

UK provides almost £30 million to humanitarian catastrophe in northern Ethiopia

The Minister for Africa Vicky Ford has announced an additional £29m of humanitarian aid to people affected by the catastrophic conflict in northern Ethiopia.

The announcement marks World Food Day today [16 October] and increases the UK's commitment to the crisis to more than £75m – making the UK the second largest donor.

The Minister is also calling on all parties in Ethiopia to urgently agree a ceasefire to allow humanitarian aid through and for the Ethiopian Government to lift the de facto blockade of humanitarian relief into the Tigray region. The people of Tigray need 500 trucks of critical assistance per week, but less than 10% of this has been met since June.

The conflict has caused a humanitarian catastrophe, with the UN estimating that 5.5 million people face acute food insecurity. Over 400,000 people in northern Ethiopia are experiencing famine-like conditions – more than in all of the humanitarian crises in the rest of the world combined.

Minister for Africa, Vicky Ford, said:

The Ethiopian people are facing a humanitarian catastrophe and are in urgent need of support.

This pledge will provide vital food, water and healthcare to the hundreds of thousands of people facing famine in northern Ethiopia.

This is a man-made crisis. I urge all parties to urgently agree a ceasefire to allow humanitarian aid to reach starving people.

The new funding comes as the UK's Special Envoy for Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs, Nick Dyer, recently concluded his third visit to Ethiopia since the start of the conflict in November 2020, where he pressed for improved humanitarian access to the areas affected by conflict.

Special Envoy Nick Dyer said:

On my third visit to Ethiopia since the start of the Tigray conflict, I saw a further deterioration of the crisis and the conditions for humanitarian operations.

We are pleased to provide more funding but humanitarian agencies

need access into all areas where people are in need now, so that lives can be saved and catastrophic famine avoided.

The conflict in northern Ethiopia has spread beyond the borders of Tigray now, so we are expanding UK funding to reach those in urgent need in Afar and Amhara.

The funding will be delivered by UN agencies and NGOs, including the WFP, UNICEF, and the Ethiopia Humanitarian Fund. Our partners expect to deliver lifesaving nutrition treatment for more than 100,000 malnourished children, and 27,000 pregnant and new mothers.

The pledge will also deliver clean water and sanitation for 26,000 people and provide services to prevent and respond to gender-based violence for almost 3,000 women and children.

It will also support people who have been forced to flee their homes by the spread of conflict across northern Ethiopia, providing shelter, healthcare, and support to children who have been separated from their families and to survivors of sexual violence.

Notes to editors:

- Ethiopia is now one of the most dangerous countries in the world for humanitarians with 23 aid workers killed in Tigray since the start of the conflict.
- The UK led a joint statement at the Human Rights Council on 4th October, signed by 43 partners, calling on the Ethiopian Government to reverse their decision to expel seven senior UN officials on 30th September.
- The UK's Ambassador for Human Rights raised the urgent need for unfettered humanitarian access at the Human Rights Council earlier this month and the former Foreign Secretary raised the UK's concerns over the conflict in a call with Prime Minister Abiy in August.

Positive steps towards a stable and inclusive democracy in Kosovo

Thank you Mr President, I would like to thank the Special Representative for his briefing and for his service to the international community and the people of Kosovo over the past six years. We also welcome the participation of Her Excellency the President of Kosovo and [His Excellency the Foreign Minister of Serbia which signals the importance both attach to a stable, secure and prosperous future for the region and all of its people.

Mr President, while there have been recent challenges to inter-community

relations in Kosovo, we note the overall positive trajectory of the situation in Kosovo set out in Mr Tanin's briefing and in the Secretary-General's most recent report.

At the last meeting, we welcomed the handling of parliamentary elections by the Kosovan authorities and the successful formation of a new government. Today's meeting takes place just ahead of local elections which begin on 17 October, after preparations which have been managed effectively. As we did in April, we wish to register our concern at reports of intimidation of Kosovo-Serb voters. Everyone in Kosovo has the right to participate in free and fair elections without fear of intimidation. Similarly, we also wish to express concern at the intimidation of Kosovo-Serb NGOs that work with Kosovo institutions and of individuals who seek to join Kosovo's multi-ethnic institutions.

We welcome the steps taken by the Kosovo authorities on a number of issues in the reporting period. In line with its priorities, the Kosovo government has made progress in strengthening the rule of law, particularly through the endorsement of a regional anti-corruption and illicit finance roadmap; and the signing-off of the Functional Review of the Rule of Law Strategy. The government has also made strong progress towards its target of vaccination of 60% of the population against the Covid-19 virus.

Finally, we wish to highlight and welcome the significant contribution made by Kosovo to NATO's evacuation efforts in Afghanistan.

There is of course always more to be done, and we urge the Kosovan authorities, working with all of Kosovo's communities, to redouble efforts on this path.

We welcome the support provided by the UN over the past 6 months. In particular, the Mission's work on returns of displaced persons and tackling gender-based violence. We should also highlight the news of the first successful conflict-related sexual violence prosecution in July, a big step forward both for survivors and for the domestic prosecution of war crimes.

Mr President, the Mission, as well as the OSCE and KFOR, play a valuable role in documenting inter-ethnic incidents and attacks on cultural heritage in Kosovo. The UK condemns all ethnically motivated violence. Likewise, we condemn all attacks on religious sites, including churches and mosques. We welcome the reduction in such incidents as reported by the OSCE and hope soon to see an end to all such incidents.

We emphasise our continued strong support for the EU-facilitated Dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo under EU Special Representative Miroslav Lajcak, working towards a comprehensive and sustainable normalisation agreement that will benefit the people of both countries. We encourage both parties to honour their dialogue commitments, engage in the dialogue in good faith and in the interest of all communities, avoid actions or rhetoric that could escalate tensions and lead to unintended consequences, including violence. We welcome the recent agreement brokered in Brussels by EUSR Lajcak, look forward to the start of further talks in Brussels next week, and urge

commitment from both sides to find a resolution that ensures freedom of movement.

Mr President, over the years UNMIK has done vital work in helping Kosovo develop into a stable and inclusive democracy. Kosovo has made huge progress since 1999 when UNSCR 1244 was agreed and conditions on the ground are now very different. It is right for a review of the role and responsibilities of UNMIK, which will help it to operate more effectively and better address contemporary challenges.

Thank you, Mr President

[Flags on UK government buildings to be half-masted](#)

News story

Following the death of Sir David Amess MP, flags on all UK government buildings will be flown at half-mast.



Flags will be flown at half mast on UK government buildings from today until 8pm on Monday 18 October.

Other organisations and local authorities may follow suit if they wish to do so.

ENDS

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Visa penalties and new powers to speed up removal of illegal migrants

The Home Secretary will be granted new powers to impose visa penalties on countries that refuse to take back their own citizens who have no right to be in the UK, under new reforms in the Nationality and Borders Bill announced today (Friday 15 October 2021).

Under these new powers, the Home Secretary will be able to take a tougher stance on countries that do not co-operate with deportations and removals, by suspending visas entirely, imposing a £190 surcharge on applications to come to the UK or increasing visa processing times.

When used, these powers will help to incentivise other countries to co-operate with the government to remove those who have no right to be in the country.

The new power to impose visa penalties is one of the amendments the government has tabled to the Nationality and Borders Bill, as the Home Secretary delivers on her commitment to create a fair but firm immigration system as part of the New Plan for Immigration.

Together these measures will help prevent dangerous illegal journeys into the UK and break the business model of the criminal gangs exploiting people.

Home Secretary, Priti Patel said:

The UK has a proud history of being open to the world but we rightly expect our international partners to work with us to remove those who have no right to be in the UK, such as dangerous foreign national offenders.

It is unfair on UK citizens and taxpayers that pressure is put on our public services by foreign nationals with no legal right to be here. Through my New Plan for Immigration, and this landmark legislation, I will continue to take the difficult action needed to fix our broken asylum system and deliver on what the British people want – full control of our borders.

More foreign criminals will also be removed sooner. Under changes to the Early Removal Scheme, foreign national criminals will now be eligible for removal up to 12 months before the end of their custodial sentence, as opposed to nine months.

Minister for Justice and Tackling Illegal Migration, Tom Pursglove said:

The New Plan for Immigration provides the only long-term solution

to fix our broken asylum system, and we are taking another step forward in delivering on this commitment as our Nationality and Borders Bill continues its passage through Parliament.

We are ensuring our system is fair for those who play by the rules, but firm on foreign criminals and those in our country illegally.

We have brought forward the most significant reforms to the immigration and asylum system in decades. This is what the British people have consistently demanded. Strengthening the Bill through these amendments will ensure that we continue to deliver for them.

The government has also tabled further amendments to the Bill, including:

- changes to the Special Immigration Appeals Commission Act 1997, to safeguard sensitive material. This will mean that legal challenges on immigration decisions which involve sensitive information can be heard by a court that specialises in protecting sensitive information
- expanding the types of claims that can be dealt with in an accelerated appeal from detention, so that more cases can be resolved while the person is in detention rather than them being released into the community. This includes foreign national offenders

Other government amendments expected to be tabled in Parliament over the coming week include:

- introducing a robust approach to age assessment to better identify children seeking asylum and stop adults accessing children's services
- legislation to establish an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) Scheme, in line with the government's ambition to secure the border. Once introduced, carriers will need to check that all passengers (except British and Irish citizens) have a digital authorisation or some other form of permission before they can travel to the UK

[Actuarial valuations of public service pensions schemes](#)

News story

New announcements will affect public service pension schemes. One means the 2016 valuations will complete and another sets out how the cost control mechanism will be reformed.



The government has made 2 separate announcements that will affect public service pension schemes: One will allow the 2016 valuations to complete. The other sets out how the cost control mechanism will be reformed going forward, starting from the forthcoming 2020 valuations.

2016 valuations – amending directions

The cost control element of these valuations had been paused due to uncertainty arising from the McCloud / Sargeant litigation. As that uncertainty recedes those valuations can now complete.

On 7 October the government published [Amending Directions](#) which allow completion of the 2016 public service pension scheme valuations. This legislation sets out how schemes must allow for the impact of the McCloud / Sargeant litigation in the cost control element of those valuations.

As part of this process, HMT [consulted the Government Actuary](#) on these changes and completed this statutory consultation in October 2021.

2020 valuations – cost control mechanism reform

On 4 October the government also announced it is to go ahead with the [reforms of the cost control mechanism](#) it proposed in its consultation earlier this year. In particular:

- moving to a ‘reformed scheme only’ design
- widening the corridor from 2% to 3% of pensionable pay
- and introducing an economic check

These reforms will be implemented ahead of the completion of the 2020 valuations and follow the Government Actuary’s recommendations in his [review of the mechanism](#) earlier this year.

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