

Informal briefing on Ethiopia with the OHCHR High Commissioner: UK statement

Thank you Madam High Commissioner,

We are grateful to you for holding today's briefing. It is a key part of your mandate to be able to inform states about issues of pressing concern, through whatever means you decide. Clearly the gravity of the information you have just presented deserves our full attention.

Anyone who has read the Joint Investigation's report can be in no doubt that the most serious of violations and abuses have been taking place over the last year in Ethiopia. It documents the widespread use of sexual violence as a weapon of war, torture, unlawful killings, detentions, attacks on civilians and forced displacement. And the report only tells part of the story.

As you made clear in your public statement last week – atrocities are continuing. Thousands of people are now being arrested and detained because of their ethnic identity. This, alongside the proposal of issuing new ID cards to identify specific groups and the increasing use of hate speech by public figures, is deeply concerning. It should ring alarm bells for all of us as to where the situation could be headed.

Having heard your presentation, it is vital that the UN Human Rights system respond swiftly to the violations which have occurred, and which continue, with a view to preventing even more serious atrocities from taking place. For its part, the Human Rights Council must not sit idly by and let these actions go unreported and allow impunity to prevail.

Madam High Commissioner, we took note of your clear message on the need for further urgent discussions by the Human Rights Council.