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world briefs

BRAZIL

Five men accused of the kidnapping and murder of openly bisexual Brazilian town councilor José Renildo dos Santos are in police custody. A sixth man was arrested but escaped. The accused are the mayor of Coqueiro Seco (dos Santos' district), the mayor's father and three military policemen. During the trial, a witness to the murder gave key testimony. The murdered man's sister has received death threats and is now in hiding. The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission has not received any information on the outcome of the case.

CHINA

In the southern province of Fujian, in the city of Xiamen, the government recently erected a camp for detaining people convicted of engaging in sexual activity with members of the same sex. Although China has no laws banning this activity between consenting adults, the government reportedly continues to arrest gay men and lesbians and send them to "re-education" camps and mental institutions. The camps, used also to detain those convicted of minor sex crimes, "detain and educate" prisoners for six months to two years. The camp currently holds about 10 people but has space for 100.

COSTA RICA

A major controversy over homophobic remarks published in the daily newspaper has embroiled the gay and lesbian community and a local private university. The International University of the Americas bought a full-page ad in *La Nación*, outlining a defense of its policy of firing openly gay professors and not allowing male students to wear long hair or earrings. The ad was in response to a letter published in the paper a few days before, from a student of IUA who complained that the university was discriminating against lesbians and gay men. Consequently, several organizations have filed protests with local human rights organizations and the government organization that oversees higher education.

CROATIA

The Croatian lesbian and gay group, LIGMA, has asked for international support from lesbian and gay groups for their petition on better AIDS education and services. Lack of education and a serious shortage of prophylactics and clean needles has resulted in an increased spread of HIV-infection in the war-ravaged country. LIGMA asks groups to write to the Croatian Ministries of Health, Finance, and Culture and Education, asking them to support LIGMA's petition that includes the following requests: that Croatia media publish AIDS/HIV literature; that a better AIDS education system be introduced including a telephone line; and, that taxes on prophylactics be abolished.

FRANCE

Two French government AIDS groups are suing the Italian clothing company, Benetton, for using AIDS-themed images in its fall-winter ad campaign. The ads, deemed "degrading" by the French Agency for the Fight Against AIDS and the National AIDS Council, showed tattoos of the words "HIV Positive" on the buttocks and other body parts of the model shown. The groups called the ads a "commercial exploitation of suffering" which "evoke...Nazi images." Benetton, in denying the suits' charges, responded that the ads are "metaphors illustrating the discriminatory branding practices by society toward those who are different." The agencies are demanding that damages be paid to organizations fighting AIDS.

INDONESIA

Current government estimates of people infected with HIV are lower than health officials recently reported. Last month the government reported that 20,000 Indonesians have been in-

fectured with HIV. Health department officials are worried that a large-scale AIDS epidemic may occur, mirroring those in Thailand and India. This summer, the government announced that it would administer HIV antibody tests to 150,000 high-risk group Indonesians including gay men, prostitutes, prisoners, truck drivers and sailors and 700,000 blood donors. Reports did not indicate whether the tests would be mandatory or voluntary.

MEXICO

The directors of the country's Cuilotzin Health Association, originally arrested and sentenced for the alleged rape of a 14-year-old boy, have been released. Gerardo Ortego Zurita and José Reyes, well-known advocates in their field, were released on appeal due to pressure brought to bear from the Mexican gay organization, Colectivo Sol, and many other groups including IGLHRC, Amnesty International and ILGA. Their appeal uncovered the fact that the medical report on the boy, which claimed that sexual contact had taken place, was falsified.

NORWAY

A poll taken after a conservative Christian politician came out last year on national television shows his actions had a positive effect on citizen's attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. Anders Gåsland, chair of the Christian People's Party, received mostly negative reactions to his disclosure from within the party but a national poll taken revealed that seven out of 10 respondents thought he did the right thing by coming out. Moreover, the poll showed that his actions made a half million Norwegians more accepting of gay men and lesbians. Gåsland will recount his experience in a book set to be published this fall.

ROMANIA

Member countries of the Council of Europe have stalled the efforts of Romania's government in its bid to join the group because of its human rights violations against lesbians, gay men and other minorities. The Council, a confederation of 31 democratic countries, monitors human rights and other issues in its member countries. Catherine Lalumiere, the group's secretary-general, visited Romania last month to investigate the concerns brought up by the Council. Reportedly, Jews, gypsies, other ethnic minorities and lesbians and gay men suffer widespread discrimination and persecution in Romania.

RUSSIA

A group of 34 lesbian and gay square dancers from all over the U.S. toured Russia and raised money for a planned AIDS center there. The Pink Triangles in Red Square, from Berkeley, Calif., toured Russia and Latvia for two weeks and hosted six learn-to-square dance events in Moscow, St. Petersburg and Riga. The events, according to the group, "offered a safe place for gay men and lesbians to gather in countries that had only recently decriminalized homosexuality."

TURKEY

The governor canceled the country's first gay and lesbian pride conference on the morning it was to begin. The Christopher Street celebration was scheduled for July 2-6, 1993 and had the full assurance of the Turkish Interior Ministry that it could go ahead as planned. On the morning of July 3, Turkish authorities arrested and expelled 28 of the conference's foreign delegates who were on their way to a press conference organized by human rights advocates in response to the governor's move. Officials detained the delegates for over five hours and threatened them with strip searches and HIV tests. Afterwards they forcibly deported them on a Turkish airline to Cologne, Germany.

Compiled by Lee Norwood