

Speaking in the House of Lords last night, Archbishop Justin Welby pressed the Government to pursue mediation and diplomacy in Ukraine, and raised concern for the many refugees and the huge humanitarian needs that a conflict would create.

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Archbishop Justin Welby:

Having listened to the questions, does the noble Baroness the Leader agree that mediation and diplomacy should be pursued until the last moment, seeking to find ways to give both sides the opportunity to withdraw—particularly the Russians from their completely unjustified threats?

The one thing we can be sure of is that, once war starts, all control of the situation will be completely lost, possibly for years, and the casualties will be terrible. Secondly, what provision are the Government making, should the worst come to the worst, to support the very large number of refugees and the huge needs for humanitarian support that will inevitably be part of fighting in the late winter in eastern Europe?

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Baroness Evans of Bowes Park:

I thank the most reverend Primate. He is absolutely right: diplomacy is the only way out of the current situation, but Russia must uphold the international commitments it has freely entered into and respect the sovereignty of Ukraine. I reassure noble Lords that we remain open to efforts by Russia to reduce tensions and encourage her to engage with transparency and de-escalation mechanisms, such as the OSCE and the NATO-Russia Council, as I mentioned. Further such council meetings have been offered to discuss a whole range of issues, and that is the way forward: to de-escalate and engage in meaningful discussions. The US Administration has also confirmed President Biden's willingness to have another meeting with President Putin, continuing the bilateral dialogue they began last week, so a lot of effort is ongoing on that side of things as well. We are providing £40 million in official development assistance and other funding to Ukraine in the coming year.

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