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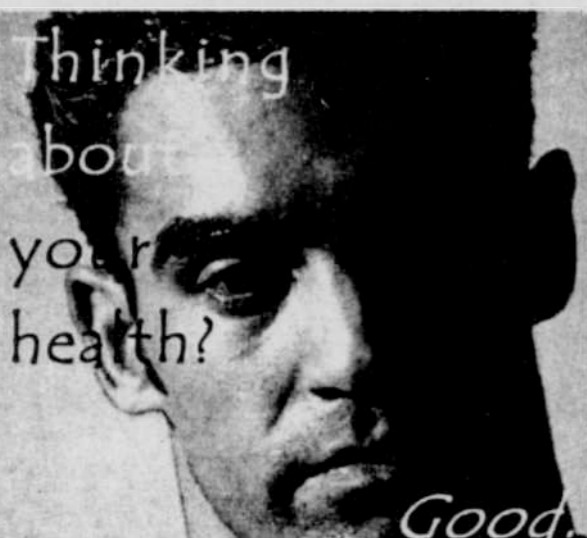
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**WORLD news**

**EGYPT**

The Emergency State Security Court in Cairo delivered its sentences Nov. 14 in the cases of the 52 men detained since May because of alleged homosexual activity.

A total of 23 were sentenced to between one and five years of hard labor, and 29 were acquitted. The defendants, who cannot appeal, wept and screamed inside a courtroom cage as the verdicts were handed down.

The men were charged with obscene behavior and contempt for religion. Police say they were arrested May 11 in and around the gay club Queen Boat.

Activists maintain many of them were nowhere near the bar when they were taken into custody. According to the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, "There are enough irregularities in the arrests and handling of this case to suggest that the Cairo 52 may have been framed."

William Schulz, Amnesty International USA executive director, said: "The proceedings against these men were egregious on many levels. Not only did their trial likely violate basic international legal standards, we are also extremely concerned at reports of torture or ill treatment during the first few days of detention and the denial of access to families and attorneys."

Joe Stork, Washington director of the Middle East and North Africa division of Human Rights Watch, added, "The government prosecuted these men in an unfair trial, apparently in order to distract public attention from their own unpopular policies, and to placate conservative elements in Egyptian society."

IGLHRC called on Egypt President Hosni Mubarak to pardon the men sentenced to hard labor.

"We are very chilled by the hard labor sentences," executive director Surina Khan said. "Having received numerous testimonies of beatings and abuse of the Cairo 52 while in detention, we can only imagine what awaits them now."

Among other abuses, the authorities subjected the men to anal probes, ostensibly to determine whether they had engaged in intercourse.

"We are concerned for the acquitted as well," IGLHRC's Scott Long added. "We call for their immediate release and ask President Mubarak to issue a clear directive to the prosecution not to appeal their acquittals."

Sherif Farahat, alleged to be the group's leader, was sentenced to five years of hard labor for debauchery, contempt for religion, falsely interpreting the Koran and exploiting Islam to promote deviant ideas. Another man was sentenced to three years of hard labor for contempt for religion.

A total of 20 men were sentenced to two years of hard labor for obscene behavior, and one man was sentenced to one year of hard labor for obscene behavior. A teen-ager, tried earlier in juvenile court, was sentenced to three years in prison Sept. 18.

The International Lesbian and Gay Association denounced the verdicts and threatened retaliation.

"ILGA-Europe will again write to European Commissioner Chris Patten, responsible for external relations, and the Belgian EU presidency urging them to intensify the European Union's pressure on Egypt to stop these human



The detainees arrive July 19 at Abdin Court in Cairo

rights violations and to appeal to President Mubarak to immediately pardon the 23 people convicted," co-chairman Kurt Krickler said. "We will also call upon the European Parliament not to ratify the Euro-Mediterranean agreement recently signed between the EU and Egypt."

According to the international gay Muslim organization Al-Fatiha, "The trial represented the worst aspects of the Egyptian judicial system." Founder Faisal Alam said, "Even after hearing the many discrepancies in this case, the Egyptian State Security Court refused to acknowledge the truth: the fact that these men did nothing wrong."

Meanwhile, IGLHRC reported Nov. 15 that four more men were arrested under identical charges Nov. 10 in the Cairo suburb of Giza. They allegedly had turned their apartment into a "den of perversion." One of the men reportedly was stripped, hung up in his cell, splashed with cold water and beaten after his arrest.

"This new case is eerily similar to the Cairo 52 case," Long said. "Presumed homosexuals arrested at random under the same law...beaten in prison and vilified by the media while police fabricate facts that do not add up. It is becoming clearer that persecution of homosexuals is a major human rights issue in Egypt."

**COLOMBIA**

A same-sex civil union bill was introduced Nov. 7 in Colombia's Senate and passed out of committee Nov. 21 by a 9-1 vote.

The measure extends marriage rights to registered couples in areas such as inheritance, insurance, immigration, social security, loans, bereavement leave, health care decisions, conjugal visits, alimony and domestic violence protection. It also bans discrimination and incitement of discrimination based on sexual orientation or identity, mandates objective gay sex education in schools and requires municipal health departments to address homosexuality and cooperate with nongovernmental organizations that work on sexual diversity issues.

**CANADA**

A gay man was found murdered Nov. 17 in Vancouver's Stanley Park, one of North America's cruisiest locations.

In an apparent hate crime, Aaron Webster, 41, was beaten with probably a baseball bat by three or four assailants, police said. "This has all the earmarks of an attack that was prompted by the man's sexual orientation," spokesman Scott Dreimal said.

No suspects have been identified. Four witnesses to the assault said it was too dark to make out anything about the attackers.



Aaron Webster