2020 and we continue to encourage the Ethiopian Government to maintain engagement with the AU and the Special Envoys, and continue to call for a cessation of violence.

Tigray: Refugees

25 Jan 2021 | HL11957

Asked by: Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they are taking to end the forced repatriation of refugees to Eritrea from refugee camps in Tigray; and what assessment they have made of (1) reports of armed attacks on those refugee camps; and (2) of the humanitarian needs of the refugees in those camps.

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We are concerned at reports that Eritrean troops have entered Ethiopian refugee camps in Tigray and forced a number of refugees to return to Eritrea. Due to the lack of access to northern refugee camps in Tigray for humanitarian agencies, including the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), it has not yet been possible to fully corroborate these reports. We have however, raised our concerns with Ministers in both governments, making clear the overriding need to protect civilians and adhere to international law and international human rights law. We continue to call for independent, international, investigations into allegations of human right abuses and violations, and that the perpetrators of those incidents that are proven are held to account, whoever they may be.

The UK continues to call for sustained, free and unfettered humanitarian access across Tigray, so that the UNHCR can uphold its mandate towards refugees. It is the responsibility of the host state to ensure refugees are protected and are not subjected to forcible return.

5

Debates

[Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative](#)

17 June 2021 | Backbench debates | House of Commons | 697 cc533-559

Motion that this House has considered the UK's Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative and the G7. Agreed to on question.

[Ethiopia](#)

14 Jun 2021 | Urgent questions | House of Commons | 697 cc33-45

Urgent question on the situation in Ethiopia.

[Conflict in Tigray Region of Ethiopia](#)

25 March 2021 | Adjournment debates | House of Commons | 691 cc1173-1180

Agreed to on question.

6

Early Day Motions

Conflict in Tigray, Ethiopia

EDM 112 (session 2021-22)

26 May 2021

Helen Hayes

That this House notes the high level of sexual violence in the conflict in Tigray, resulting in an estimated 10,000 women being raped in the four months to March; further notes the leadership role the UK government has played in global efforts to eliminate sexual violence in conflict; notes that the UN Day for the Elimination of sexual violence in conflict is on 19 June; and calls on the UK government to table a resolution at the UN Security Council setting up a tribunal to investigate sexual violence in the conflict in Tigray as a war crime, a crime against humanity or a constitutive act of genocide.

Conflict in Tigray, Ethiopia

EDM 1723 (session 2019-21)

12 April 2021

Helen Hayes

That this House condemns the massacre at Axum in Ethiopia, documented by both Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, that may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity; further condemns the reported wider pattern of violence throughout the Tigray region, including the use of rape and sexual violence, and the alleged involvement of Eritrean forces; notes that there is a risk of a regional conflict in the Horn of Africa, with an escalation of tensions with Sudan and Egypt; requests that the UK Government places that issue formally on the agenda of the United Nations Security Council, as well as on that of the African Union; supports calls for a full, prompt, impartial and effective investigation into the massacre and unfettered humanitarian access to Tigray, as well as immediate access for human rights and media organisations; considers that the starvation and conflict-induced food insecurity in that region is man-made, is a violation of international humanitarian law, and is a test case for the UK Special Envoy with that brief; and expresses concern for the fate of Eritrean refugees in that country alleged to be at risk of refoulement.

Violence in Tigray Province, Ethiopia

EDM 1603 (session 2019-21)

09 March 2021

Carol Monaghan

That this House strongly condemns the violence unfolding in Ethiopia's Tigray Region; notes that fighting between Ethiopian Forces and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) has claimed many civilian lives; acknowledges reports that Eritrean fighters have participated in the conflict on Ethiopian terrain; notes the findings of the United Nations Security Council Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide that extrajudicial killings, sexual violence, mass executions and property looting are prevalent in Tigray; recognises United Nations allegations that possible crimes against humanity have been committed in Tigray; is alarmed by reports that humanitarian organisations' access to the Region is being restricted; is concerned that an estimated 60,000 refugees have fled Tigray into neighbouring Sudan to escape the violence since November 2020; is appalled by recent reports of massacres carried out by Eritrean personnel against civilians, including at Maryam Dengelat church and the holy city of Aksum; calls for an end to violence committed by all parties in the conflict; fully supports the United Nations in its mission to facilitate peace, transparency, and emergency relief; and calls on the UK Government to exercise all its diplomatic capabilities to bring an end to this conflict.

Conflict in Ethiopia

EDM 1181 (session 2019-21)

24 November 2020

Layla Moran

That this House is deeply concerned about the escalation of conflict in Ethiopia; condemns the deliberate killing of innocent civilians; sends its sincerest condolences to all those who have tragically lost loved ones as a result; notes the estimated 4,000 refugees per day fleeing Ethiopia; further notes the UNHRC's warning of a full-scale humanitarian crisis if the conflict continues without imminent de-escalation; calls on the Government to use all diplomatic means it can to assist de-escalating the violence and resolving the underlying conflict; and therefore also urges the Government to ensure the Official Development Assistance budget is maintained to ensure Ethiopian civilians receive adequate support and aid.

7

Select Committee publications

[The humanitarian situation in Tigray: Government Response to the Committee's Tenth Report of Session 2019–21](#), First Special Report of Session 2021–22, International Development Committee, HC 554, 16 July 2021

[The humanitarian situation in Tigray Tenth Report of Session 2019–21](#), International Development Committee, HC 1289, 30 April 2021

[Letter from the Chairs of both the International Development & Foreign Affairs Committees to the Foreign and Development Secretary regarding the situation in Tigray](#), 23 March 2021

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