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Date: 12 February 2026

Open Letter to Mr. Tom Fletcher

United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs
and Emergency Relief Coordinator

Cc: Antonio Guterres -UN Secretary General

Re: Concerns Regarding the Conduct of the Humanitarian Coordinator in Sudan

Dear Mr. Fletcher,

I write to express serious concerns regarding recent public statements issued by the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) in Sudan, Ms. Denise Brown, and the broader implications of those statements for humanitarian neutrality, operational integrity, and effective coordination in Sudan.

On 6 February 2026, Ms. Brown issued a public statement condemning an alleged attack on a World Food Programme (WFP) aid truck in North Kordofan. At the time of her statement, no official confirmation of such an incident had been issued by WFP itself. Nevertheless, her statement was swiftly followed by a series of condemnation statements from the governments of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Egypt, and subsequently by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, all of which explicitly relied on or referenced the HC's initial assertion.

As a former United Nations staff member, I am compelled to note that this sequence of events raises serious concerns regarding adherence to core UN principles, established operational governance standards, and accepted communication and verification practices.

First, with respect to UN principles and institutional discipline, the Humanitarian Coordinator should reasonably be expected to await formal confirmation from the relevant UN operational agency, particularly WFP in this case, before issuing a public condemnation. The



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absence of any contemporaneous WFP statement confirming the alleged incident renders the HC's intervention premature and institutionally unsound.

Second, from an operational and security governance perspective, it is highly implausible that UN humanitarian assistance would be transported through an active conflict zone by a single, uncoordinated vehicle. Standard UN procedures require security clearance and coordination through the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), with organized convoys that are clearly marked with humanitarian insignia and flags to distinguish them from military or commercial traffic. The statement in question provided no verifiable operational details consistent with these protocols.

Third, in terms of communication standards, the statement lacked essential factual specificity and verifiable information, falling short of the transparency and evidentiary threshold expected of senior UN officials when addressing highly sensitive and potentially escalatory incidents.

In parallel, serious concerns have emerged regarding possible undue influence by Port Sudan-based intelligence and political actors. These concerns were amplified by the circulation of a leaked National Intelligence Service report dated 6 February 2026, the same day as Ms. Brown's statement, which reportedly described an attack on a Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) logistical convoy in which more than 41 armored vehicles were destroyed. The report allegedly recommended that the de facto Ministry of Foreign Affairs encourage diplomatic missions, including the United Nations and foreign embassies, to issue public condemnation statements against the Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

While politically aligned actors may predictably issue reactive statements, it is deeply troubling if a senior UN official is perceived to have acted in a manner that aligns with such a strategy. Even the appearance of coordination with the Port Sudan de facto authorities' risks undermining the UN's neutrality, credibility, and the confidence of humanitarian partners on the ground.

It is also important to underscore that, at the time Ms. Brown issued her statement, there was active and constructive coordination between the Peace Government's National Authority for Humanitarian Access and several UN agencies. On 6 February 2026, UNICEF, UNDP, and WFP formally approached me, in my capacity as Chairman of the National Authority



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for Humanitarian Access, requesting travel permits for the movement of eighteen humanitarian trucks from El-Obeid (North Kordofan) to Dilling (South Kordofan). That request was immediately approved, security guarantees were provided, and the convoy arrived safely, with assistance delivered in a timely and effective manner.

This episode reflects a functioning operational partnership aimed at facilitating humanitarian access. In such a context, any perception of politicization or the “weaponization” of humanitarian narratives risks eroding trust and undermining practical coordination that directly affects civilians in need.

Finally, many humanitarian practitioners have expressed concern regarding the absence of comparable public condemnation of documented attacks attributed to SAF and allied groups, including the attack on WFP premises in Yabus and an SAF airstrike in Dabkar, South Kordofan, which reportedly destroyed five humanitarian trucks and resulted in the deaths of three aid workers. This lack of balanced public response further reinforces perceptions of partiality.

In light of the above, I respectfully urge United Nations Headquarters to consider the following measures:

1. Safeguarding Humanitarian Neutrality

Any perception that humanitarian action is being politicized or instrumentalized undermines UN core values and endangers humanitarian access. Decisive steps are required to preserve neutrality, impartiality, and independence in Sudan.

2. Review of Political Engagement Policy

The current approach of treating the Port Sudan de facto authorities as the sole representative of Sudan risks marginalizing other relevant actors and may inadvertently contribute to prolonging the conflict. A policy review could enable broader, more balanced engagement in support of humanitarian access and peace.

3. Leadership Review

Effective humanitarian leadership in armed conflict demands strict adherence to UN principles, institutional discipline, and cautious communication. It may be appropriate to



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assess whether current leadership arrangements best serve the UN Country Team during this critical period.

4. Commitment to Humanitarian Access

The National Authority for Humanitarian Access of the Peace Government remains fully committed to facilitating safe, effective, and timely humanitarian assistance across Sudan and stands ready to continue constructive cooperation with all UN agencies.

I trust that these concerns will be examined with the seriousness they warrant, in the shared interest of protecting humanitarian space and ensuring that assistance reaches those most in need without politicization.

Respectfully,

Ezzaddean Elsafi

Chairman

National Authority for Humanitarian Access

