The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Putin Stops Short of Confirming Re-Election Campaign

June 15, 2017



Kremlin Press Service

At his annual "Direct Line" question and answer session broadcast live on television, Russian President Vladimir Putin stopped short of announcing he will run for the presidency in elections scheduled for March.

“First, I am still in the office,” Putin said in response to a question about his potential successor. He then said that only voters can decide who will lead a town, a region or the country.

The Russian president did not specify when Russians would select his successor, in 2018 or 2024.

Asked what the goals of the next presidential term Putin should be, Putin answered “growth of Russian citizens’ income” and “dismantling barracks and dilapidated housing.”

“It all can be achieved if we will develop national economy at the requisite speed,” he said.

The Russian president said he has nothing against legal “political longevity” in a separate comment.

If Putin successfully runs for the presidency in 2018, he will have remained in power for 24 years, exceeding the term of any Russian leader since Josef Stalin.

Putin did not confirm whether he will run for the presidency next year or whether he would host "Direct Line again."

“If I have one," the president said, "it will be direct.”

Original url:
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