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world briefs

FINLAND

One hundred eighty-one Finnish public figures signed an open letter March 5 supporting registered partnership for gay men and lesbians.

The document will be sent to parliament and Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen.

Finland is expected to follow Denmark, Norway and Sweden in legalizing registered partnerships that grant all the rights of marriage except access to church weddings, adoption, artificial insemination and in-vitro fertilization.

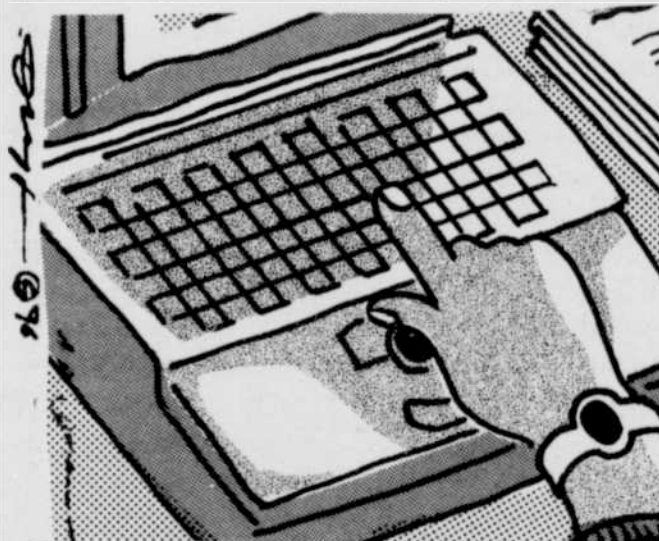
The signers included well-known actors, writers, designers, scientists, researchers, dancers, artists, theologians, doctors, lawyers and a hockey coach.

GERMANY

On-line queers are not the only people who feel under attack in the German state of Bavaria, where police action against Internet pornography has disrupted non-sexually oriented areas of gay cyberspace.

According to activist reports on the Internet, the whole Munich lesbian and gay community has seen increased hostility from police and government officials in the past six months.

The lesbian community center was closed after the city withdrew funding. A gay sauna was raided and closed, and other saunas are being patrolled by naked undercover policemen.



Gay "jack-off parties," previously endorsed by the city Health Authority, have been banned. And gay bars are being raided, particularly those favored by so-called rent-boys.

Gay activists say politicians from the conservative CSU party are to blame. The party picked up several more seats in state elections March 10 at the expense of the Social Democratic and Green parties.

At the same time, however, the gay party Pink List won a Munich city council seat after receiving 1.8 percent of the vote. The council has 80 members.

LIBYA

The British organization War on Want says Libya "severely enforce[s]" Islamic Sharia law against homosexual sex, imprisoning violators for three to five years.

War on Want recently launched a "War on Prejudice" campaign after discovering "that no other [British] aid organization funds lesbian and gay projects...in the developing world."

Openly gay Member of Parliament Chris Smith has endorsed the campaign, calling it "an important development in understanding our responsibilities as lesbians and gay men."

THE NETHERLANDS

The Guardian of London reported March 6 that the Netherlands is "on the verge of becoming the first country in Europe to allow homosexual marriages."

Denmark, Norway and Sweden permit same-sex marriages under registered partnership laws that grant all the rights of matrimony except access to church weddings, adoption, artificial insemination and in-vitro fertilization.

The Dutch move, which is supported by most members of parliament in the governing coalition

parties, would allow authentic, unrestricted marriage, according to several European reports.

NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand's upcoming census will count same-sex couples, correspondent Mark Proffitt reports.

Question No. 16 instructs, "If you live with a partner as a gay or lesbian couple, tick 'your partner or de facto girlfriend or boyfriend.'"

PERU

More than 600 gay men have been arrested in a series of bar raids in Lima, according to the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission.

On several occasions since Jan. 26, the National Police and Lima city police hit the gay clubs Sagitario, 1031, Kan Yu, Papillon, Agata, Aruba, Stefany, Sabor, Imperio and Rambler.

The officers said they were looking for underage drinkers and people without identification papers. They allegedly beat customers who questioned their actions. Patrons who were taken to a police station were allegedly shoved, insulted and asked for bribes.

In a Feb. 2 raid, detainees were forced to stand outside the police station in the rain for four hours, they said. Several hundred gay men were detained in one big sweep on Feb. 10.

The Lima Homosexual Movement says two men share particular blame for the crackdown: Crime Prevention Prosecutor Elmer Alva Leon and Lima Deputy Mayor Agrahan Pacheco Cajaleon.



THE PHILIPPINES

Gays should steer clear of the Philippine armed forces, Chief of Staff Gen. Arturo Enrile told reporters March 11.

"There is no way we will accept gays in the armed forces," Enrile said. "I don't have to explain. I have my own way of looking at things."

It's a different story at the national police force. Gen. Recaredo Sarmiento said on March 9 that gays were welcome as long as they did their jobs right and did not behave scandalously.

Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim went further. Homosexual policemen should be allowed to put on



"a little blush...and lipstick" if they want, he said.

"There's no law barring any cop from looking beautiful when conducting an investigation or an operation," Lim said.

PORTUGAL

Portugal's leading lesbian and gay group, ILGA, is working with politicians to add "sexual orientation" to the Constitution's list of characteristics that cannot be a basis for discrimination.

Compiled by Rex Wockner

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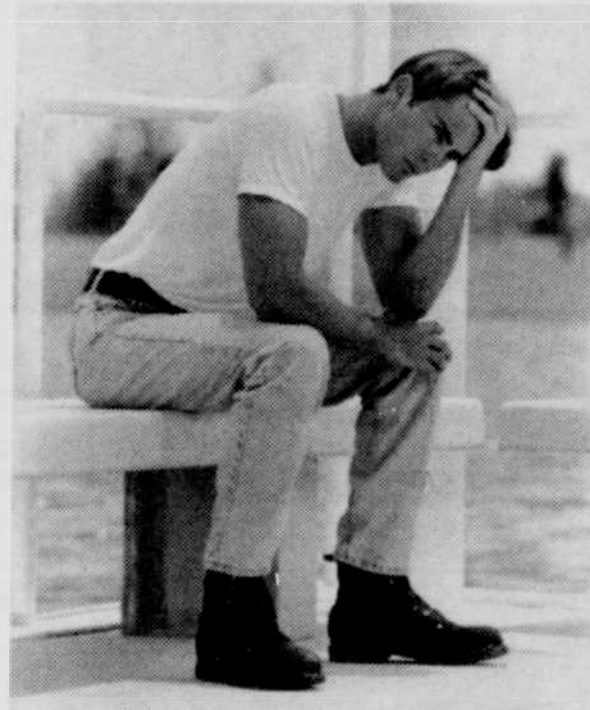
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