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WORLD news**ROMANIA**

A gay man from Romania lost his bid for asylum in the United Kingdom on Nov. 1.

The high court agreed Gabi Ragman, 25, had been mistreated because of his homosexuality but ruled he did not have a "well-founded fear of persecution" as required by the Geneva Convention. If mistreatment was all that was required to win asylum, then every openly gay Romanian would likely qualify, Justice Scott Baker said.

"The right protected by the convention is not a right to practice as a homosexual," he wrote. "It is the right not to suffer persecution for doing so. [There can] be various degrees of hostility towards homosexuals that nevertheless fall short of persecution."

Before he left Romania, Ragman was called before a student assembly at his university and told by the institution's director that he had brought shame on the school because of his sexual orientation. Administrators told him he could finish his degree in physical education teaching but never would be allowed to teach because he would be "a danger to children."

AUSTRALIA

About 50 percent of Australian gay men who catch HIV are getting it from their boyfriends or lovers, not from casual sexual partners, according to a study by the National Center in HIV Social Research, *Capital Q* reported.

Researchers said: "The most common reasons given by men in regular relationships for their seroconversions were couched in terms of love and intimacy and in terms of a breakdown in trust and communication. Assumptions are made on HIV status based on nothing, or failed communication."

"In many of these cases, people are throwing away condoms before negotiations about their HIV status.... The most striking thing is that seroconversions within relationships occur very early in a relationship."

Dr. Andrew Grulich, a spokesman for the National Center in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research, added, "Not using condoms within a couple of weeks of meeting someone is not an effective safe-sex strategy." In many cases, partners who seroconverted were aware their lover was HIV-positive, the study found.

Lesbians in Sydney get sexually transmitted diseases as often as straight women, a study by the Alice Springs' Sexual Health Unit has found.

Both groups had equal rates of herpes and genital warts, while lesbians had higher rates of bacterial vaginosis and hepatitis C. Only 7 percent of the self-identified lesbians never had had sex with a man.

The study looked at the medical and sexual histories of 1,408 lesbians and 1,423 heterosexual women from 1991 to 1998. It appears in the journal *Sexually Transmitted Infections*.

EUROPE

The Council of Ministers of the 15-nation European Union outlawed employment discrimination based on sexual orientation Oct. 17.

Member countries will have three years to implement the mandate in their national laws. The members of the EU are Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

The ministers also banned discrimination based on religion, belief, age and disability. Jackie Lewis, International Lesbian and Gay Association European co-chairwoman, called the new law "historic."

"It is arguably the most important law ever introduced in relation to sexual orientation discrimination," she said. "It will lead to the banning of all aspects of employment discrimination first in the 15 European Union member states and then in a further 13 countries as those countries currently applying to join the European Union become members."

UNITED KINGDOM

One of Britain's most prominent Hindu priests was murdered Oct. 20, and police say his secret gay life is a main area of investigation. The body of Harish Purohit, 42, was found stabbed 13 times at an empty house in Leicester.

"We know he led a double life," Detective Superintendent Bryan Warraker told the British Broadcasting Corp. "He had a happy domestic home life but also had a separate social lifestyle.... From the information we have, Harish had a lot of male friends that he went to meet and engage with in the evenings."

Purohit was president of the Hindu Federation and secretary of the National Association of Hindu Priests. His wife, Anjana Joshi, told the *Times* she was aware of his evening activities.

"Of course I knew about it," she said. "But I respected his wishes, and he was always a loving husband."

"He was an incredible person, and he has left a big hole in the life of all his family. Whoever chose to take his life was totally selfish and evil beyond belief."

The boyfriend of the first openly gay officer in Britain's Royal Navy has been fully accepted as a naval spouse.

Lt. Cmdr. Craig Jones' partner, Adam, has attended formal dinners on his ship, the HMS Northumberland, and recently flew to the Mediterranean with Navy wives to visit their husbands in port. The European Court of Human Rights struck down Britain's ban on gays in the military last year.

SWITZERLAND

The Swiss government has appointed Justice Minister Ruth Metzler to draft a registered partnership bill for gay couples.

The measure is expected to grant registered partners a large number of the rights and obligations of marriage, including adoption rights and access to medically assisted procreation. It also might give immigration rights to foreign lovers.

The process of enacting the law could take several years. Gay couples have almost all the rights of marriage in Denmark, France, Greenland, Iceland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Vermont.

IRELAND

Providers of goods and services in Ireland cannot discriminate based on sexual orientation under a law that took effect Oct. 25. The Equal Status Act bans unfair treatment based on gender, age, marital and family status, religion, race, sexual orientation, disability or membership of the Traveller community (an apparent reference to Gypsies).

Enforcement will be carried out by the Office of the Director of Equality Investigations, which can impose fines and mandate remedial action. Ireland already bans employment discrimination based on the same nine characteristics. **JN**

Compiled by REX WOCKNER, who has reported for the gay press since 1985. He has a bachelor's degree in journalism from Drake University and started his career as a radio reporter.