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***The legal mess shows why 'separate but equal' is never good enough.***

Gay Star News (20.11.2020) - <https://bit.ly/2JFM3IE> - The Czech government has snubbed civil partnership ceremonies while loosening COVID restrictions on heterosexual marriages.

The inequality – which may be deliberate discrimination or simply a mix-up – provides the perfect illustration of why 'separate but equal' laws for same-sex couples aren't good enough.

The Czech Republic's new coronavirus rules allow 'traditional' weddings with up to 15 guests.

However registered partnerships – which have been legal for same-sex couples since 2006 – can only go ahead if they are 'urgent'.

This means two distinct circumstances – either one of the partners is suffering from serious ill health and may die or one of the partners is a foreigner who may have to leave the country due to the length of their residency permit.

The inequality may be swiftly resolved. Already the Interior Minister, Jan Hamáček, has tweeted that the government will 'fix it as soon as possible'.

### ***'Clear and unjustifiable discrimination'***

But despite that comment, many have criticized the Czech government.

Today the European Parliament's Intergroup on LGBT Rights has written to Hamáček and Deputy Prime Minister Andrej Babiš about the issue.

The group said: 'The decree which lifts the ban on the freedom of movement for the purposes of a wedding but not for the purposes of registration of same-sex partnership, directly discriminates against same-sex couples.

'Unlike different-sex couples, who can marry freely, the only requirement being a restriction on the number of guests at their weddings, same-sex couples can only register their partnership in the case of urgency, such as if one of their lives is at risk.

'This constitutes clear and unjustifiable discrimination.'

The letter reminds the ministers that EU members should not 'abuse emergency powers' in this way during the COVID crisis.

## ***Equal marriage is the answer***

Meanwhile campaign organization Jsme fér (We Are Fair), posted their take on the rules on Facebook:

'Do you want to affirm your love at the time of Covid? Yes, but only if you die. Does that seem absurd to you? A new reality for gays and lesbians.'

The group also used the post to renew its appeal for marriage for all. It added:

'Equal marriage is a solution that once and for all stops dividing society.'

Research published in January 2020 found that 67% of Czechs support same-sex marriage.

But although the government announced its support for a same-sex marriage bill in 2018, it has repeatedly delayed a vote on the issue.

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