

**ARGENTINA**

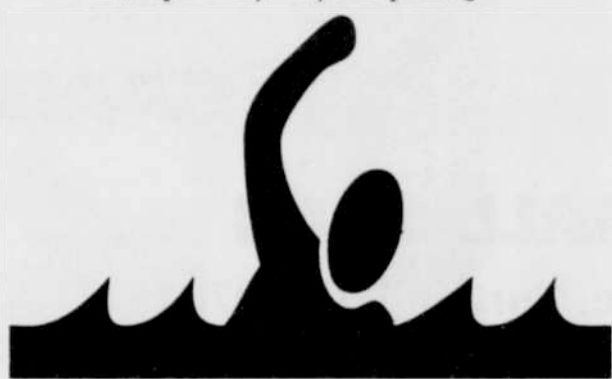
Women involved with Buenos Aires' La Fulana Feminist Community Center for Women Who Love Women say police and neighbors are terrorizing them.

After complaining to police about "disturbing noises," "orgies," "naked parties," "weird people, even transvestites" and "immoral tortilla makers" (a derogatory term for lesbians), a group of neighbors reportedly pounded and kicked at the center's door and grabbed and beat a woman who responded. Neighbors claimed music coming from the center was too loud.

Police raided the center in mid-March and removed all the audio equipment.

**AUSTRALIA**

About 260 people participated in the Australian Gaymes during Easter weekend in Brisbane, reports Sydney's *Capital Q*.



The most popular of the 12 sports were swimming, volleyball and track-and-field events.

Athletes came from Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, northern New South Wales and far-north Queensland.

Next year's Gaymes will be in Sydney as a precursor to the 2002 Gay Games.

**BRAZIL**

There were 116 anti-gay murders in Brazil in 1998, reports the Bahia Gay Group, which has kept violence statistics for several years.

Seventy-three of the victims were gay men, 36 transvestites and seven lesbians.

"Most of the gay men were shot dead inside their own apartments, while the transvestites were mainly killed in the street," said group member Luiz Mott. "Many of these crimes are committed with excessive cruelty, with many stab wounds, strangulation, suffocation and torture."

Mott said arrests occurred in only 10 percent of the cases, and convictions resulted in only 4 percent.

Bahia Gay Group's statistics show 1,661 anti-gay murders nationwide in the past 20 years.

Mott cautions, however, the "numbers are only the tip of an iceberg of hatred and blood,

since in many cases, owing to the carelessness and failures of the police and pressure from members of the family, the homosexuality of many victims is not disclosed."

**BRITAIN**

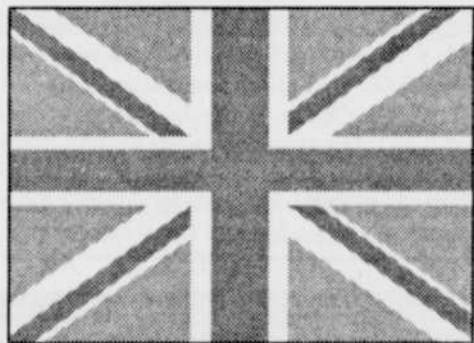
For the second time in nine months, Britain's unelected House of Lords killed a measure to lower the age of consent for sex between same-gender partners from 18 to 16. The measure would have brought the age of consent in line with that for heterosexual sex.

The April 13 vote was 222-146. The 1998 vote was 290-122. The House of Commons, Britain's elected house of Parliament, passed the newer measure in January by a vote of 313-130.

Baroness Janet Young of Farnsworth led the charge against the proposal. "This is a very important matter of social policy—there is no human right to commit buggery," she said. "This bill is just one more nail in the coffin of family life.... Good parents do not want their sons to be encouraged to take up homosexual relationships at such an early age."

The only openly gay member of the House of Lords, Baron Waheed Alli of Norbury, gave a moving speech in favor of the bill.

Despite the latest setback, the age of consent may well be reduced in a few months. Tony Blair's Labour government may invoke the rarely used Parliament Act, with which the government can override a House of Lords vote that thwarts the will of the elected lawmakers in the House of Commons.



"It is quite clear that the Lords are completely out of touch with modern Britain," says Angela Mason, head of the country's main gay lobby group, Stonewall. "All those concerned with the welfare of young people supported this bill. We hoped that the Lords would listen not only to the experts but also to medical opinion, to the elected house and to two-thirds of public opinion—all supporting this bill."

In 1998, 65 members of the British armed forces were ejected for being gay or lesbian, *The Pink Paper* reported April 2.

Forty-one were men and 24 were women. One was an officer. The majority served in the army.

Britain's military gay ban is currently under scrutiny from European courts.

**CANADA**

Seventeen of the country's 60,000 soldiers claimed medical or relocation benefits for a same-sex partner last year, the Defence Department announced in April.

"There hasn't really been a great deal of extra work caused by all of this," said Lt. Paul Roquet of the military's benefits office in Ottawa.

All seven of the medical and dental requests came from lesbians. Two of the 10 requests for relocation benefits came from men.

Spousal benefits were extended to gay and lesbian servicemembers in 1996.

**CHINA**

On March 24, Voice of America shortwave stations broadcast a 50-minute interview and call-in show on gay issues to the People's Republic of China.

Washington, D.C., gay activist Frank Kameny was the guest. He answered questions from Chinese callers on everything from same-sex marriage to the causes of homosexuality.



Frank Kameny

VOA says tens of millions of Chinese listen to the program, called *American Issues*.

**CZECH REPUBLIC**

A bill granting registered same-sex couples most of the rights of matrimony passed second reading in the Chamber of Deputies on March 31.

The vote was 88-80 with 13 abstentions. A final vote is expected in May, after which the measure would go to the Senate and then to the president for his signature.

The bill is supported by all political parties except the Christian Democrats. The only significant marriage right that would be withheld is the right to adopt children.

**FRANCE**

The National Assembly has passed a measure to grant same-sex and unmarried straight couples many of the rights and obligations of matrimony.

The April 7 vote was 300-253. Deputies affiliated with the leftist government parties supported the bill while deputies from the opposition parties generally rejected it.

Under the measure, partners must support

each other financially and be jointly liable for debts related to housing and living expenses. Spousal rights are accorded in areas such as taxation, inheritance and housing.

A similar bill passed the Assembly on Dec. 9 but was rejected by the Senate March 18. The new measure now moves to the Senate.

**GERMANY**

Reported AIDS cases dropped from 1,414 in 1997 to 922 in 1998, officials reported in April.

New infections were down as well, from 4,826 to 4,028.

In all, 17,955 Germans have developed AIDS and two-thirds of them have died.

**ISRAEL**

On April 5, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned Jewish gay and lesbian groups that Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority is anti-gay.

In a letter to the World Congress of Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Jewish Organizations, Netanyahu said the authority has a "negative attitude toward gays."

He attached a clipping from the Hebrew newspaper *Yerushalayim* titled "Palestinian Police Chief Maligns Homosexuals," in which Chief Ghazi Jibali denounced a Palestinian policeman who was executed in February for sodomizing a 6-year-old boy.

Jibali also said: "We do not like homosexuals and I heard that in Britain there is even a law against homosexuals. I even heard that the Australian ambassador to Sweden is a homosexual."

(Stephen Brady, 39, Australia's ambassador to Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden and Norway, is openly gay.)

**MALAYSIA**

On April 15, sacked Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim was sent to jail for six years for interfering with police investigations of allegations he had sex with the wife of a staff member and with his male driver.

Anwar has denounced the charges as a political conspiracy to keep Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad in power, an analysis that is shared by Amnesty International, which condemned the sentencing.

Anwar was charged after leading large anti-government protests last year.

"We...consider Anwar Ibrahim to be a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for peacefully expressing his dissenting political opinions, and reiterate our call for his immediate and unconditional release," Amnesty officials said.

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