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## world briefs

### BRAZIL

Quimbanda-dudu, a new gay group in Salvador, Bahia, is fighting racism in the gay community and homophobia in the Afro-Brazilian community, says spokesman Luiz Mott.

"Quimbanda" is an Angolan word meaning "sodomite sorcerer." "Dudu" means "black" in the Yoruba language.

The group's first project is lobbying the Brazilian parliament to denounce Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe's recent anti-gay statements. Quimbanda-dudu seeks magazines, newspapers and other material from African American gay and lesbian groups. Write: Quimbanda-dudu, Box 2552, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil; phone/fax: 011-55-71-322-3782; e-mail: luizmott@ufba.br.

### CUBA

Cuba will launch human testing of an HIV vaccine in 1996, the newspaper *Juventud Rebelde* reported the week of Nov. 6.

The Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology has tested the vaccine on small animals and is about to test it on chimpanzees, said Director Manuel Limonta.

The center has been working on the project for six years, he said.



### INDIA

A majority of women in 11 of India's 13 states have never heard of AIDS, the new National Family Health Survey has found. Only 8 percent of respondents in the state of Assam were familiar with the disease.

This and other factors lead Indian health officials to predict 5 million HIV infections by the year 2000, up from the current 1.5 million.

### ISRAEL

Israeli gay men and lesbians say the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was also a blow to the cause of gay rights, because Rabin was actively pro-gay.

Rabin reportedly helped change regulations that barred gay men and lesbians from high-security jobs in the military, and once assisted a reserve officer, Uzi Even, who had lost his security clearance because of his sexual orientation.

In addition, the Nov. 6 edition of the newspaper *Yediot Aharonot* noted that Rabin had helped a Palestinian gay man from the Gaza Strip achieve permanent-resident status in Israel so he could live with his lover.

### NEW ZEALAND

Two hundred gay men and lesbians picketed outside the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Auckland on Nov. 10, to protest the presence of aggressively anti-gay Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe among the more than 50 world leaders in attendance.

The protesters—from the Lesbian Avengers, Pride Center, New Zealand AIDS Foundation, Auckland Gay and Lesbian Welfare, and Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence—also succeeded in passing a letter to Mugabe via the police.

"We appeal to you, as a person who has known oppression, and who has struggled for his country's freedom, not to become in turn the oppressor," it said. "A true statesman will lead and guide his people, shining like a beacon, and setting an example of love, tolerance and acceptance. We would urge you to guide your nation along the path towards the ideal of true democracy, where freedom of expression and human rights are accorded equally to minorities as to the majority."

Mugabe responded to reporters: "This is a subject which is abhorrent.... Let them [New

Zealand lesbians and gay men] get upset. We are more than upset by those who think that Prime Minister Bolger or Robert Mugabe can be turned into women."

### SPAIN

On Nov. 8, Spain's Congress of Deputies and Senate banned discrimination based on sexual orientation and created new hate-crime laws.

Ratifying a new Penal Code, the legislators declared the right to express one's sexual orientation a fundamental freedom and prohibited sexual-orientation-based discrimination in housing, employment, public services and professional activities.

The new code also specifically criminalizes hate and violence against gay and lesbian individuals and organizations with penalties ranging from six months to four years in prison.

"This Penal Code is one of the most advanced in penalizing discrimination based on sexual orientation...and the first to protect the rights of homosexuals in a Latin Catholic country," said Jordi Petit, co-secretary general of the national organization Coordinadora Gai-Lesbiana.

### TASMANIA

Gay activists in this Australian state filed suit Nov. 14 with the High Court to overturn state laws against gay-male sex, which carry prison sentences of up to 21 years.

"Gay men in Tasmania are still criminals, and the High Court has the power to change that," appellant Rodney Croome told Reuters.

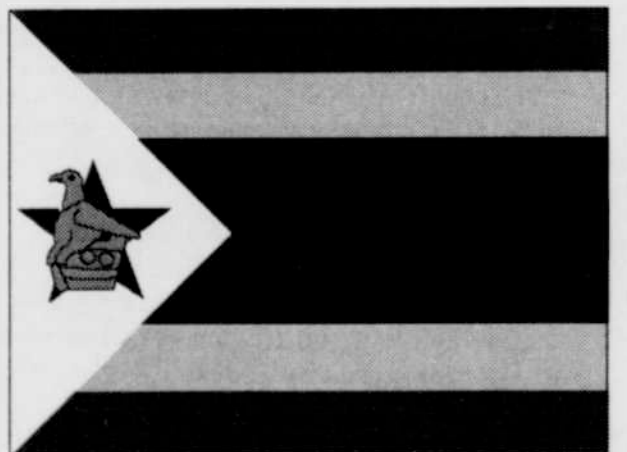
All other Australian states allow gay sex. In April 1994, the U.N. Human Rights Committee ruled that the Tasmanian ban placed Australia in violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Tasmania still refused to budge, so federal legislators passed a privacy measure designed to neutralize the ban.

It is not yet clear if that move was constitutional.

### ZIMBABWE

With President Robert Mugabe and several members of Parliament continuing to spout some of the most virulently anti-gay rhetoric heard anywhere in the world, Zimbabwean gay men and lesbians are quite simply "afraid," says Stephen Van Breda, international spokesman for the group Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe.

Mugabe has labeled homosexuality "sub-animal behavior" that will "never ever" be allowed in



Zimbabwe. "If you see people in your areas parading themselves as lesbians and gays, arrest them and hand them over to the police," he has urged. "I don't believe they have any rights at all."

Meanwhile, in Parliament on Nov. 8, MP Tirivanhu Mudariki told fellow parliamentarians "that this House unreservedly condemns the evil and iniquitous practice of homosexuality and lesbianism...and urges government to take all the necessary steps to stamp out this evil practice. [I]f we allow or condone such bastardly acts under the so-called human-rights banners...we shall also have rapists, murderers, criminals and those sodomists who are militating to have sex with 4-year-olds claiming their human rights," he said.