

News story: UK Minister for Africa condemns ongoing conflict in South Sudan

The UK's Minister for Africa, Harriett Baldwin, has visited South Sudan to call on all parties to find an urgent solution to the conflict which is causing extreme man-made suffering across the country.

During her visit, Mrs Baldwin made clear that the UK will not tolerate ongoing human rights abuses happening in the country, and urged South Sudan's leaders to demonstrate that they are committed to peace by abiding by the ceasefire they signed in Khartoum.

Meeting with First Vice President Taban Deng Gai, Mrs Baldwin handed over a copy of a UN report on the indiscriminate use of violence against civilians in the Southern Unity region of the country. She also shared World Food Programme data showing declining agricultural outputs across the country, heightening the risk of famine.

The ongoing conflict in South Sudan is having a devastating impact on the population. 7 million people (two thirds of the population) are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance and continued obstructions are threatening to prevent lifesaving assistance reaching those most in need. Human rights abuses are rife, including shocking levels of sexual and gender-based violence, which is having devastating consequences on the lives of the most vulnerable. Mrs Baldwin welcomed the announcement on Friday of UN sanctions and an arms embargo on South Sudan, which will help to hold the perpetrators to account.

The UK is one of the top three humanitarian donors in South Sudan, providing lifesaving support to hundreds of thousands of people, and some 340 British military troops providing important engineering and medical assistance to the UN Mission of South Sudan. UK aid is supporting the continuation of vital health and education services in the country, including supporting the country's only paediatric hospital, which the Minister had the opportunity to visit. Ms Baldwin also met young girls at a UK aid-funded school in Juba, who told her how ongoing conflict is affecting their lives and hopes for the future.

The conflict is driving the largest refugee crisis in Africa, with 2.5 million people having fled to neighbouring countries. The UK is providing extensive support to countries such as Uganda who are hosting huge refugee populations, and helping those refugees to rebuild their lives in the neighbouring countries to help bring stability to the whole region.

UK Minister for Africa Harriett Baldwin said:

South Sudan's leaders must demonstrate that they are committed to peace and immediately silence their guns. The UK stands with the people of South Sudan who are suffering the horrific consequences of this man-made crisis.

We will not abandon the people of South Sudan and their hopes for a peaceful future – which is why we're working to bring stability to the whole region, and provide the next generation with the skills they need to begin to rebuild their country.

The UN sanctions and arms embargo announced last Friday are a strong sign of international support for regional peace talks. I have seen for myself the effects of this devastating conflict. Meaningful progress will only happen if the perpetrators of violence know they will be held to account.