

# Ukraine conflict may drag on for years, says Welby

**Kaya Burgess**  
Religious Affairs Correspondent, Kyiv

There is a real fear that the war between Russia and Ukraine will drag on for decades like the Israel-Palestine conflict, the Archbishop of Canterbury said in Kyiv yesterday.

The Most Rev Justin Welby had to take cover in a bomb shelter yesterday after air-raid sirens sounded across Ukraine when Russian planes with missile-carrying capability were reported to have taken off in Belarus.

The Times accompanied Welby and Ukrainian religious leaders to a bunker in a converted car park two floors beneath a Kyiv hotel, where the archbishop said: "It is a great horror and disgrace, almost 80 years after the end of the Second World War, that a European country has air-raid warnings."

After the all-clear sounded, Welby said of the war in Ukraine: "How long will it last? Is it like some of the wars we have seen which have lasted, as between India and Pakistan, a year or 18 months? Is it like the Second World War — six years?"

"Or is it what people call a 'frozen' war, which has moments of great activity, moments of relative calm but not peace, and like the Middle East could last 60, 70, 80 years?"

Asked if the comparison with the Israel-Palestine conflict, made by other religious leaders during his visit, was apt, he said: "I think it's a very real and very reasonable fear ... I think western countries need to realise they will have to show long-term resilience."

Welby said pressuring Ukraine to surrender or give in to Russian terms would be as "immoral" as it was to carve up Czechoslovakia to appease Hitler in 1938.

Ukrainian church leaders told Welby yesterday that they feared another Russian-caused genocide, following

the man-made Holodomor famine of the 1930s, but this time caused by Russian strikes on energy infrastructure as winter sets in.

Welby was shown a video purportedly showing a Russian priest blessing bullets as they were loaded into Russian guns for use in Ukraine. He said: "I am horrified. That is a terrible blasphemy."

He said his message to Patriarch Kirill, head of the Russian Orthodox church and a supporter of President Putin and the Russian invasion, was that "the duty of Christian leaders is to seek peace and pursue it".

The archbishop called on people in Britain to send money or materials to support Ukraine if they were able to, and urged people to cook a Christmas meal for Ukrainian refugees staying nearby, to "enable them to have a Christmas where they won't feel quite as lonely and take some weight off the people in whose house they are living".

Welby said he did not regret calling Putin's invasion an "act of evil" in February and said that even if the war ended soon, it could take generations to repair the damage and trauma.

He also said Boris Johnson's stance on Ukraine was "one of the things he got stunningly right" and said: "Liz Truss and Rishi Sunak have followed his example and so has Keir Starmer. If Labour come into office at some point, I don't anticipate any change of policy at all. They all realise ... we have to support Ukraine clearly and well. The challenges and implications of that are enormous ... but are we gearing up for the ultra long-term?" He added that it was "very positive" that Britain had a "healthy political atmosphere again" after recent turmoil.

Welby will visit bomb-damaged areas near Kyiv today on the final day of his trip to Ukraine.

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## Army's ammunition would last for only a week of war

**George Grylls**

The British Army would run out of ammunition in a week if it was forced to fight a conflict like the war in Ukraine, a report has warned.

A study of the war published by the Royal United Services Institute found that Britain's ammunition stockpiles were "woefully deficient".

The report, whose authors include senior Ukrainian military figures, praised the professionalism of the British Army and its ability to quickly train forces, meaning it could rapidly expand in size in the event of an all-out war.

But it said that the army lacked the level of firepower that enabled Ukraine to defend Kyiv and argued that other Nato allies could not be relied upon to make up the shortfall because they too had underspent on ammunition.

"The oft-cited refrain of the UK Ministry of Defence that these deficiencies are not a problem because the UK fights alongside Nato allies would be more credible if the situation were much better among any of the UK's European allies. It is not, except in Finland," the report said.

At the height of fighting in the Don-

bas, Russia was using more ammunition in two days than Britain has in its entire stockpiles, the authors found.

At Ukrainian levels of firing, Britain would run out of ammunition in a week. Ukrainian officials said that they were firing about 5,000 to 6,000 artillery rounds a day in the summer, equating to 35,000 to 42,000 a week.

Britain also lacked air defence capabilities, the authors said.

Francis Tusa, a defence analyst, said that the problem of depleted British stockpiles was decades-old and blamed Treasury rules that penalise departments for holding spare stock.

"From the Treasury's point of view, holding stock is wrong. But we need to hold six months' worth of ammo in case we get into a serious war."

A defence source said the report was "based on assumptions", adding: "Given that ammunition levels are highly classified, this report is misleading."

"The war in Ukraine is an example of Soviet doctrine which uses vast quantities of artillery. We do not, nor ever have, used artillery in such methods, so to try and draw such conclusions is misleading."

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