

# Hamon presents pro-war, law-and-order program in French elections

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Benoît Hamon, after having beaten former Prime Minister Manuel Valls into second place in the Socialist Party (PS) presidential primary, is placed to become the PS's candidate, according to polls.

Hamon's rise since the beginning of the primary campaign reflects broad discontent with the current PS government, as well as media coverage for Hamon's call for a universal minimum income paid by the state to everyone. Valls, though his poll ratings benefited as prime minister from media promotion of his law-and-order policies as interior and then prime minister, was suddenly overtaken by a relatively minor candidate. According to a BVA-Salesforce poll, Hamon is set to beat Valls with 52 percent of the vote in the second round.

Nonetheless, any attempt to register opposition to the PS's agenda of war, austerity and police state measures through a vote for Hamon is doomed to failure. Despite media promotion of Hamon as "left" due to his promise to set up a universal income, Hamon defends a foreign policy of war and a law-and-order policy oriented to the security forces.

It represents in the final analysis an attempt to continue the policies of PS President François Hollande. In fact, in the first primary debate, Hamon said that Hollande's government left "a feeling that things were partially done, as if we left many subjects in mid-stream."

As the installation of Donald Trump in the White House underlines the rising danger of large-scale war between the major powers, Hamon calls for an offensive of French imperialism. In foreign policy, he is aligned with the CIA and the sections of American and European imperialism that are the most hostile against Russia, and who want to continue the war in Syria.

Hamon has attacked the cease-fire organized by Russia and Turkey from the standpoint of defending the influence of Washington and the major European powers, who provoked the war by arming Islamist "rebels" against the Syrian regime. "I do not want a cease-fire accord in Syria that would come about, as is the case now, without the United Nations, without the European Union, without the Americans and without the Arab societies," he declared.

To justify a French policy of continuing to finance the "rebel"-held areas in Syria while opposing financial aid to the Syrian people, Hamon said: "Spending money on zones controlled by Bashar al Assad, I do not see very well why this should be a priority of the European Union, when there is in Syria a wide range of other potential partners, like the quasi-autonomous and self-ruled cities. We, on our part, do not have to limit ourselves to simply rebuilding what was methodically destroyed by the Russians and Assad's regime."

As a representative of French imperialism, Hamon calls for using military means to reinforce the influence of France in its former colonial empire and sphere of influence, as in the wars in Libya and Mali. Asked if he would have intervened in Africa as did President Nicolas Sarkozy and Hollande, he said: "If a sovereign state asked you to intervene militarily to prevent the rise of a jihadist 'state' just across the Mediterranean? Of course I would have intervened."

Hamon is resolutely pro-war. He is the candidate that demands the greatest increase in the military budget, to 3 percent of GDP, more than the 2 percent demanded by NATO: "If we want to conserve a level of investment that does not sacrifice our conventional forces to maintaining our nuclear capacity and deterrent, we will have to increase the defence budget. This means ... that we will have to say, including to the

Europeans ... that investments made by France, so by French taxpayers, should be excluded from the calculation of budget deficits.”

Even if Hamon succeeded in convincing the EU not to count the military budget when calculating whether France had violated EU limits on budget deficits, spending billions of euros on the army would require slashing social spending to extract the cost of the military buildup from the workers.

Hamon, who has said there must “without a doubt be more” policemen in France, is calling for a massive increase in police force levels to make it possible to send troops—currently deployed inside France under Operation Watchman and the state of emergency—to fight in foreign wars. “It’s no longer possible to continue with the [current] Operation Watchman, which mobilizes professional soldiers who objectively would be more useful on the ground, and in training, than on guard duty in front of our buildings. So we need to strengthen the *gendarmerie* reserves, the armed forces reserve, to complement Operation Watchman, which should keep fewer professional soldiers busy.”

The call to boost the security forces, taken up by the Hollande administration, shows that Hamon is fundamentally on the same reactionary line. The criticisms he has made of the state of emergency imposed by the PS are purely tactical, insofar as they aim to make the police deployment more efficient and make it easier to fight foreign wars.

The media are not stressing Hamon’s support for Hollande’s wars and police-state policies. They are presenting Hamon as the PS’s left wing, citing his proposal to set up a universal income paying everyone somewhere between €600 and €800 per month.

Asked by *Libération*, “Does this mean that we have to abandon any hope in [economic] growth?” he replied: “Growth will not come back. And if it does return, it will not reduce either poverty or social inequality. And it does not mean anything about the level of health and education, which can develop independently of growth levels. GDP can no longer be an objective when it is obtained via a consumerist and productivist development model.”

Hamon’s proposition combines demoralization and charlatanry. He has nothing to propose to the workers besides accepting deindustrialization, mass unemployment and the pauperization of the population,

reduced to an €800 salary on which it is impossible to live decently. While Hamon claims that it is possible to defend health and education while accepting the destruction of industry and the productive forces, this is false.

Moreover, such a measure would require an expenditure of hundreds of billions of euros that Hamon’s backers inside the bourgeoisie would not tolerate—a state of affairs that doubtless is not lost on Hamon. His proposal is simply made to give himself a bit of empty “left” cover, and, according to polls, two-thirds of the French population says they are hostile to his universal income scheme.



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