



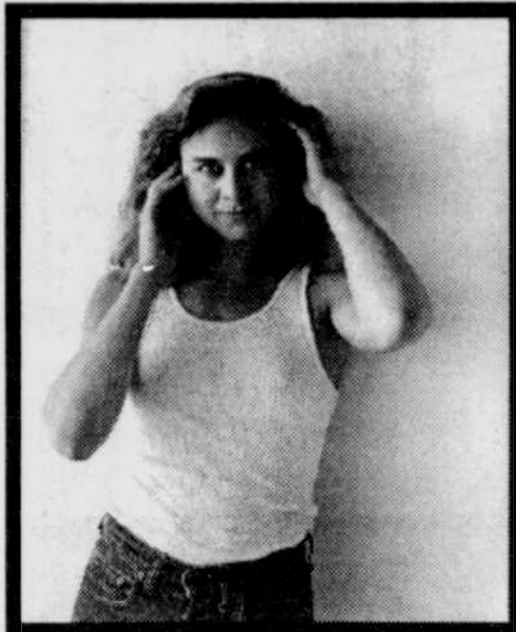
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world briefs

AUSTRALIA

Same-sex couples are now welcome to use the bridal-registry system at Australia's largest department store chain, Myer-Grace Brothers, reported *Brother Sister* newspaper.

The company has 70 stores nationwide.

CHILE

The Lambda Center in Santiago reports that a city jail recently drew blood from 37 gay prisoners to test them for HIV—and only used 10 separate needles in the process.

Lambda says the forced testing was carried out with the dirty needles even though 11 of the prisoners told jailers they had already tested HIV positive.

Lambda is demanding "a clear and public explanation of the facts" and punishment for the officials involved.



INTERNATIONAL

The International Lesbian and Gay Association's recent troubles at the United Nations have created problems for the group with the Council of Europe.

ILGA lost consultative status at the U.N. in 1994 after right-wing forces in the United States revealed that a few of ILGA's hundreds of member organizations did not oppose sexual contact between adults and people under the age of consent, which varies from 12 to 21 worldwide. ILGA responded by revoking the membership of three pedophile organizations, including the North American Man/Boy Love Association, but the association is still struggling to prove to the U.N. that none of its other member groups is lax on underage sex.

Now ILGA has received a letter from the Council of Europe asking for further information on the U.N. suspension before it will consider granting ILGA consultative status with the Council.

ILGA is a federation of groups and individuals from more than 80 countries. Recent ILGA initiatives have increased gay clout within the European Union, World Health Organization and Amnesty International.

IRELAND

The government has proposed a new Employment Equality Bill that bans discrimination and harassment based on, among other characteristics, sexual orientation.

Activists with Dublin's Gay and Lesbian Equality Network are supporting the bill even though they oppose its exemptions for religious, educational and medical institutions.

The measure will be brought before the Dail, Ireland's parliament, this autumn.

POLAND

Poland's parliament begins debate this month on the country's new constitution, the current draft of which bans discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Should Poland approve such protections, it would become only the second country in the world, after South Africa, with a gay anti-discrimination law included in its constitution.

The Polish national group Lambda warns that the Catholic Church plans a fight to remove the sexual minority protections.

SINGAPORE

Internet service providers in Singapore have been given a deadline of Sept. 14 to funnel customers' Internet connections through special fil-



tering sites that will block access to a wide variety of sites outside of Singapore, including those with contents that "depict or propagate sexual perversions such as homosexuality, lesbianism and pedophilia."

Such sites "undermine public morals, political stability and religious harmony," the government ruled.

The new restrictions also seem to ban cyberspace discussion of homosexuality within Singapore.

SLOVENIA

The International Lesbian and Gay Association's 10th Regional Conference for Eastern, Southeastern and Central Europe wrapped up in Ljubljana on Aug. 11.

There were 38 participants apart from the many Slovenians.

Three delegates—one each from Romania, Cameroon and the United States—were denied entry into Slovenia, allegedly because they were not carrying a required amount of cash.

The three delegates told reporters that was not true.

SWEDEN

The government says Iranian gay men and lesbians don't have it so bad and that periodic news reports that another gay man has been put to death for the crime of homosexuality are false.

At the urging of activists, the government declassified in August a report on the topic written by Sweden's embassy in Teheran. The report had been used to deny a gay Iranian asylum in Sweden.

Although Iranian law allows the death penalty for gay or lesbian sex, in reality homosexuals are not actively persecuted, the report said.

"The risk for legal proceedings or harassment is utterly minimal as long as the homosexual relationship is handled in a discreet manner," the embassy said. "The strict regulations for submission of evidence—four male witnesses to the homosexual penetration or four confessions from each of the active partners—renders a sentence for homosexuality almost impossible in practice."

"The police...do not take active measures to investigate the existence of homosexuality nor do they actively hunt homosexuals," the report continued. "All in all, the situation in practice in Iran is drastically different from the impression conveyed by the...Penal Code."

SWITZERLAND

The Swiss government has not taken any action on the June mandate from parliament to devise a plan to legalize gay and lesbian relationships, activists report.

Parliament passed the measure 68-61 with one abstention and 70 MPs skipping the voting. The bill was introduced after lesbian and gay leaders presented a petition signed by 85,000 Swiss supporting legal same-gender unions.

Christians presented a petition with an equal number of signatures urging that marriage be limited to opposite-sex couples, but parliament declined to consider their petition, activists said.

TURKEY

According to the group Lambda Istanbul, Turkey's Supreme Court ruled in August that lesbian mothers threaten the moral development of their children.

The court struck down a lower-court ruling that had granted a lesbian custody of her 2-year-old daughter.

The woman's sexual "habit" is a "sickness," the Supreme Court said.

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