
FRANCE TO PRESENT NEW SECURITY BILL AMID EXTREMIST THREATS

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PARIS (AP) □ French President Emmanuel Macron's new government is presenting a security bill Thursday to beef up police powers amid sustained extremist threats to Europe.

Macron insists the bill being discussed at a Cabinet meeting won't infringe on freedoms, but rights groups fear France is heading for a permanent state of emergency.

Macron's government is seeking to extend France's existing state of emergency through Nov. 1, the time it will take the new security bill to pass through parliament. The current expiration date for the state of emergency is July 15. It would be the sixth extension of the measure since deadly attacks by extremists in Paris November 2015.

Thursday's discussion comes three days after an attacker drove a car carrying explosives into a police convoy on Paris' busy Champs-Elysees avenue, the latest of several small-scale attacks on European cities.

"The threat is long-lasting," Macron said in an interview with several European newspapers published Thursday. "So we must organize ourselves for the long-term" instead of relying on emergency security measures.

The bill would allow state authorities to place people posing "a particularly serious threat" under house arrest. They would be allowed to move within a specific area, so that they would be able to have a family and professional life.

The draft law would also ease conditions for state authorities to conduct counterterror raids on condition they are authorized and supervised by a judge.

Authorities could also decide to close places of worship for up to six months if comments deemed to incite terrorism are made. The bill also includes measures to ensure better security at big sports and cultural events.

Some human rights organizations called on the government to abandon the reforms earlier this month because of concerns over civil liberties.

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