

Mayor Faces Jail for Refusing to Officiate Gay Wedding

A French mayor is facing up to five years in prison and fine of up to £63,000 for declining to carry out a **same-sex marriage**.

Jean-Michel Colo, a mayor in southwest France, rejected a wedding application from two men and says he stands by his decision. But under French law, discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation can be punishable by up to half a decade in prison and up to a €75,000 fine. He could also be removed from office or face suspension over the move—which is being supported by his deputies.

Mayor Colo said while it is up to individuals what they do in the privacy of their own homes, “If you ask me as the mayor to support it, then I am very uncomfortable with it.” Speaking to a French newspaper, the French interior minister said elected officials “who do not respect the laws of the republic will risk significant sanctions.”

The same-sex couple, Guy Martineau-Espel and Jean-Michel Martin, plan to take the case to court. And a homosexual lobby group also says it will file a complaint against the mayor and his deputies.

France redefined marriage in April, but at the time a poll showed around 15,000 mayors were opposed to the new law. Another survey in April showed that French President François Hollande, who made the change an election pledge, was the most unpopular president since the 1950s. The poll, from Ifop, showed 74 percent of respondents were unhappy with him.

In January, hundreds of thousands of people lined the streets of Paris to demonstrate against the legislation, which also includes same-sex adoption. Protestors held blue and pink

posters and banners declaring “all born of a father and mother.”

In Britain, the coalition government is pushing ahead with **same-sex marriage**, despite widespread concern. The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill, which has been described as “ill-thought through” and lacking in democratic legitimacy, is currently being considered by the House of Lords.