

3 March 2017

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Crispin Blunt MP
Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

Thank you for your letter of 6 February about the case of Andargachew Tsege, detained in Ethiopia, and for the Committee's continued interest in this case.

I follow Mr Tsege's case closely and have personally raised it on numerous occasions with the Ethiopian Government, most recently on 17 February with Foreign Minister Workneh during the Munich Security Conference. The Secretary of State for International Development also raised the case with the Ethiopian Prime Minister during her visit to Addis Ababa on 30 January. In addition, our Ambassador takes every opportunity to raise Mr Tsege's case at the highest levels with the Ethiopian Government.

With regards to your request that the UK Government calls for Mr Tsege's release, we judge that calling for his release would not be helpful at this stage. It could in fact damage the progress we have made in this case including 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. From the moment we heard about Mr Tsege's detention, we pressed for regular access. Over the course of the past two and a half years Mr Tsege has received 14 consular visits. The most recent visit occurred on 25 February. Our Ambassador visited Mr Tsege to check on his welfare, discuss his legal access and pass on messages from his family. It is not common practice for consular visits to be held in private. During our consular visits to Mr Tsege, an Ethiopian official was present. We consider this presence of an Ethiopian official in accordance with Article 36 of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, and in line with local laws and regulations.

I was pleased to meet Mr Tsege's partner, Ms Hailemariam, on 7 February alongside the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Tobias Ellwood to reaffirm the importance that we place upon her partner's case. We have provided significant support to Mr Tsege's family since he was first taken to Ethiopia and remain in regular contact with them.

I want to reassure you and the Committee that this Government will continue to provide consular support to Mr Tsege including raising his case at the highest levels in Ethiopia.

THE RT HON BORIS JOHNSON MP