



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on January 16, 2013

## Half-Million French Protest Country's Plan to Legalize Same-Sex Marriage

As France's socialist government gears up to push for the legalization of same-sex marriage, the French people are fighting back. On January 13 a crowd estimated at around 500,000 took to the streets surrounding Paris' Eiffel Tower to show their support for traditional marriage and their opposition to normalizing homosexual relationships as "marriage."



[Reuters News](#) reported that the massive, half-million-strong crowd marched through the streets of Paris on Sunday, January 13, demanding that Socialist President Francois Hollande withdraw a "reform bill" that would legalize same-sex marriage and give homosexual couples adoption rights. Opponents are demanding a national debate on the issues.

Many participants said that the protest was aimed at the government's apparent refusal to budge on its plans to push through the legislative measures, and the huge crowd was fueled by the government's intransigence. The display did not move government leaders, with Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, the socialist government's women's affairs minister, telling Reuters that the plan to pass the reform bill through parliament by June 1 would continue as scheduled. "The government is totally determined to achieve ... this historic progress that is not the victory of one camp over another, but progress for the whole society," she said. "We take note of the demonstration, but this will be discussed in parliament and not in the street."

Interior Minister Manuel Valls mirrored the government's position, telling France's *Le Monde* that "we always thought the turnout would be strong and it was.... All the more reason to stay focused on the goal of passing the law."

French law already allows same-sex civil unions, but during his presidential campaign, Hollande pledged to deliver marriage to gays, as well as adoption rights.

Opposition parties, by contrast, expressed their resistance to the move, with Jean-Francois Cope, president of the UMP (Union for a Popular Movement), telling Reuters that the protest represented a major obstacle for Hollande, showing that there are "clearly millions of French people who are probably concerned by this reform." Likewise, reported Reuters, the National Front party "is also opposed to the change, although its leader Marine Le Pen stayed away from the march, arguing the issue was a diversion by politicians from France's real problems."

Not surprisingly in one of Europe's most secular nations, organizers insisted that the protest was not motivated by religious commitment to traditional marriage. Protesters' placards included such slogans



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as, “We don’t want your law, Francois,” “Don’t touch my civil code,” and, “Long live the parity in the marriage, one mother, one father it is elementary.”

Frigide Barjot, the French comedienne considered the figurehead leader of the event, said that the protest was not aimed against gays, and insisted that many of the protesters, whom she said included atheists and even homosexuals, had no problem with the present civil union law that allows same-sex partnerships. They simply saw same-sex marriage as destructive to French society.

Nonetheless, both Catholic and non-denominational Christian sentiment was present in the mass demonstration. Daniel Liechti, vice president of the National Council of French Evangelicals, insisted that the rally demonstrated the beginnings of a re-emergence of the influence of religious faith among a minority in the secularized France. “We’re not naïve,” he said. “We see that religion’s influence in society is diminishing. But as it diminishes, this leads to increased commitment among believers.” He added that the crowd of hundreds of thousands showed that the French still value morality. “The French are tolerant, but they are deeply attached to the family and the defense of children,” he said.

While the Catholic Church kept a low profile at the protest, reported Reuters, “about 30 lay associations — including large ones representing Catholic families and right-to-life activists — and local parishes provided crucial logistical backbone for the protest.”

[LifeSiteNews.com](#) reported that among the Catholic Church leaders who appeared at the event were Cardinal Vingt-Trois of Paris, as well as Cardinal Philippe Barbarin of Lyon, who spoke of the “violence” of the new legislation that would “change the meaning” of marriage. “This law is violently harming a nation,” Barbarin told a crowd of protesters. “It will not mean progress for France.”

According to Jean Smits, a LifeSiteNews reporter who covered the event, the majority of the protesters in the massive crowd were Catholics. “Old and young, rich and poor, from every corner of France, rural areas and towns, they responded to calls from nearly every French bishop to voice their opposition to same-sex ‘marriage,’” reported Smits. “Many large families traveled far and long by car or bus. People who had never demonstrated in their lives discovered the joy of defending their faith and their ideals together.”

In additions to Catholics and other Christians, Muslims had also indicated that they would join the January 13 protest. At least 50 Islamic organizations in France signed an open letter urging the nation’s Muslims to join the protest. That letter followed a similar appeal from the influential Union of French Islamic Organizations (UOIF).

“We will protest on January 13 by joining a pluralist campaign to preserve the traditional framework of marriage,” the letter said. “We invite all French Muslims to turn out in large numbers.” The UOIF letter similarly asked Muslims to stand against the reform bill, warning that if it passes, it “will disrupt family and social structures and civil law dangerously and irreparably.”

*Photo of French protest: AP Images*



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