

world briefs

AUSTRIA

The head of the Catholic Church in Austria, Cardinal Hans-Hermann Groer, 75, has announced he will step down in September following allegations he had sex with a 17-year-old boy 20 years ago.

Groer will be replaced by Bishop Christoph Schoenborn, who was outed as gay in August by Austria's best-known gay activist, Kurt Krickler. Groer's accuser, Josef Hartmann, now 37, went public with his story after Groer stated that people who molest children will not go to heaven.

Four other men said they had sex as teenagers with Groer at the seminary where he taught in the 1970s, but Hartmann was the only one whose name was publicized.

CANADA

Robert Watkins, a gay Toronto lawyer with AIDS, says his life mirrors that of Tom Hanks' character in the movie *Philadelphia*.

Watkins says his law firm, Bennett, Best and Burn, locked him into a "glass closet," pushed him out of his job, withheld pay while he waited for disability benefits, and tried to terminate his health insurance.

"I came out of that movie in a state of shock," Watkins told the Canadian Press news service. "I'd seen my life on the screen."

Watkins is suing. The firm has denied everything.

"We can't give him what he's not entitled to because he has AIDS," said senior partner David Burn.

GERMANY

The Munich city police are discriminating against gay foreigners, reported the newspaper *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*.

Members of the gay group Rosa Liste showed the paper passports of two gay Poles who had been arrested in a bar raid. One passport was stamped "homo-scene" and the other "homo-rent," meaning "gay prostitute."

Rosa Liste demanded police cease stamping passports and stop raiding gay bars and cruisy toilets, where plainclothes cops allegedly watch men have sex, then arrest them for disturbing the peace.

A police spokesman admitted the stamping of passports was illegal and said the officers involved will be disciplined. He urged foreign gay men with defiled passports to bring them in for "cleaning."

ISRAEL

The Israeli military does not have to provide spousal death benefits to the male lover of a deceased male colonel, a Tel Aviv court ruled Aug. 28.

Adir Steiner, 29, applied for the benefits—which include a pension and tax deductions—after his lover of eight years, Doron Maisel, died of cancer in 1991.

The court said Steiner did not deserve the benefits because his and Maisel's relationship did not "constitute a nuclear family," according to the *Yedioth Ahronoth* newspaper.

The ruling conflicts with a recent Israeli Supreme Court ruling that forced the airline El Al to extend spousal benefits to gay and lesbian employees' families. The Tel Aviv court reasoned that relations between companies and employees differ from those between the army and soldiers.

Maisel had been openly gay and, according to Steiner, Maisel's military superiors treated the couple like a couple.

Gay men and lesbians are not banned from the Israeli military.

THE NETHERLANDS

The Dutch government has provided Amsterdam's 1998 Gay Games with a \$62,000 subsidy, reported the Dutch newspaper *De Gay Krant*.

The money came from a fund for organizers of large sporting events.

A spokesman for Secretary of State Eric Terpstra said he hoped that "more than before, attention will be given to sport for homosexuals, which in turn will promote sporting participation in general."

Meanwhile, organizers of the 1998 Games have hired the professional lobbying group AEF European Affairs to seek money from the European Community.

"We're counting on...\$625,000," said Gay Games spokesman Marc Janssens. "To achieve that we have to submit a lot of applications."

PHILIPPINES

A Philippine congressman filed a bill Aug. 22 to create a seat in Parliament for sexual minorities.

"Civility requires that this peculiar segment of our people be extended our understanding, not ridicule, our compassion, not harassment," said Congressman Reynaldo Calalay. "There is a growing recognition, both here and abroad, of the emerging relevance of that distinct segment of society known as 'the third sex.'"

The constitution allows the Philippine president to appoint 25 legislators as representatives of minority groups, according to the Reuter news service. There are 204 elected members of the body.

SCANDINAVIA

Denmark, Norway and Sweden, the three countries where same-sex marriage is legal, agreed in mid-August to recognize each other's lesbian and gay marriages, the Danish Ministry of Justice announced.

The "registered partnerships" are assumedly not recognized elsewhere in the world.

SLOVENIA

Slovenian gay and lesbian groups, holding their first international conference Aug. 23-27 in Ljubljana, said local homosexuals' biggest fear is coming out of the closet, reports correspondent Lisa Power.

"Despite little legal discrimination, support from some government politicians and administrators, and an equal age-of-consent of 14, most Slovenian lesbians and gays are too afraid of adverse comment to be open in their work for gay rights," Power reported.

Guests from Britain, the Netherlands, Germany and the United States participated in workshops such as Living with HIV, Queer Nationalism, and Working with Your Government.

ZIMBABWE

Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe just can't shut up about his hatred of gay men and lesbians, and now he says if foreign gay men and lesbians come to Zimbabwe to protest his continuing tirades, he'll toss them in jail, according to the country's ZIANA news agency.

Speaking to Anglican Church women on Aug. 16, Mugabe said he had heard gays were protesting at Zimbabwean diplomatic missions abroad. "They can demonstrate, but if they come here we will throw them in jail," he said.

He called for an international campaign against homosexuality which, he claimed, was brought to Zimbabwe by colonial nations.

Mugabe began his anti-gay tirades Aug. 1, as he opened the Zimbabwe International Book Fair, whose organizers banned the group Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe at the government's insistence.

Compiled by Rex Wockner

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