
MACRON WARNING: ITALY LEADER THREATENS EU SPLIT BY DEFYING FRANCE TO MEET 'YELLOW VESTS'

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ITALYS deputy leader has pledged to meet with leaders of the yellow vest movement in France despite being warned to stay out of French affairs.

Luigi Di Maio said he hoped the talks would pave the way to involving the anti-establishment protestors in his vision for a populist wave in the upcoming European Parliament elections. The deputy prime minister, who serves alongside Matteo Salvini, has praised the gilets jaunes, as they are known in France, for taking to the streets and demanding change. Their praise has been met with fury from the French government, with Nathalie Loiseau, Frances minister for European affairs, suggesting the pair focus on solving Italys problems first.

But despite the scolding, Mr Di Maio today said he would meet with yellow vest leader Eric Drouet, Rome-based newspaper Il Messaggero reports.

He insisted he was not dealing with any of the groups involved in violent protests which have prompted weeks of unrest on the streets of French cities.

Speaking to Italian broadcaster Rai Radio 1, he said: I am creating an alternative European parliamentary group to the right and the left and I am involving all those movements that believe in direct democracy.

Im not talking to the violent groups though.

In the coming days I will meet various leaders of the yellow vests and Drouet is said to be available.

The meeting will add to fuel the worsening row between Italy and France as the two governments continue to argue over issues including immigration and the future of the European Union.

And Mr Di Maio, who heads up Italys anti-establishment Five Star Movement, this week again attacked Emmanuel Macron for his remarks on the populist coalition in Rome.

Speaking shortly after the new Italian government took power, Mr Macron likened populist Eurosceptic movements to a disease which should be resisted by moderates.

He did not refer to Italy by name, but did say populism had spread to neighbouring countries where we thought that it would be impossible to see them again.

Mr Di Maios announcement that he will attempt to recruit the yellow vests to his new populist movement comes after Matteo Salvini expressed hope that Poland and Italy to work together on a new Europe.

Speaking yesterday, he said: Poland and Italy will be part of the new spring of Europe, the renaissance of European values.

"The Europe that will come to form in June (after May's European Parliament elections) will lead us all than the one that exists today and is run by bureaucrats."

Additional reporting by Maria Ortega.

Kaynak/Source: