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world briefs

AUSTRALIA

Forty state police officers in Melbourne, Australia, raided a gay bar called the Commerce Club in early August and spent three hours strip-searching all 463 customers, allegedly looking for drugs, reported *The Age*.

Twenty-four patrons filed complaints against the police, charging assault and civil rights violations.

Eight people were charged with drug possession, public drunkenness, or hindering police.



Australia's first gay television station hits the air Sept. 17, broadcasting over shared Channel 33 in Melbourne, says the *Melbourne Star Observer*.

The first broadcast will feature the current affairs program *Bent-O-Rama* and the dating show *Date-O-Rama*.



Police in the state of Tasmania are going ahead with an investigation of five activists who turned themselves in for violating the state laws against gay male sex.

Tasmania is the only Australian state where gay male sex is illegal, and officials have vowed to keep it that way, despite a recent adverse ruling from the United Nations Human Rights Committee and strong pressure from the federal government.

The activists, including leader Rodney Croome, confessed their crimes May 11 in an effort to embarrass the government into enforcing the laws.

Meanwhile, the boycott of Tasmanian products has grown to 300 business establishments nationwide, according to reports in the queer press.



BRAZIL

Seventy-three Brazilian cities and towns, three states, and the federal capital district now protect gay men and lesbians from discrimination, reported *The Washington Blade*.

Among them are the cities of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, and the states of Bahia, Sergipe and Mato Grosso. One town of 2,000 people has a sexual minority rights law.

Laws aside, Brazil has a dramatic violence problem directed at gay men. Activists have documented 1,265 murders nationwide since 1980, committed by at least 18 organized right wing groups.

ENGLAND

Britain's Channel 4 network began airing two 30-second safer-sex advertisements Aug. 9. The ads were produced for gay men by the group Gay Men Fighting AIDS.

London's *Capital Gay* reported: "The commercials, made by gay director Paul Oremland, were funded with a Channel 4 grant [of \$25,000]. One features models and actors in a romantic fantasy setting, while the other, shot with volunteers in Soho's Freedom Cafe, is a witty snapshot of gay men cruising."

GMFA's Peter Scott said, "For the first time, safer-sex adverts made by gay men, for gay men, will be screened on national television. We are proud and delighted at this singular achievement."



Seventy women attended the first meeting of the London Lesbian Avengers in late July.

Those who joined received an Avenger handbook and posters that incite lesbians to fight homophobia.

Capital Gay reported, "Many people were eager to have an active role in the organization of demos and offered skills such as abseiling [a protest maneuver involving descent by rope from spectators' balconies onto the floor of Parliament] and fire-eating!"

FRANCE

"Condoms: Fuck AIDS." That's the message of the French government's new anti-AIDS campaign which went up on 8,000 billboards nationwide this month.

The campaign uses the actual English word "fuck," which is popular among French youth, according to Reuters.

"At a time when fear [of AIDS] seems to be dissipating, especially among the young... a new, more involving, more motivating slogan was urgently needed," said a spokesperson for the Kerjo ad agency, which created the posters.

INTERNATIONAL

Iran, Mauritania and Yemen are three countries known to punish gay male sex with the death penalty, Amnesty International noted last month.

There is ample evidence that Iran, in particular, enforces such laws, the organization said.

ISRAEL

A 28-year-old Tel Aviv student is suing the Israeli Defense Ministry. Adir Steiner is seeking to overturn a decision that denies him survivor benefits after the death of his male lover, a colonel.

"I want that institution to recognize me as the partner of an army casualty," Steiner told Reuters.

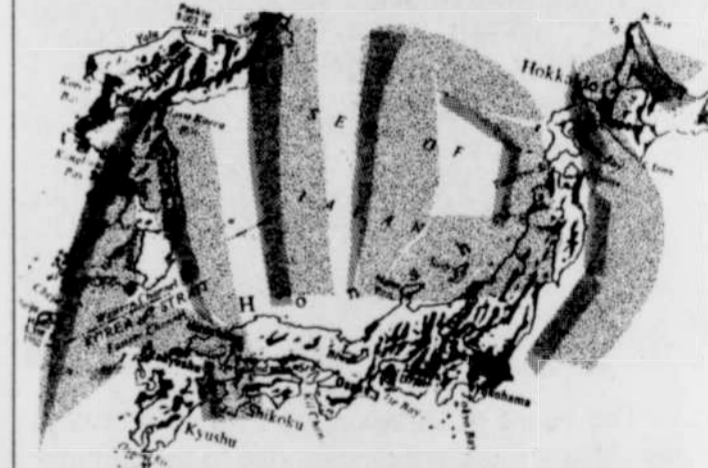
In his appeal to the Magistrate Court, Steiner said the army acknowledged the relationship when his lover was alive, running security checks on Steiner when his lover was promoted, and has even invited him to military functions since his lover's death.

The Israeli military is open to gay men and lesbians.

JAPAN

The news is that no big news emerged from the 10th International Conference on AIDS, held this year in Yokohama, Aug. 7 to 11.

Hot topics included the rapid spread of HIV in Asia, vaccine trials (no big breakthroughs), the



shortage of AIDS caregivers, and the prevention of HIV transmission, according to numerous reports.

About 10,000 delegates from 140 countries heard or viewed around 3,400 presentations on such matters as viral genetics, drug development (no big breakthroughs), burnout among HIV/AIDS workers, and prostitution.

Results of several studies on treating people with HIV with combinations of the drugs AZT, ddI, ddC and d4T were not especially encouraging.

There was interest in long-term survivors. Up to 10 percent of men infected with HIV for 13 years have no immune system damage, and researchers want to know why.

Japan's one openly HIV-positive citizen, Toshihiro Oishi, 25, drew thunderous applause at the opening ceremony when he convinced hundreds of audience members to stand up and acknowledge that they are infected.

"We are all humans," Oishi said. "We must continue to live together."

Compiled by Rex Wockner