

We stand with you, Welby tells people of Kyiv

Kaya Burgess
Religious Affairs Correspondent, Kyiv

The Archbishop of Canterbury praised the “extraordinary courage” of the Ukrainian people as he arrived in the country’s capital for a landmark visit.

Justin Welby arrived by sleeper train in Kyiv yesterday to show solidarity in the face of what he called “Russia’s illegal, unjust and brutal invasion”, becoming the first leader of the Church of England since the First World War to travel to an active European war zone.

Welby said he wanted to “be present with people who, because of conflict and war, feel incredibly isolated” and said that he feared a humanitarian catastrophe. He added: “This visit is about showing solidarity with them as they face a profoundly difficult winter.”

He is set to visit bomb-damaged areas near the capital, hold talks with leaders from the Catholic and Orthodox churches and meet UN officials and the British ambassador. He will also witness the work being done by Anglicans and other Christians to provide aid to those displaced by the conflict in what is being termed a three-day “pastoral visit”.

Randall Davidson was the last Archbishop of Canterbury to travel to an active European warzone, when he visited the western front in 1916.

Welby spent yesterday afternoon touring central Kyiv with local Anglican church leaders, passing by military checkpoints and armed guards around the presidential and government buildings now familiar from President Zelensky’s outdoor addresses to rally his nation. He also visited a Lutheran church and walked by the hulks of destroyed and captured Russian tanks on display outside St Michael’s monastery.

The Times flew with the archbishop from London to Warsaw yesterday where he met a charity called Ukrainian House, which is working to help Ukrainian refugees in Poland,

providing schooling to children and support to their mothers, who usually arrive as lone parents because men of military age are banned from leaving Ukraine. More than 7.8 million Ukrainians have crossed the Polish border since the Russian invasion in February, with about 1.4 million staying in Poland.

Myroslava Keryk, the head of the charity, told Welby that Ukrainians were “very grateful for this very strong voice of Great Britain, supporting us regardless of the changes of governments”. Welby placed his head in his hands in mock despair at the recent political turmoil in Britain, prompting laughter from the charity’s staff.

Welby said: “They were almost all women who had fled [Ukraine], with children in some cases, leaving behind husbands, boyfriends, partners serving with the military. So [feeling] really lonely, isolated and fearful.”

Welby also visited the papal nuncio — the Pope’s ambassador in Poland — Archbishop Salvatore Pennacchio, at his residence in Warsaw to discuss relief efforts to support Ukrainians in Poland and send aid supplies across the border.

With airspace closed over Ukraine, Welby was joined by a small team including The Times in boarding a sleeper train in Warsaw to roll across into Ukraine and on to Kyiv, with the archbishop describing the journey as “like something out of a John le Carré novel”.

The archbishop was accompanied by the Bishop in Europe, the Right Rev Robert Innes, who represents Anglicans in continental Europe, for the 17-hour journey. Welby said he wanted to “learn how we can continue to support them amidst the ongoing devastation, loss and destruction of this war”.

Welby has visited a large number of conflict-affected zones, including in Pakistan and Mozambique this year and in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, South Sudan and Nigeria.

Battle for tiny outpost could decide who wins Ukraine war, page 32

A guide accompanies the Archbishop of Canterbury near St Sophia’s Cathedral in central Kyiv yesterday



£90k award for harassed TV reporter

Dominic Kennedy Investigations editor

A *Panorama* reporter who exposed antisemitism in Labour has been awarded exemplary libel damages of £90,000 after he was falsely branded a “rogue journalist”.

John Ware was harassed by Paddy French, a campaigner, who sent his blog to 100 BBC managers in a “targeting of those on whom [Ware] relies for work”, the High Court said.

French, who did not attend the trial, “seriously exacerbated the damage caused to” Ware by wrongly claiming he had been stifled by the court, a judge said. Ware has already succeeded in libel actions against Labour and the fringe group Jewish Voice for Labour, who attacked his character.

Ware presented *Is Labour Antisemitic?* in 2019, reporting that antisemitism had increased under Jeremy Corbyn’s leadership. One interviewee called the party “institutionally racist”. Corbyn and Labour had the right to reply.

Ware, 75, a former BBC employee turned freelance, is an award-winning journalist, Mr Justice Julian Knowles said. French is a retired TV producer who edits the Press Gang website with the slogan “Exposing rogue journalism”. He joined Labour under Corbyn.

French’s article said Ware’s programme was one-sided, ignored facts and “bent the truth to breaking point”. French claimed Ware was biased and hostile towards Corbyn and Labour.

French recounted in his piece how he had previously co-authored with Brian Cathcart, journalism professor at Kingston University, a book accusing The Times of “anti-Muslim reporting”.

French at first pleaded defences of truth and public interest. He then withdrew the defence of truth and was ordered to pay Ware £15,000 costs, which he failed to do before finally announcing he would no longer contest the claim.

The judge said accusing a journalist of being a dishonest rogue was of the “utmost seriousness”. Ware told the court he had written more pieces critical of Boris Johnson than Corbyn.

French was ordered to publish a summary of the judgment on his website and send it to those he had sent his article to. An injunction was made forbidding French from repeating the claims.

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