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world briefs

BRAZIL

The front-runner in Brazil's presidential campaign, Workers' Party candidate Luiz Ignacio Lula da Silva, has come out strongly in support of equality for sexual minorities, reports the gay publication *News from Brazil*.

In a document issued last month, the Workers' Party fully endorsed proposals for a national queer rights law (several Brazilian cities have such laws) and for equal treatment in the areas of insurance, pensions, division of possessions, and inheritance.

The party backed down, however, from earlier preliminary support for legal same-sex partnerships, following strong resistance at its May national conference.

FINLAND

Queer activists expect the currently stalled same-sex marriage legislation to gain steam after next spring's elections. The Conservative coalition government is expected to lose seats in Parliament and supportive parties—the Social Democrats, the Greens, and the Left Alliance—are expected to see substantial gains.

JAPAN

Japanese Foreign Minister Koji Kakizawa apparently does not approve of "homos."

During recent discussions on choosing a name for the Liberal Party, of which Kakizawa is a member, he said: "It is possible that by calling ourselves simply 'Liberals,' we can be mistaken for liberals like the ones in America who approve of homos and drugs.... We would have liked to have called ourselves New Liberals or New Conservatives."

MEXICO

Gay men and cross-dressers in the state of Sinaloa are under increased attack from police and thugs, reports the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission.

Seventeen gay men and cross-dressers have been murdered since 1992, the group said. Many victims were severely beaten or stabbed repeatedly. In some cases the murders were linked to robbery or extortion, but often there was no identifiable motive for the crime, according to the IGLHRC.

Police engage in "aggressive and nearly constant harassment," the activist group reported, citing a "series of very public police raids against cross-dressing sex workers."

The group charges, "The frequent raids, often conducted on a weekly basis, are rife with irregularities. Persons arrested are often subject to detention without formal charges or arrest records.... Detained transvestites face beatings, heavy fines, extortion, sexual assault, and even rape. The detentions are either unreported or covered in sensationalistic fashion by the press, who consistently print the names and addresses of the detained transvestites, occasionally with accompanying photos. The newspaper stories are often peppered with disparaging adjectives used to describe the victims of the raids."

The IGLHRC claims it has "credible evidence documenting a series of raids on the private homes of transvestites. The raids are conducted without appropriate arrest or search warrants. The language and attitude of the police officers suggest that the raids are meant to harass the transvestites in retaliation for their public protests over police misconduct."

Some cross-dressers detained by police are force-tested for HIV.

Cross dressing is not illegal in Mexico.



conference, and a "White Party" marking the 10th anniversary of the leading sexual minority rights group, Grupo *¿Y Qué?*

The director of human rights for the state of Baja California Norte addressed the conference, entitled "Human Rights and Sexuality."

Activists hailed the talk as an important step, since state bureaucrats in Mexicali, the capital, refused to let Grupo *¿Y Qué?* use the state Culture Institute in Tijuana for some of the week's events.

Gay Culture Week came amid reports of increased attacks on gay men outside El Ranchero, a popular and sleazy gay bar in Plaza Santa Cecilia, a tourist area. The attacks have all involved robbery, but men leaving the gay bar seem to be at higher risk.

NETHERLANDS

The estimated 100,000 gay men and lesbians gathered in Amsterdam for EuroPride '94 hoped to send a strong message against the rise of ultra-right-wing activism and violence in Europe, EuroPride director Hans Verhoeven told *Reuters*.

June 18, activists staged a mock wedding to demand that the Netherlands legalize same-sex marriage, as Denmark, Norway and Sweden have done.

The Dutch government has plans to introduce legislation that would let gay men and lesbians register their relationships and receive the benefits of marriage.

This year's EuroPride offered over 300 events. One of the more unusual was a nighttime bicycle tour of parks popular for cruising. The EuroPride celebration moves to a different country each year.

POLAND

The Polish government has granted legal status to the new Movement of Lesbians and Gay Men (Ruch Lesbijek i Gejowand), and the group has big plans.

Meeting June 14, activists elected male and female presidents—Sylwester Biraga and Monika Komoda—a treasurer, and a board of directors.

The organization will "act for social acceptance and self-acceptance of homosexual and bisexual people," work with AIDS groups, "act against social pathologies [among] lesbian, gay and bisexual people," and "get relief for lesbian, gay and bisexual people who are in bad circumstances, including prisoners."

Already, members have met with Senate Vice-President Zofia Kuratowska. She agreed to arrange a meeting with other members of Parliament from her Union of Freedom Party.

SINGAPORE

People Like Us is a new support group for queers in law-and-order-oriented Singapore.

Meetings are held monthly, on the first Sunday, at The Substation arts center. Up to 40 people generally attend.

Queer sex is illegal in Singapore, and a plainclothes cop came to at least one meeting, but no official action has yet been taken.

UNITED NATIONS

Delegates to the 16th conference of the International Lesbian and Gay Association voted June 30 to expel the North American Man/Boy Love Association and two lesser-known pedophile groups.

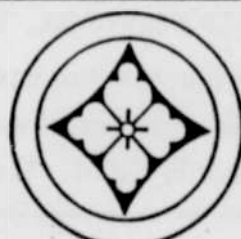
The vote was 214 to 30. The ILGA's constitution required an 80-percent majority to remove the groups. The pro-NAMBLA camp fell short by 19 votes.

The secretariats of the ILGA began efforts to dump the pedophile organizations in late 1993, after the U.S. government threatened to work to revoke the ILGA's consultative status at the United Nations because of NAMBLA's membership.

The brouhaha erupted after the U.S. anti-queer magazine *The Lambda Report* revealed that NAMBLA belonged to the ILGA.

The ILGA is composed of some 300 sexual minority rights organizations from about 60 nations.

Compiled by Rex Wockner



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