

Archbishop of Canterbury warns over hunger in Britain

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The Archbishop of Canterbury was launching a report Monday urging Britain's government to do more to eliminate hunger among people who struggle to afford food.

Justin Welby is backing the report by a group of lawmakers which was prompted by a huge increase in the number of Britons using food banks. These distribute free groceries to people who need them.

The Trussell Trust, one of the main charities running food banks in Britain, says the number of people using its centres has risen from 128,697 in 2011/12 to 913,138 in 2013/14.

The All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Hunger and Food Poverty in Britain is reportedly set to urge the creation of a new body featuring government ministers to work for a "hunger-free Britain", plus action to make supermarkets give surplus [food](#) to poor people.

In an article for this week's Mail on Sunday newspaper, Welby compared what he saw at a refugee camp in the Democratic Republic of Congo with a [food bank](#) in Britain where he met a family struggling to make ends meet.

"I found their plight more shocking," the spiritual leader of the world's Anglican Christians wrote of the British family.

"It was less serious, but it was here. And they weren't careless with what

they had—they were just up against it."

The co-chairman of the group behind the report, lawmaker Frank Field of the main opposition Labour party, said ahead of its publication: "There is clear evidence that something terribly disturbing is happening."

He added: "People are near the abyss and the smallest thing can tip them over into the abyss."

Prime Minister David Cameron's coalition government, led by the centre-right Conservatives, has imposed steep cuts on public services in Britain since coming to power in 2010 to try and reduce a budget deficit.

Britain's deficit is forecast to hit £91.3 billion (115 billion euros, \$143 billion dollars) in the year to March 2015, finance minister George Osborne said in a key budget update Wednesday.

The next day, Osborne hit back at a suggestion in a BBC report that the cuts were taking parts of Britain back to the kind of crippling poverty portrayed in George Orwell's 1937 book "The Road To Wigan Pier".

He condemned the claim as "hyperbolic", rejecting the BBC's allegation that the budget had "glossed over" the "hulking great mountain of pain" facing Britain.

The economy is set to be a key battleground in next May's general election, for which opinion polls place the Conservatives and Labour neck-and-neck.

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