

world news

Amnesty International to adopt gays and lesbians after 17 years of stalling

by Rex Wockner

Following 17 years of campaigning by gay and lesbian activists, Amnesty International reached consensus in favor of adopting jailed gays and lesbians as "prisoners of conscience."

At the end of its annual International Council Meeting, held this year in Yokohama, Japan, Amnesty embraced the most far-reaching proposal that had been presented on gay issues.

Amnesty previously adopted homosexuals only when their arrests resulted from speaking out for gay rights (i.e. when it was a free-speech issue) or when they were subjected to prison "treatment" designed to make them heterosexual. Gays and lesbians arrested simply for being gay, those nabbed for belonging to gay organizations, rounded up in bar raids, or jailed for violating laws against gay sex, among others, did not qualify.

Gay activists worldwide hailed the move, which had been first suggested in 1974 by Danish Amnesty members but was consistently blocked by Third World Amnesty sections, which feared their societies were not ready to support the human rights of homosexuals.

International AIDS confab moves to Holland

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Next summer's Eighth International Conference on AIDS has been relocated to Amsterdam, scheduled for July 19-24.

The huge annual gathering had been planned for Boston but was scrapped in August by its sponsor, the Harvard AIDS Institute, to protest the U.S. immigration restrictions on HIV-positive visitors and the ban on HIV-positive immigrants.

Many AIDS activists and others felt the U.S. should be punished and embarrassed for its immigration policies. But recently, some AIDS activists have criticized the decision to move the conference, saying it would have presented an unprecedented opportunity to focus media attention on AIDS issues during a U.S. presidential election year.

The relocated conference will be at Amsterdam's RAI Exhibition Center. It is expected to draw between 10,000 and 14,000 participants.

Further, the International Lesbian and Gay Association's 14th World Conference will be held in Paris either immediately before or after the AIDS gathering—meaning the large number of gays who routinely attend both events can do so with one airline ticket.

BELGIUM: The International Lesbian and Gay Association is broke and will soon have to lay off its one employee and scale back its programs. The association is the world's only international gay networking body—linking activists from Australia to Zimbabwe, Athens to Zagreb.

Send money to ILGA Financial Secretariat, 141 Cloudesley Road, London N1 0EN, England.

BRAZIL: Soccer hero Pele will appear in a Ministry of Health-sponsored TV ad campaign to promote safe sex and discourage discrimination against HIV-positive people, according to London's *Gay Times*.

CANADA: The Ottawa-based "Dock & Raider" comic strip, which runs in 20 gay newspapers, has been acquired by the National Archives of Canada. The strip chronicles the lives of two happily married gay men and has tackled topics ranging from shopping to domestic violence.

DENMARK: A new survey by the University of Copenhagen found that 84 percent of Danish gay men are out to their families. Most of the respondents knew they were gay by age 15 and came out by age 21. Half of Danish gay men live alone, while 30 percent live with a lover, the survey found. Researchers were surprised that twelve percent of the men had children.

ENGLAND: London will host the first ever "Euro-Pride" next summer. More than 100,000 European dykes and poofers are expected.

FRANCE: Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays recently launched a chapter in Paris.

GERMANY: Rita Suessmuth, president of the German parliament, recently said gay and lesbian couples should have access to "fiscal advantages and assistance" in the case of a partner's death. *Gai Pied*

INDIA: Urban yuppies are coming out of the closet, gathering at bars, cruising at train stations, and holding hands in public parks, according to *The New York Times*.

NORWAY: "The Military's Little Pink" is a new brochure presented to all new recruits. It provides information on gay and lesbian organizations, as well as supportive contacts within the military.

PUERTO RICO: San Juan was rejected for AZT-maker Burroughs-Wellcome's large gaypress ad campaign promoting HIV testing "because we don't know how a minority community might respond," said a spokesman for the ad agency Lavey, Wolff & Swift. "If a counselor on the [national AIDS-information] line made rec-

ommendations, would a minority follow their advice? We did not know," the spokesman said. The gay magazine *Caribbean Heat* denounced Wellcome and the agency for "blatant racism." Further, *CH* said, Wellcome also likely skipped over San Juan because economic conditions are such that neither AIDS patients nor the government can afford AZT, the only federally approved anti-HIV drug.

San Juan has the second-highest AIDS rate of any U.S. city.

SWEDEN: The International Gay and Lesbian Youth Organization held its annual gathering in Gothenburg in August, discussing AIDS, racism, sadomasochism, sexism and other issues of importance of gay youth.

Seventy delegates attended from around the world.

Write IGLYO, 4410 Massachusetts Ave. NW #108, Washington, D.C. 20016.

Leathermen from across Europe gathered in Stockholm in August for the annual "Baltic Battle" weekend. The 1,200-member group Scandinavian Leathermen hosted the events. SLM is believed to be the largest leather club in the world.

USSR: The faces of gays and lesbians were repeatedly visible in TV video of the grassroots uprising against the failed Communist coup, say Americans back from July and August's groundbreaking gay-pride celebrations in St. Petersburg (previously Leningrad) and Moscow.

During the coup, Boellstorff and Kalinin ran off 4,000 extra copies of *Tema*, the Moscow gay newspaper, combined it with copies of Boris Yeltsin's anti-coup proclamation, and distributed both to people in the streets and even soldiers in the tanks.


"We had the only [available] Macintosh computer in Moscow," said Boellstorff.

American activists delivered two Macs, a laser printer and a monitor to Kalinin July 23 in St. Petersburg. Customs officials socked duties on the equipment equal to six years of the average Soviet worker's income. Money to cover the duties had been smuggled in earlier.

P-FLAG Program Director Laurie Coburn launched P-FLAG groups in St. Petersburg and Moscow.

"I was touched by the many young people who clearly longed for affirmation from their parents," Coburn said. "Their expressions of love and gratitude for P-FLAG's presence at the symposium were almost overwhelming."

compiled by Rex Wockner



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