

## Taiwan May Become First Asian Country to Legalize Same-Sex Marriage



*Summary: After a ruling from Taiwan's high court, the country may become the first in Asia to legalize same-sex marriages.*

In a landmark decision, Taiwan's high court has ruled on Wednesday that barring same-sex marriage is unconstitutional. The overall liberal country said that denying LGBTQ individuals the right to marry violated their right to equality.

Wednesday's ruling from the court called Legislative Yuan gives parliament two years to amend current laws or pass new ones to legalize same-sex marriage.

"Different treatment is incompatible with the spirit and meaning of the right to equality," Taiwan's press release said.

Parliament has the choice to grant same-sex couples all the rights as opposite-sex couples which include inheritance and adoption rights, but BBC reports that the local LGBTQ community worries that parliament may only give them the bare minimum--recognition of their marriage but not with equal rights.

Taiwan is the first country in Asia to declare same-sex marriage as legal, and Wednesday's ruling could pave the way for gay weddings to be performed in the island country. While Taiwan is known for its vibrant yearly LGBTQ festival and President Tsai Ing-wen has said in 2015 that she supported same-sex marriages, there are thousands of conservatives who have turned out to protest the possible progression of same-sex rights.

A Taiwanese legislature Yu Mei-nu told CNN that the religious and family groups who are against same-sex marriage may slow down LGBTQ progress.

"I hope that the legislators will have the moral courage to pass same-sex marriage into law, however it is hard to predict how long it will take, at this moment," said Yu Mei-nu. "The opposition toward gay marriage in Taiwan won't just gladly accept it and give up the debate, so the debate will continue."

Legislative Yuan's decision was a response to two cases that challenge article 972 of Taiwan's civil code, which said that marriage was between a man and a woman. One of the requests was filed by Taipei's city government and the other case was filed by gay rights activist Chi Chia-wei in 2015.

"For more than three decades, Petitioner Chia-Wei Chi has been appealing to the legislative, executive, and judicial departments for the right to same-sex marriage," Taiwan's press release said. "After more than a decade, the Legislative Yuan is still unable to complete its legislative process on those bills regarding same-sex marriage. This case involves the very controversial social and political issues of whether homosexuals shall enjoy the equal protection of the same freedom of marriage as heterosexuals. The representative body is to enact or revise the relevant laws in due time."

Taiwan is an independently run country and a sovereign of China. Wednesday's decision is one-to-watch in Asia because other countries such as South Korea and Indonesia have increased their crackdown on homosexual activity. For instance, South Korea has been discriminating against gays in the armed forces, and Indonesian police have recently raided a gay sauna and publicly caned two gay men, according to CNN. In other Asian countries, such as China, the government does not formally discriminate against gay and lesbians, but prejudices exist.

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