

WORLD news

Nico Beger, International Lesbian and Gay Association co-delegate to the council's nongovernmental organization forum, called the statement "strong...given the number of countries involved and the fact that they are at widely differing stages in their acceptance of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered rights."

Co-delegate Nigel Warner added, "Never before have so many governments joined in attacking homophobia."

One council member state, Armenia, bans gay sex. A total of 10 other member countries have laws that treat gays differently than heterosexuals (in areas other than cutting-edge partnership matters): Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Portugal, Romania and the United Kingdom. Four territorial entities controlled by the United Kingdom—Gibraltar, Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey—also maintain discriminatory laws.

The council's main role is to strengthen democracy, human rights and the rule of law throughout member states. Founded in the wake of World War II, it is the continent's most important human rights organization.

The European Convention on Human Rights is the most significant of its many treaties. The European Court of Human Rights settles complaints of convention violations.

PANAMA

After a three-year legal battle, the New Men and Women Association of Panama has achieved legal registration.

The gay organization had been denied official status by the Ministry of Government and Justice on the grounds that its aims were contrary to "morals and good habits." The agency relented, according to the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, after the association received support from the Human Rights Commission of the Organization of American States.

NEW ZEALAND

Georgina Beyer, the world's first openly transsexual member of Parliament, has decided not to retire after all. She had said in May she would not seek a second term because she wanted to spend more time with her Maori tribe and family and work on gay and human rights issues.

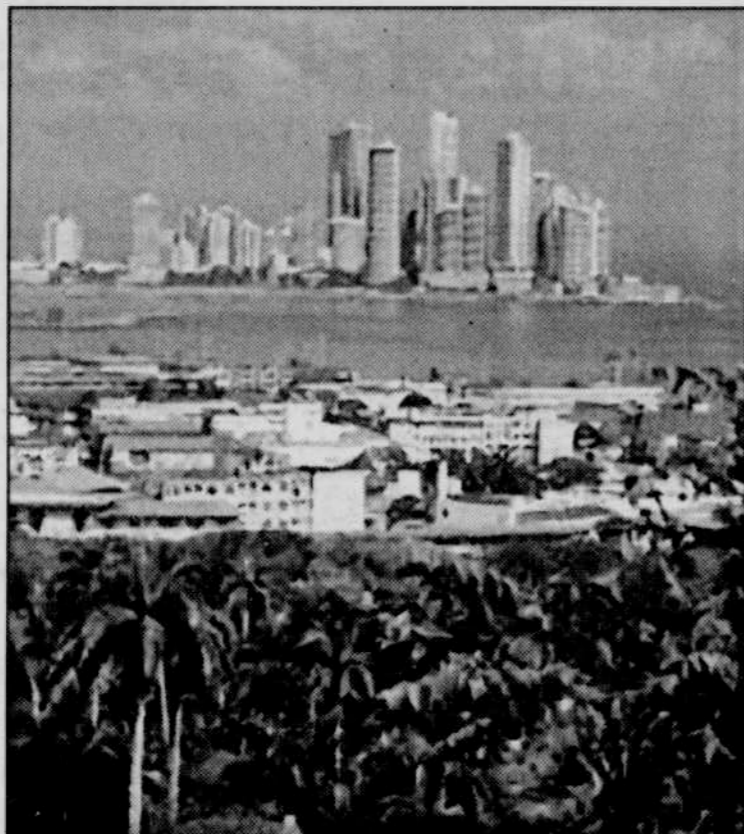
"It was not my intention to be in politics forever," Beyer said. "There are other things that I want to do in my life."

Beyer changed her mind after voters across the political spectrum urged her to stay, she said. She represents the conservative Wairarapa region in the southeastern corner of the North Island. Before becoming a politician, she was a nationally known actor and, before that, a prostitute, stripper and drag queen.

AUSTRALIA

Peter Tatchell has been denied a visa to enter Australia, where he planned to report from the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting for the BBC and make a citizens arrest of Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe. The gay activist twice before has attempted to "arrest" the virulently homophobic leader, in London and Brussels, where he was beaten by his security guards.

"The refusal to grant me a visa is an illegal



Panama finally has recognized a local gay organization

abuse of the immigration laws," Tatchell said. "The Australian government is welcoming Mugabe as an honored guest, yet I am being denied the right to return to the country of my birth."

Leaders of 54 commonwealth countries were scheduled to meet Oct. 6 to 9 in Brisbane. Tatchell said the Australian High Commission in London told him he was being excluded under Section 501 of the 1958 Migration Act, a rarely used law usually invoked against suspected terrorists, war criminals, drug barons, gangsters and others believed to be of "bad character" or to have engaged in "criminal behavior."

UKRAINE

Less than a month after it opened, the first gay community center in the former Soviet Union has been shut down by its landlord, activists reported.

Employees, volunteers and patrons of the Our World Center in Lugansk were forced from the building Sept. 15, the electricity was shut off, and the locks were changed. Coordinator Andriy Maymulakhin thinks the actions were politically motivated.

"Reputedly, the actual building owner is planning to be a candidate for election to the Parliament of Ukraine during the spring of 2002," he said. "Thus it becomes clear the basis of the urgent actions aimed at pushing gays and lesbians out into the street. We are confident that once again...we have suffered acts manifesting prejudice against people of homosexual orientation in wider Ukrainian society."

THE PHILIPPINES

About 20 people marched Sept. 25 on the Philippines Congress in support of legislation to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation, correspondent Doug Sanders reports. The demonstration was organized by the Lesbian and Gay Legislative Action Network, a coalition of 12 gay organizations.

Among the marchers was the executive director of Amnesty International's Philippines office. The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission is coordinating foreign lobbying efforts in support of the anti-discrimination bills. [M]

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.



Ukraine's gay community center publishes the magazine *Our World*

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