

world news

AUSTRIA: The Ministry of the Interior announced in January that "persecution on the grounds of sexual orientation can, according to the Geneva Convention, constitute a reason to flee from a country and thus can be a reason to be granted political asylum in Austria."

"This is good news," said Kurt Krickler. "Now it is official that persecuted gays and lesbians can seek asylum in Austria."

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The government said Thursday that it would propose creating a new law and amending an old one to make it easier to prosecute crimes such as advocating Nazi ideas or denying the Holocaust.

Jewish leaders, human rights monitors and other officials in Austria welcomed the proposals, which are expected to be presented to the parliament next week.

The proposed law would also make it a crime "to deny, grossly minimize, praise or justify through printed works, over the airwaves or in any other medium the National Socialist genocide or any other National Socialist crime."

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A freedom-of-speech case brought by the leading gay organization, Homosexual Initiative Vienna (HOSI Wien), has been accepted by the European Human Rights Commission.

In 1988, Vienna police confiscated and destroyed a HOSI banner during a ceremony unveiling a monument against fascism. The banner read, "Thousands of homosexual victims of concentration camps are still waiting for recognition/compensation."

HOSI appealed to the European Commission, which accepted the case in December 1991. The Austrian government must respond this month.

CANADA: Someone tossed a bomb in the stairway to Little Sister's Book and Art Emporium in Vancouver last month.

There were no injuries, but the explosion knocked books off shelves and damaged the stairs and walls at the gay-oriented shop.

It was the third bombing at the store since 1983.

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Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's brother Gary is gay, according to the new biography *Mulroney*:

The spread of HIV worldwide surpasses predictions

AIDS CASES

- U.S., Canada: 1 million
- Latin America, Caribbean: more than 1 million
- Western Europe: 500,000
- North Africa, Middle East: 50,000

- South, SE Asia: more than 1 million
- Sub-Saharan Africa: 6.5 million
- Australia: 30,000
- Eastern Europe, ex-USSR: 20,000
- East Asia, Pacific: 20,000

The Politics of Ambition by John Sawatsky.

COSTA RICA: Alda Facio, daughter of the Costa Rican ambassador to the U.S. is an open lesbian, says *The Advocate*.

The father and daughter do not communicate with each other, the magazine said.

DENMARK: The European Community has granted the International Lesbian and Gay Association's Lesbian Visibility Project \$53,000 to make lesbians visible to each other and to EC policy makers.

ENGLAND: A survey by the Gay London Policing Group found that 40 percent of gay men and 25 percent of lesbians have been physically assaulted because of their sexuality.

Most of the attacks happened near gay bars. Half of the victims had been attacked more than once.

FRANCE: The hierarchy of France's Roman Catholic Church supported the pro-Nazi government of Vichy France, according to a Jesuit theologian's report discovered after nearly a half-century in a private archive.

Historians are concluding that, despite individual acts of bravery and heroism, much of the church hierarchy collaborated wholeheartedly.

This comes just weeks after a church-appointed panel of historians issued a 400-page report concluding that for decades French cardinals, monks and nuns helped one of France's most notorious Nazi collaborators, Paul Touvier, elude justice.

Touvier, 76, faces charges of crimes against humanity for commanding a pro-Nazi militia unit based in Lyon during World War II. The force hunted down Resistance fighters and Jews.

GERMANY: Berlin's new gay antiviolenence hotline recorded 200 bashings during its first year.

Many of the attacks were carried out by "groups of very young people" and skinheads, according to the International Lesbian and Gay Association.

Antigay violence is on the rise across Germany and has become particularly serious in the East. In Leipzig, the city's first gay club closed following repeated threats and bashings.

Meanwhile, about 150 neo-Nazis gathered in Kassel to bury the ashes of neo-Nazi leader Michael Kuhnen, who died of AIDS.

An equal number of demonstrators turned out, leading to what *Gai Pied* termed "a pitched battle between the Nazis, the unaffiliated and the police, which left many wounded."

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The new draft constitution for the former East German state of Brandenburg bans discrimination against homosexuals—a first in Germany.

Lesbia

NETHERLANDS: Thirty Dutch cities now allow gays and lesbians to register their relationships—and even conduct marriage ceremonies—at City Hall, even though there is no provision in federal law for lesbian and gay marriage.

On Feb. 6, 250 cities presented Justice Minister Hirsch Ballin with a petition demanding the

Netherlands catch up with Denmark, where gay marriage has been legal since October 1989.

SOUTH AFRICA: Police arrested almost the entire leadership of a far-right white organization early Tuesday.

The 10 officers of the neo-Nazi Afrikaner Resistance Movement were seized in the raids.

Their arrest marked the most aggressive action taken against the militant organization, which has sought to generate defiance of the government's efforts to dismantle apartheid and negotiate with blacks on a new constitutional arrangement.

SPAIN: The state parliament in Catalonia, home to Barcelona, has banned discrimination against gays and lesbians, according to a brief item in France's *Gai Pied*.

TURKEY: Amnesty International has accepted the case of Ramazam 'Demet' Demir, a gay activist and transvestite who was taken into custody in August during a raid on alleged brothels in the Cihangir area of Istanbul's Beyoglu district.

He was reportedly beaten with a steel pipe at the Beyoglu police station by the police chief, who has repeatedly vowed to cleanse the neighborhood of transvestites.

According to Amnesty, police told Demir they arrested him because of his homosexuality. Demir pointed out that homosexuality is not illegal. Police asked what he meant. Demir said that Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey, decriminalized homosexuality. Demir was then charged under law 5816 for insulting the memory of Ataturk.

Said Amnesty: "Demir is a prisoner of conscience. Amnesty International is appealing for his immediate and unconditional release."

Translations by Charlie Fineman (Danish, Norwegian, Swedish), Bliss Frings (German), Dave Kelly (Dutch), Jussi (Finnish), Bob Miller (Italian), L. Rich (Czech), Charles Smith (French), John Styber (Polish, Russian), and Rex Wockner (Spanish).



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