

20 June 2016

Our reference: MIN/98000/2016

The Rt Hon Fiona Mactaggart MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

Dear Fiona,

Thank you for your email of 26 May on behalf of your constituent [REDACTED] about the detention of Andargachew Tsege in Ethiopia.

Please be assured that the British Government takes Mr Tsege's detention and welfare very seriously. The Foreign Secretary 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 and a transfer to a federal prison, further steps are required. Prime Minister Hailemariam assured the Foreign Secretary that Mr Tsege will 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 Ethiopians to ensure that Mr Tsege has access to the promised legal representation.

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, although we do 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 Foreign Secretary's visit, a senior Foreign Office official travelling with him was at his request given access to Mr Tsege in prison. This was the tenth visit to Mr Tsege by British Government officials. Following that visit, I am satisfied that he is not being ill-treated and that he is receiving regular visits from family members in Ethiopia.

I hope this reassures you and your constituent how seriously we are taking Mr Tsege's case and that it remains a priority for the British Government. We will continue to support Mr Tsege and his family.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James".

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James Duddridge".

James Duddridge MP
Minster for Africa, the Overseas Territories and Caribbean