

F. Hollande: being the president is hard

On 18th of September, the French president François Hollande held a mid-term press conference where he expressed doubts in effectiveness of his actions, answered journalists' questions, concerning delicate national and international issues and announced plans for the rest of his term.

While answering the queries of *Figaro* journalists and defending his actions during the past two years, the president abundantly repeated “this is not easy” and suggested that the results of his policy should be evaluated in 2017, when they are more evident. In spite of the economic recession, Holland affirmed his intentions on retaining the post until 2017. “Today I have earned the experience in confronting various situations where I must be strict and make decisions affecting millions of French citizens. It was not an easy decision to replace the Prime Minister, however, I was rigid with myself in the first place” confessed F. Hollande and revoked the rumors about his resignation. In order to regain the trust of the nation, president reassured to make as little changes as possible in the budget of 2015 and denied the rumors about the growth of VAT next year.

Criticized by A. Merkel for not respecting the European Union budget agreements and delaying the reforms, Hollande replied that the Union should take thought of why the anti-EU sentiment is on the rise in many of the member states, “we did not create the European Union to watch it break up” he added. Hollande vigorously defended his position explaining that the changes, currently expected from France, took Germans themselves over ten years despite a more favorable economic environment and a virtual lack of public deficit. As for now, in the times of economic standstill in the country, the revival of French business competitiveness is his major concern.

Moving onto the subject of international terrorism, François Hollande rejected the U.S. administration accusations of negotiating with terrorists and reminded about the ongoing hostage situation in Mali where one person has already been murdered after France’s refusal to negotiate.

The question of French presence in the crises in Iraq, Libya and Russia-Ukraine conflict has also been briefly discussed. Hollande stated: “France cannot be omnipresent. The matter [in Libya] should be arbitrated by international organizations,” although affirmed the intention to take part in the aerial operations in Iraq: “Our aim is to contribute to the peace and security in Iraq by weakening the terrorists.” The president rigorously emphasized that he strongly believes in the cause yet he denied the possibility of any ground operations. Further, socialist President confirmed the notion expressed during the NATO meeting in New Port that the ship “Mistral” can be sold to Russia if the Ceasefire Agreement in Ukraine is respected.

Lastly, Ebola virus outbreak, which has already taken lives of more than 2500 people, was discussed. The French president has announced the intention to financially support Guinea in construction of a military hospital in a forested area.

After a two-hour-long press conference F. Hollande admitted to the *LePoint* reporters: “A couple of hours will not make any difference, there is still a long way to go” while the whispers in the background could be heard: “He does the job he seems not to believe in anymore”.



President of French Republic François Hollande in press conference in Elysées, Paris on 18th of September 2014 (Photo Patrick Kovarik “Libération Politique”)