

WORLD news

ISRAEL

Israel has lowered the age of consent for gay sex from 18 to 16, in line with that for heterosexuals. The penal code was modified in July, but the move was not publicized until Nov. 1 because activists realized teens were unaware of the change.

Homosexual relations also were legalized for 14- and 15-year-olds as long as their sexual partners are not more than three years older than them. Many European nations have a lower age of consent than Israel, including Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain (12); Germany, Iceland, Italy, San Marino and Slovenia (14); and the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Greece, Poland, Slovakia and Sweden (15), according to testimony presented to the Knesset by the Association for Civil Rights in Israel and the Association of Homosexuals and Lesbians.



FRANCE

The leading conservative candidate for mayor of Paris, Philippe Seguin, has given a groundbreaking interview to the gay magazine *Illico*. His main opponent, Socialist Bertrand Delanoë, is openly gay and 18 percent ahead in the polls.

In the interview, Seguin, a member of the Rally for the Republic party, promised to appoint a gay liaison, launch a major HIV prevention program and consider marching in next year's gay pride parade and funding the city's Gay and Lesbian Center. The election will be held in March.

UKRAINE

Amnesty International chapters from around the country made a strong showing during the first Ukraine International Lesbian & Gay Conference from Oct. 19 to 21 in Kiev. Representatives of gay organizations attended from Belarus, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Russia and Sweden.

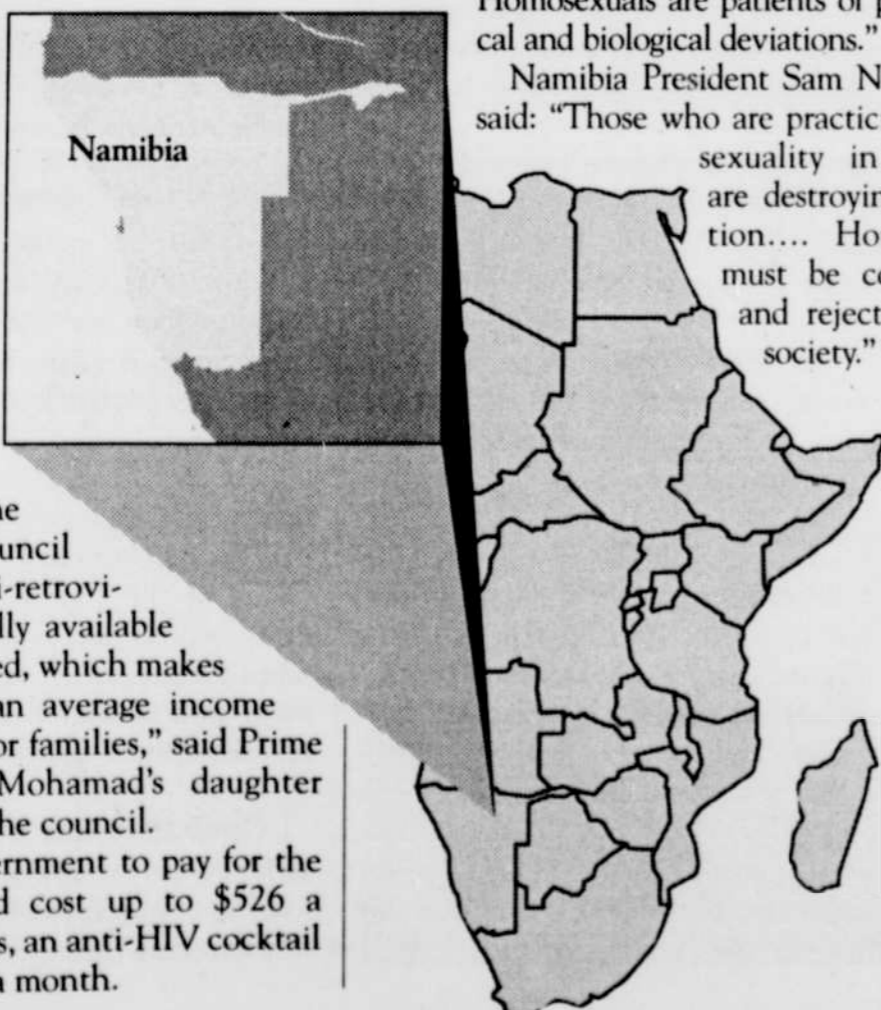
"The main importance of the conference [was the] conversations of the participants between themselves, establishing direct relations between different organizations and activists," organizers said in a press release. "For the first time, a large number of lesbigay groups from Eastern Europe could directly get to know about the problems and achievements of each other, about work experiences and plans for the future. Ukrainian human rights organizations had an opportunity to get to know and establish contacts with groups engaging in human rights protection toward lesbians and gay men."

Documents from the conference are available at www.gay.org.ua/.

MALAYSIA

About 99 percent of the 34,000 people with HIV in Malaysia cannot afford an anti-retroviral drug cocktail to combat the virus, the Malaysian AIDS Council said Oct. 29. "The anti-retroviral drugs are not locally available and need to be imported, which makes them too costly for an average income earner, more so for poor families," said Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's daughter Marina, a member of the council.

She urged the government to pay for the drugs, which she said cost up to \$526 a month. In most nations, an anti-HIV cocktail costs closer to \$1,000 a month.



BRAZIL

An ardent supporter of gay equality was elected mayor of Sao Paulo on Oct. 30. Former television sex psychologist Marta Suplicy, 55, authored a gay partnership bill, which remains stalled in the nation's Chamber of Deputies, when she was a member of Congress during the late '90s.

"We will govern for all citizens, especially the poor, who need better education, health and transportation," she said. "My victory represents the response of millions who want an end to corruption."

NAMIBIA

Homophobic members of Parliament from the ruling Swapo party continually disrupted National Assembly proceedings Oct. 31 in to delay debate on creation of the African Court on Human and People's Rights. The outbreak began when MP Rosa Namises noted that gays and lesbians have been under attack from Namibian authorities.

"As far as I know, sodomy is still a crime in this country," MP Jerry Ekandjo shouted. MPs Hadino Hishongwa and Jeremiah Nambinga also repeatedly interrupted the session.

Ekandjo, who is also the minister of home affairs, told 700 new police officers during a graduation ceremony in October: "We must make sure we eliminate [gays and lesbians] from the face of Namibia. [The] constitution does not guarantee rights for gays and lesbians."

Jeremiah Nambinga, deputy home affairs minister, has said: "Homosexuality is evil. Homosexuality is anti-social and should not only be condemned but should also be legislated against."

Homosexuals are patients of psychological and biological deviations."

Namibia President Sam Nujoma has said: "Those who are practicing homosexuality in Namibia are destroying the nation.... Homosexuals must be condemned and rejected in our society."

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