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Lukashenko Urges 'Truce' in Ukraine and Talks 'Without Preconditions'

By AFP

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Belarus' President Alexander Lukashenko. **president.gov.by**

Belarusian strongman and close Kremlin ally Alexander Lukashenko called Friday for a "truce" in Ukraine and for talks "without preconditions" between Moscow and Kyiv.

"We must stop now, before an escalation begins. I'll take the risk of suggesting an end of hostilities ... a declaration of a truce," Lukashenko said during a televised state-of-the-nation address.

"All territorial, reconstruction, security and other issues can and should be settled at the negotiation table, without preconditions," added Lukashenko, who has been in power since 1994.

He also said that Western support for Kyiv was increasing the likelihood of a nuclear war breaking out in Ukraine.

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"As a result of the efforts of the United States and its satellites, a full-scale war has been unleashed in [Ukraine]... a third world war with nuclear fires looms on the horizon," he said.

Belarus allowed Russian forces to use its territory as a launchpad for Moscow's offensive, but Lukashenko has so far refused to send his own troops over the border.

Over the weekend, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced plans to station tactical nuclear weapons in the Moscow-allied country, drawing condemnation from the West.

Belarus subsequently said that it felt compelled to host Russian nuclear weapons due to the "unprecedented" Western pressure exerted on Minsk, while insisting their deployment did not violate existing international agreements.

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