

Home Affairs Minister Jerry Ekandjo has said, "We must make sure we eliminate them [gays and lesbians] from the face of Namibia."

The Namibian Society for Human Rights called Nujoma's latest attack "dangerous and violent."

The gay Rainbow Project said: "Nowhere does our constitution state that gay and lesbian people are not members of the human family and therefore do not enjoy the same rights as all other citizens. We would also like to know whether the president has made arrangements with the prison authorities to accommodate some 10 percent of the population."

It was not immediately clear if police would act on Nujoma's demand.

EUROPE

The registered partner of a Swedish gay man does not deserve spousal benefits when his partner goes to work for the European Union bureaucracy in Brussels, Belgium, according to a preliminary ruling in a lawsuit over the matter.

An advocate-general delivered his opinion to the European Court of Justice in February. The court does not have to follow his conclusions but, in practice, usually does.

The advocate-general said the term "spouse" in European Union staff regulations does not extend to registered partnerships—even ones such as in Sweden that grant more than 99 percent of the rights and obligations of marriage. A final ruling is expected in a few months' time.

MEXICO

The Mexican state of Aguascalientes banned discrimination based on sexual orientation March 11. Legislators voted unanimously for the change.

An addition to the Penal Code punishes with six to nine months in prison "anyone who provokes or incites hate or violence or negates or restricts employment rights based on age, sex, pregnancy, civil status, race, language, religion, ideology or sexual orientation."

The legislation is, in part, a response to an incident last year in which a city-run swimming park in the capital city, also called Aguascalientes, posted a sign banning dogs and gays. The sign led to a picket of City Hall by 50 gays and transvestites.

After the new protections were passed, National Action Party Deputy Cecilia Franco, a member of the state Congress' Human Rights Commission, told reporters: "No person should be excluded because of his/her private life. Sexual preference is a private matter. You cannot and should not discriminate against anyone because of that."

The Federal District, where Mexico City is located, is the only other place in Mexico where anti-gay discrimination is banned.

CANADA

Somebody detonated a can of high-pressure pepper spray during a performance by the Vancouver Lesbian and Gay Choir on March 10 at the Sid Williams Theatre in Courtenay, British Columbia.

Courtenay is 90 miles northwest of Vancouver, on Vancouver Island. The chorus had been invited by the local Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays chapter.

Many of the 250 audience members began choking and coughing and darted from their seats. No one was seriously injured.

Choir members regrouped in front of the theater after marching around the building singing "Never Turning Back." The concert later was concluded in the sanctuary of a local United Church parish.

The type of pepper spray involved is designed for use by people who find themselves under attack from a bear.

PORTUGAL

By a large majority, the Portuguese Parliament on March 15 extended to gay couples

the same rights given to unmarried straight couples who live together. Gay couples who cohabitate for two years will have marital rights in areas such as vacations, taxes, inheritance, pensions, housing contracts and rental leases.

The "De Facto Unions" legislation is expected to receive the signature of President Jorge Sampaio and become law within several months. It will not allow gay couples to adopt children.

AUSTRALIA

The parliament of the Australian state of Tasmania repealed laws banning men from wearing women's clothing March 13.

"A great weight has been lifted from the shoulders of all transgender folk," activist Ros Houston said. "Discrimination and violence against transgender people remain a problem, but at least now these social ills don't have the sanction of the law."

Section 8(1)d of the 1935 Tasmanian Police Offences Act criminalized men dressing as women between sunset and sunrise. The law likely targeted bushrangers who cross-dressed to elude police as well as thieves who dressed as prostitutes to rob whalers.

CHINA

The number of legal gay bars in Beijing is down to one after a bizarre attack on the popular nightclub Drag-On in which police arrested the owner of a competing bar, Half and Half, for orchestrating the crime, Beijing correspondent Steve Friess reports.



The owner of Half and Half is accused of masterminding an attack on his competition

Several thugs rampaged through Drag-On just before it closed Feb. 10, stabbing owner Mi Ke in the head, arms and abdomen. The injuries were not life-threatening. Bar operators received a call the next day warning that the assailants would return if Drag-On reopened, which it did not for several days.

On Feb. 22, police arrested the owner of Half and Half and charged him with masterminding the attack in order to increase business at his own establishment. Half and Half has been closed ever since.

Drag-On finally reopened Feb. 28. The bar has Beijing's only gay dance floor and is a favorite among expatriates.

A few other Beijing bars attract gays, but they are illegal and oftentimes filled with prostitutes. Drag-On and Half and Half were believed to be the only properly licensed gay bars in the city. **J**

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.

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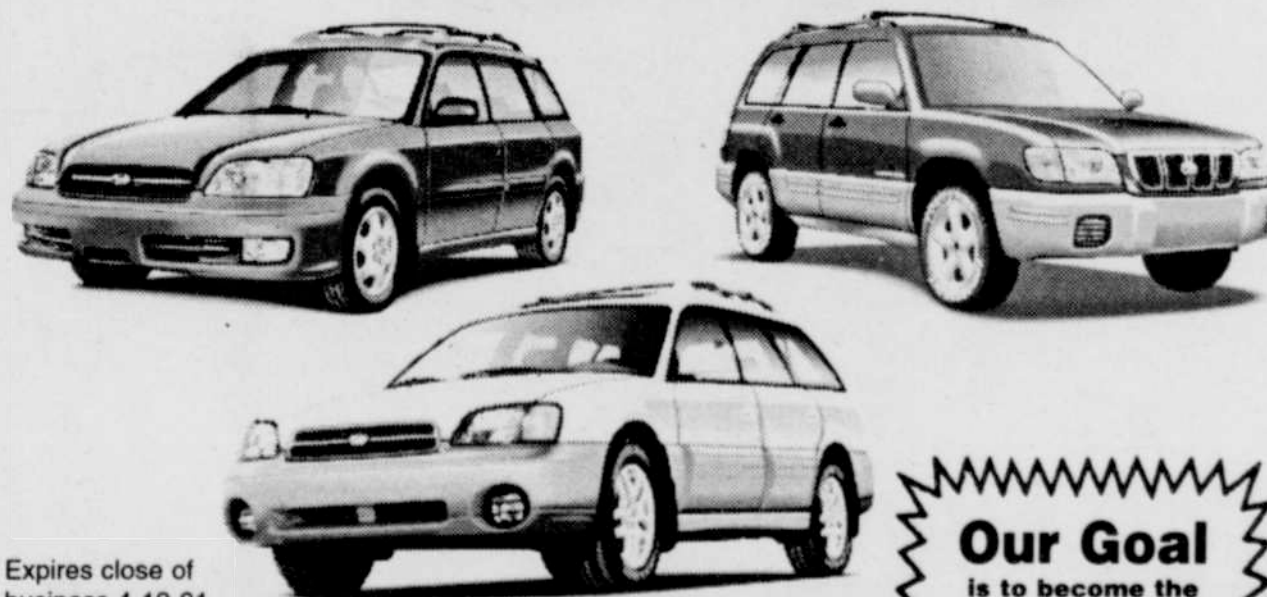
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