

Beat: Politics

U.S. urges Ukraine;s president not to declare state of emergency

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USPA News - U.S. Vice President Joe Biden called Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych on Monday to warn the government not to declare a state of emergency, saying harsh security measures would further escalate the situation and make a peaceful resolution unlikely. The White House said Biden spoke by telephone with Yanukovych and expressed the U.S. government's support for the ongoing negotiations between the Ukrainian government and the opposition, which earlier led to opposition leader Arseniy Yatsenyuk rejecting Yanukovych's offer to become prime minister.

"[Biden] underscored that the U.S. condemns the use of violence by any side, and warned that declaring a State of Emergency or enacting other harsh security measures would further inflame the situation and close the space for a peaceful resolution," the White House said in a statement. The statement added: "Underscoring that no time should be lost, the Vice President urged President Yanukovych to pull back riot police and work with the opposition on immediate measures to de-escalate tensions between protesters and the government. He also urged the government to take concrete steps during [Tuesday's] parliamentary session to respond to the full and legitimate concerns of the Ukrainian people, including by repealing the anti-democratic laws passed on January 16." The vice president also reaffirmed the U.S. government's "unwavering support" for a democratic Ukraine. "[Biden] reaffirmed the unwavering support of the United States for a Ukraine that rejects violence and that respects the human rights and dignity of its citizens in accordance with their European aspirations and their desire to restore their country back to economic health," the White House said. Earlier on Monday evening, after Yanukovych wrapped up a 4-hour meeting with opposition leaders, Justice Minister Olena Lukash said the president had agreed to scrap his harsh anti-protest laws that set off week-long clashes between protesters and police. But it remained unclear whether the move was sufficient to satisfy protesters. "A political decision has been made to abolish the laws adopted on January 16 that caused multiple discussions," Lukash said in a statement issued by the presidency. "Provisions of the laws that will be invalidated tomorrow will be jointly elaborated by the parties and will meet the European standards." Lukash also hinted at an amnesty for protesters who have been arrested over the past week, but said it would only be possible if all protesters stopped occupying buildings as well as Kiev's central Independence Square. "The amnesty will enter into force only in case of vacation of all seized premises and roads. Otherwise, the offenses committed will not be amnestied," said Lukash, who had earlier threatened with a state of emergency.

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