

ZIMBABWE

Anti-gay President Robert Mugabe signed a law Aug. 24 criminalizing willful transmission of HIV. The punishment will be up to 20 years in prison.

MEXICO

The southern state of Chiapas, site of the Zapatista indigenous peoples uprising, has banned discrimination based on sexual orientation.

The vote by the 40 members of the state legislative body was unanimous as a new penal code was approved. Article 205 punishes "crimes against the dignity of persons, which consists of incitation to hate or violence... vexation or exclusion of a group of people, negation or restriction of a group of people and negation or restriction of employment rights based on age, sex, pregnancy, civil status, race, language, religion, ideology, sexual orientation, skin color, nationality, origin and social or other position."

The state of Aguascalientes and the Federal District also ban anti-gay discrimination. Mexico has 29 other states.

AUSTRALIA

Australia will not legalize gay marriage, Prime Minister John Howard said Aug. 23. "I don't believe in gay marriage," he said. "We should be completely tolerant and fair-minded about people's sexual preferences, but I don't believe homosexual relationships should be given the same place in our society such as traditional concepts as marriage."

Asked if he'd be disappointed if he had a gay son, Howard said: "I wouldn't love him any less, but... I would be disappointed. I haven't met a parent yet who wants their children to grow up gay."

GERMANY

Gay couples in the conservative southern state of Bavaria will have to wait a few months to access Germany's new gay partnership law. The Federal Constitutional Court ruled Aug. 9 that Bavarian legislators may wait until their next regular sessions to pass measures needed to implement the law.

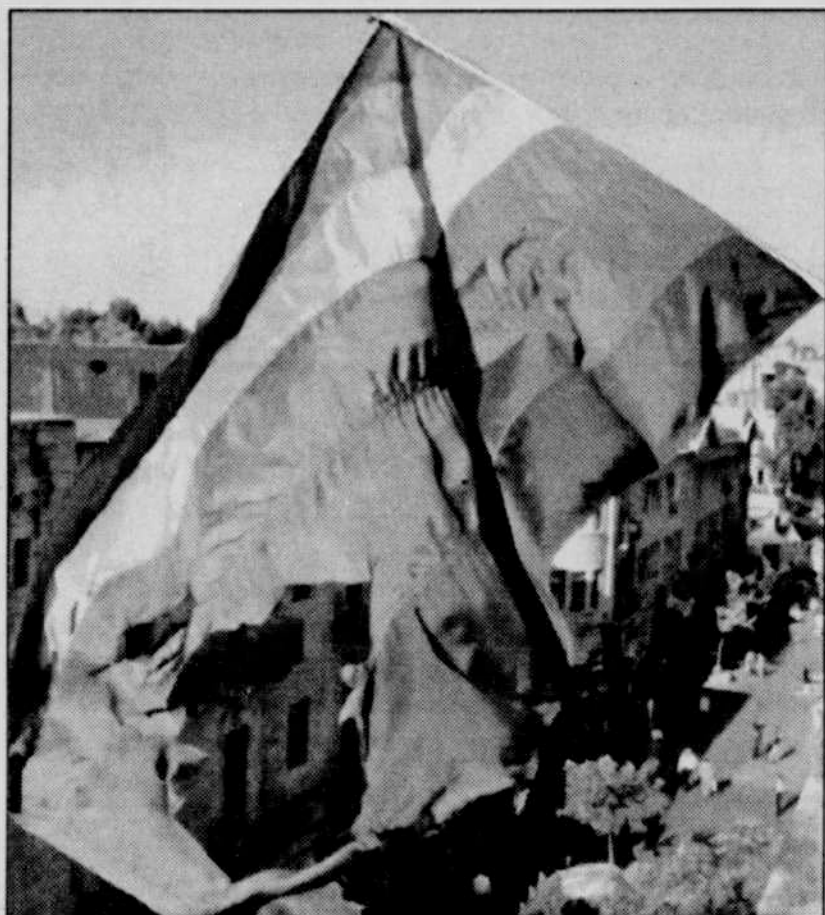
The steps were not taken earlier because Bavaria sued to block the partnership registration law altogether. That suit was rejected July 18, and the law took effect nationwide Aug. 1.

The law grants registered gay couples marriage rights and obligations in areas such as inheritance, health insurance, immigration, name changes and alimony. It withholds marriage rights in the areas of adoption, taxation, pensions and social welfare benefits.

UNITED KINGDOM

The Observer reported Aug. 12 that the Ministry of Defense will recognize partners of gay service personnel as spouses.

Britain lifted its ban on gays in the military in January 2000 under order from the European Court of Human Rights. A review revealed the new policy had no impact on operational effectiveness.



Vandals torched the flag flying above Jerusalem's gay community center Aug. 23

ISRAEL

The rainbow flag flying on the balcony of Jerusalem's gay community center, Open House, was torched by vandals Aug. 23, the day before Mayor Ehud Olmert was scheduled to make his first visit to the facility. The vandals left a note saying, "God will humiliate those that have pride."

"It is sad that such an incident occurred... especially today," Open House director Hagai El-Ad said. "We will continue doing what we have always done, our work for tolerance and pluralism in the Holy City."

During his visit, Olmert called the attack "a barbaric act that should be condemned." The flag will be replaced, El-Ad said.

BRAZIL

Recife Mayor Joao Paulo has sent a proposal to the City Council to extend spousal benefits to civil servants' same-sex partners. A vote is expected shortly.

Among Latin American nations, Brazil has led the way on gay issues. Two states, Sergipe and Mato Grosso, and more than 80 cities ban discrimination based on sexual orientation, and the Brazilian Supreme Court has extended inheritance rights to same-sex partners.

DENMARK

Marchers in Copenhagen's Gay Pride parade were attacked by immigrant youth throwing stones and bottles Aug. 18.

One man was arrested, and two marchers were treated at a hospital for minor injuries. According to the program for the Pride festivities, an annual "homophobia prize" was scheduled to be given to Muslim nations because of their intolerance of gay and lesbian people.

PORTUGAL

Leiria saw its first Gay Pride celebration Aug. 11. More than 250 people partied on the street in front of the gay bar Dorius, which helped organize the event. 

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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