

France Wants to Extend Post-Terror Attack State of Emergency



Paris, November 16 (RHC)-- French Prime Minister Manuel Valls confirmed on Tuesday the government's plan to extend a nationwide state of emergency which has been in place since last November's coordinated terrorist attacks shook Paris.

Valls said that the government will ask the country's parliament to further extend the state of emergency enacted after the November Paris attacks carried out by terrorists which killed at least 130 people including the shooting of concertgoers at the Bataclan Theatre.

"France has to be clear about the threat, and that's why we're proposing to Parliament to extend the state of emergency," Valls said, noting that the risk for terrorist attacks seems to have decreased.

The prime minister has continually cited the country's presidential elections starting in May and France's support of U.S.-backed forces fighting the Islamic State Group in Iraq and Syria as justification for the extension. Valls did not specify how long the extensions would last for. It was previously drawn out for another six months at the end of July.

Last Sunday -- the anniversary of the Paris attacks -- Valls said it was "difficult" to lift the state of emergency "since we are going to begin a presidential campaign in a few weeks with meetings, with public gatherings. So we must also protect our democracy."

Valls said that there were still risks of a Nice-style attack where 84 people were run down by a truck on Bastille Day in July. However, the prime minister noted that the risk of terrorist attacks seems to have decreased.

Rights and civil liberties groups are concerned that state of emergency powers erode personal rights and freedoms, where the government has afforded law enforcement additional powers to carry out searches without a warrant and placing people under house arrest for suspicious activities.

Others are concerned about the impact the laws are having on Muslim and minority communities within France, as far-right political groups such as Marie Le Pen gain momentum going into the elections.

The government, however, claims that the state of emergency has been effective in expelling and preventing extremism with police making hundreds of key arrests to keep the country secure for attacks.

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