

The Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has said in a tweet that five members of the UN humanitarian affairs office, OCHA, including senior leaders, were being ordered out of the country, as well as the UN Children's Fund UNICEF Representative, and a team leader from the UN human rights office.

The announcement was made on Thursday; two days after the world body's aid chief warned a government blockade of aid had likely forced hundreds of thousands of people in the northern region of Tigray into famine.

There has been increasing international criticism of conditions in Tigray and all parties fighting in northern Ethiopia face the possibility of sanctions from the U.S. government.

Secretary-General António Guterres voiced his shock on Thursday after the Ethiopian Government declared seven UN staff persona non grata, ordering them to leave the country within 72 hours.

Conflict erupted between federal forces and those aligned with the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the political party that controls the region, in November.

Tigrayan forces retook most of the region at the end of June, and then pushed into the neighbouring regions of Afar and Amhara, forcing hundreds of thousands of people there to flee their homes.