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# world briefs

## ARGENTINA

Members of the groups Argentinean Association of Transvestites and Gays for Civil Rights protested outside Buenos Aires' police station No. 23 on March 20, alleging that officers from the station routinely beat and arrest transvestites.



Police responded by arresting and beating three transvestite protesters, according to correspondent Alejandra Sarda.

## AUSTRALIA

Openly gay candidate Bob Brown won election to the Australian Senate on March 19, representing the island of Tasmania.

He is the first out gay in the federal parliament and, at present, the only among the 756 members of the federal, six state and two territory parliaments.

A Green Party environmentalist, Brown was formerly a member of the Tasmanian parliament.

Tasmania is the only remaining Australian state to ban gay sex.

## BRAZIL

Gay registered-partnership legislation is pending in Brazil's parliament, and activists are seeking lobbying assistance from abroad.

Federal Deputy Marta Suplicy introduced the bill last October, and it is now being studied by the parliament's Social Security and Family Commission. It grants registered same-sex couples rights in such areas as inheritance, social security and immigration.

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## BRAZIL

The British lover of Brazilian gay leader Toni Reis was forced out of the country March 15 after his visa expired, and immigration authorities refused to recognize the couple's "marriage-like relationship," gay activists reported.

David Harrad can obtain a new visa from outside Brazil and then return, said gay activist Luiz Mott.

Foreign opposite-sex spouses of Brazilians are granted automatic residency.

## CANADA

Canada's Liberal Party government will at long last make good on its pledge to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation under the Human Rights Act, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien said March 20.

According to Toronto's *Globe and Mail*, Chrétien's statement came one day after federal Human Rights Commissioner Max Yalden issued a "scorching report" accusing the Liberals of breaking their promises to gay men and lesbians.

## CHINA

Although homosexuality is not illegal, China jails gays for "disturbance[s] against the social order" (a violation of Penal Code section 158), says the British organization War on Want. Sentences can run up to five years.

Other gays are treated with electric shocks to "cure" their homosexuality, the group said.

China also reportedly is requiring certificates of negative HIV status from all visitors from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau.

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."

## COSTA RICA

The Costa Rican gay group Triangulo Rosa won a lawsuit last week against the federal Civil Registry office, which was charged with denying legal charters to groups it disapproved of.

The Defensoria de los Habitantes court ruled that the Constitution's free-association clause guarantees all legal organizations the right to official registration.

Triangulo Rosa had been denied a charter until on-line foreign queers bombarded the registry office with complaints. The group continued its lawsuit after the registry backed down, in hopes of achieving a legal precedent.

Triangulo Rosa recently opened a gay center in Alajuela, outside San Jose, with funds provided by the Dutch government.

## ICELAND

Following in the footsteps of its Scandinavian neighbors, Iceland will legalize marriage-like registered partnership for gay men and lesbians by July 1, reports Samtökin '78, the island's main lesbian and gay organization.

As in Denmark, Greenland, Norway and Sweden, the partnerships will carry all the rights and responsibilities of marriage except access to church weddings, adoption, artificial insemination and in-vitro fertilization.

Unlike in the other nations, Icelandic same-sex couples will be permitted joint custody of each other's biological children.

Parliament also is expected to pass a measure banning defamation based on sexual orientation.

## SWEDEN

Despite news reports over the past 10 years that Iran executes homosexuals, Sweden's Aliens Appeals Board is sending a gay Iranian home, saying it doesn't believe his story.

The man claimed that in November 1994, shortly after his arrival in Sweden, his parents were visited by police who said they would kill him if they ever found him, just as they had killed his lover.

The officers reportedly made the threat after searching the man's room and finding banned movies (one showing two gay men joking about Ayatollah Khomeini), along with a collection of prohibited anti-Islam poems and a photo of the ex-Shah of Iran and his wife.

In Denmark, meanwhile, the Refugee Review Board granted a 26-year-old Armenian gay man refugee status March 22 because Armenia allegedly mistreats homosexuals.

It was the first time a citizen of that former Soviet republic won asylum in Denmark for this reason.

The board took more than two years to make its determination.

## SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa's Metropolitan Life Ltd. will issue insurance policies to people with HIV, the company announced on March 20.

Applicants must be between ages 15 and 55 and not have AIDS symptoms. The premium is \$32 a month for a \$2,544 policy.

"Considering the eventual outcome of the epidemic, it makes business sense to be in this market," said a company spokesman.

Experts say up to 27 percent of South Africans will be HIV positive by the year 2010.

Compiled by Rex Wockner

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