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*Dear Sam,*

Thank you for your correspondence of 18 July, co-signed by Baroness Cox and Lord Alton of Liverpool, about reports of aerial bombing in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile (the 'Two Areas') and the ongoing humanitarian situation.

The UK condemns the ongoing hostilities in Sudan in the strongest terms. The escalation of conflict has caused the destruction of civilian infrastructure by fighting, looting and incidences of ransacking; and people have been forced to flee their homes to seek safety, protection and assistance. Reports of continued aerial bombardment of densely populated areas are deeply disturbing. Ending the violence is the single most important action we can take to guarantee the safety of the people of Sudan.

I remain extremely concerned by the ongoing hostilities between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), as well as by the continued lack of humanitarian access in the areas worst hit by the conflict. Despite commitments from both sides under the Jeddah Declaration to adhere to International Humanitarian Law, protect civilians and allow the transit and delivery of essential aid, access remains extremely limited, including almost no access to parts of Khartoum, and Darfur and Kordofan states.

The UK's top humanitarian priority is to secure immediate unfettered humanitarian access and operational security guarantees for humanitarian agencies. There can be no aid without safe and reliable access. The UK is in close contact, and actively working, with the UN, donors and humanitarian agencies to coordinate the effective delivery of aid. This includes putting pressure on the parties to the conflict to abide by their commitments and allow lifesaving humanitarian aid to reach the Sudanese people. We continue to work with our international partners, so that if and when the access situation improves, collectively the humanitarian response will be able to scale-up delivery in Sudan, targeting those most in need.

In May, I announced that the UK will provide £21.7 million in humanitarian aid for Sudan, as part of our contribution at the UN Horn of Africa pledging summit (which we reaffirmed at the 19 June Sudan pledging event). This follows an earlier announcement of £5 million to help meet the urgent needs of refugees and returnees in South Sudan and Chad. UK funded support will be delivered through the UN and other trusted partners, and through this, we will provide assistance such as safe drinking water, food, medical care and shelter to people in need, as well as supporting Gender Based violence protection services.

We also provide core funding to trusted global partners to enable them to respond rapidly in an emergency such as that which we are seeing in Sudan. For instance, the UN Central Emergency Respond Fund (CERF) and the Red Cross Disaster Response Emergency Fund (DREF), and START Fund, all of which the UK contributes to, have activated for Sudan and the region to provide assistance to those in desperate need.

I share your concerns regarding the human rights violations taking place across Sudan. The UK has consistently denounced all human rights violations that have taken place since the military coup on 25 October 2021, and the escalation in incidents since 15 April. The violence must end and those responsible must be held to account.

I will continue to raise my concerns about human rights violations in international fora, such as the UN Human Rights Council and Security Council. At the 13 July UN Security Council meeting on the International Criminal Court's Sudan investigation, we welcomed the ICC Prosecutor's decision to commence investigations into the offences being committed in Darfur.

The UK has released funding to organisations who are working with local partners to collect, verify and preserve digital content from the conflict, including incidents of significant abuses. This will play a vital role in amplifying the voices of those who are being targeted and would be permissible in future accountability mechanisms, should they be established. We also continue to fund and provide support to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Sudan (OHCHR), a UN body that provides a crucial role in monitoring and reporting on human rights.

The UK is pursuing all diplomatic avenues, including through cooperation with counterparts from African, Quad (KSA, UAE, UK, US) and European countries, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the African Union and the UN, to support efforts to end the violence, secure unfettered humanitarian access and protect civilians.

We are also working through an African Union-convened Core Group to ensure inclusive regional and international action to secure a viable peace process.

I would like to thank you for HART's continued work on Sudan, including providing life-saving assistance to the states of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile. It is essential that the security and military forces secure a permanent cessation of hostilities and hold to their commitments to withdraw from politics. I urge all Sudanese stakeholders to engage in an inclusive dialogue that will deliver the peace and security that the Sudanese people deserve.

With every good wish to you  
Yours ever,  
Andrew

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