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world news

CANADA

Six hundred men who were allegedly sexually and physically abused while attending Roman Catholic reform schools are eligible for a share of an \$18 million compensation fund. The Christian Brothers lay order, the archdioceses of Toronto and Ottawa, and the Canadian government have each agreed to contribute to the fund. The fund was increased from \$10 million after more than 300 additional survivors came forward.

COLOMBIA

A report by the Washington Office on Latin America, a human rights group, confirms that police in Colombia continue to systematically persecute and murder gays. Homeless people, prostitutes, transvestites and gay men are regularly chased and beaten by police, who also extort money from them, according to the report. Colombian gays have reported being terrorized by police and paramilitary death squads for years. WOLA urged the United States government to hold Colombia accountable for such human rights violations by withholding military aid. Colombia is reported to receive more U.S. military aid than any other country in the Western Hemisphere.

CYPRUS

The European Court of Human Rights has ruled that Cyprus's anti-sodomy law violates the right to privacy guaranteed in the European Convention on Human Rights. Alex Modinos, president of Cyprus's Homosexual Liberation Movement, filed the complaint in 1989. The court heard the case in October 1992 and ruled in April. The only justice on the ECHR to vote in support of the anti-gay law was from Cyprus.

IRELAND

Ireland recently moved to legalize sex acts between men, with the age of consent the same as for heterosexual acts. The repeal of the sodomy law has passed both Houses of Parliament and awaits President Mary Robinson's signature, according to the Consulate General of Ireland in San Francisco. The law dates back to 1861, before Ireland gained independence from Great Britain. The European Court of Human Rights ruled against the law in 1988. Ireland also recently legalized condom-vending machines, although a recent *Irish Times* article claims business owners are slow to install them. Students at both Trinity College and University College of Dublin installed illegal condom-vending machines years ago. Irish voters will consider legalizing divorce within a year.

ISRAEL

Gay, lesbian and bisexual soldiers in Israel can now advance to the highest levels of the military. Israel's armed forces recently declared they would no longer discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation. A 1986 order forbade gay soldiers from entering top positions in intelligence and communications and allowed discrimination in

lower levels. "This is one of the most wonderful things that could have happened to the [gay] community," said activist Danny Lachman. "That homosexuals were drafted was always important to me. It gave a feeling that we were, after all, part of society."

NORWAY

Immigration officials have denied a request for asylum from a Cuban gay man who has been jailed three times under his country's sodomy laws. Norwegian officials say they turned down Raul Barreras, 25, because they couldn't get much information on gays in Cuba from Amnesty International. Barreras has appealed to the Department of Justice. Norway generally doesn't deport refugees who risk imprisonment in their native countries.

POLAND

Police have shut down Poland's last gay club. The club started as a government-sponsored youth center, but became a gay club last year. The city responded by severing its ties to the club and canceling the preferential rent rate. Then neighbors began complaining that the club was too loud, and the city of Poznan ordered the club to close at 10 pm. Club operators refused to follow the order, and police arrived to enforce it. Patrons report being brutally thrown out. The police deny their claims, saying patrons called them names and threw drinks at them.

RUSSIA

President Boris Yeltsin signed legislation legalizing consensual sex between men. Russian Article 121 now outlaws only rape and statutory rape. Some activists had pushed to create a completely new article to punish all sexual acts involving force, but the government instead opted to rework the existing law. Men imprisoned for gay sex should be released under the revised law. No official has been put in charge of releasing them. The government will not provide any sort of compensation or rehabilitation for those released. "This is great news for gays and lesbians in Russia," said Vladislav Ortanov, editor of *RISK*, Moscow's gay paper. "Just last month, we were convinced that this law would not be changed for at least another year."

SWITZERLAND

The World Health Organization passed a resolution at its annual meeting urging the United Nations to establish a unified AIDS program. WHO Director General Dr. Hiroshi Nakajima has nine months to report on the feasibility of a UN AIDS program. WHO's Global Program on AIDS received \$4 million this year but cannot continue without borrowing funds. The United States joined 37 other countries in introducing the motion to form a UN AIDS program.

Compiled by Irene K. Hislop

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