

WORLD news

friendly approach of the [Israeli military] as an example he would proudly use in his deliberations in the U.S. regarding a change in... 'don't ask, don't tell.'"



The embassy said two of the murdered foreigners visited the Chameleon nightclub

RUSSIA

The U.S. Embassy in Moscow is urging gay Americans to be careful in the city following eight recent murders of men who frequented gay bars.

Officials particularly cited the gay bar Kazarma, which is inside the straight club Chameleon. "We believe we may have uncovered a disturbing pattern of murders of foreign gay men in Moscow," the embassy said.

The dead men include British television producer Christopher Rees, U.S. teacher Steve Malcom, Australian petrochemical consultant Thomas Nagy-Bachman, German chef Heinrich-Helmut Kurth and four Russian men. Rees, Malcom and Nagy-Bachman were killed in their apartments, Kurth on the street.

"To the best of my knowledge all the murders were connected to Kazarma," Gay.ru editor Nikita Ivanov told the *Moscow Times*. "It is an inherently dangerous place. The kind of people who congregate there are like hustlers, male prostitutes from the provinces and bad neighborhoods of Moscow. My suspicion is that the motive behind these crimes is economic. They're committed by some poor boy from the provinces who has ended up in Moscow a criminal and prostituting himself."

Chameleon's financial manager, Tamara Zhikhareva, told the newspaper the club is safe.

"All clients have to pass through strict face and passport control," she said. "As for the foreigners... our guards keep an eye on them so that nobody extorts money from them."

Ivanov challenged that statement, charging that the club's security guards actually point out foreigners to the criminals who prey on them.

Russian police believe that the deaths are not related and that no serial killer is on the loose. "These were ordinary murders," said Svetlana Baskakova of the General Prosecutor's Office.

SOUTH KOREA

The government has demanded South Korea's oldest and biggest gay Web site, Exzone.com, label itself as "harmful" and prevent access by young people. Failure to follow the order will result in a \$10,000 fine and a two-year prison sentence for the owner, officials said.

The Ministry of Information and Communications enacted an Internet content rating system last year classifying gay Web sites as "harmful media" that must be blocked from youth. The determination followed a decision by the Korean Information and Communica-



Cassia Eller

tions Ethics Committee to classify homosexuality as "obscenity and perversion" in its "Criteria for Indecent Internet Sites." Activists trace that definition to a 1997 law classifying descriptions of "homosexual love" as "harmful to youth."

Since the introduction of the Internet Content Filtering Ordinance last July, more than 12,000 Web sites, including several gay ones, have been blocked, deleted or shut down. The large gay site Ivancity.com was turned off by its service provider without any notice or request for content modification. Gay online clubs at two of Korea's biggest Web portals also were deleted, reportedly on orders from the committee.

A total of 15 gay groups filed suit Jan. 9 against the government, claiming the clampdown violates constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression, speech and press.

"The government has no right to determine people's sexual orientation," said Im Tae-Hun of the Lesbian and Gay Alliance Against Discrimination in Korea. "Even if we don't stand a chance of winning the case, we will take the case to international human rights organizations to call international attention to this issue."

INDIA

Two gay judges visiting from overseas promoted gay rights Jan. 8 in Mumbai, the *Times of India* reported. Australian Justice Michael Kirby and South African Justice Edwin Cameron told a conference that convincing the media to include gay characters on television entertainment programs could be an important goal.

"We need to blow away that spell cast on people to keep quiet about their sexual identities," Kirby said. "We had a program featuring gays in Australia, and believe me, it did more for furthering the community's cause than anything else."

Kirby is a member of Australia's High Court. Cameron, who sits on South Africa's Supreme Court of Appeal, revealed in 1999 he is HIV-positive.

BRAZIL

Cassia Eller's lover was granted temporary custody of the late rock star's 8-year-old son Jan. 8, Reuters reported. Gay campaigners cheered the decision by a Rio de Janeiro court—the first such ruling in the nation's history.

Eller, who had been with Eguenia Vieira for 14 years, died of an apparent drug overdose in December, the wire service said. The father, musician Tavinho Fialho, died in a car crash when she was pregnant with the boy.

The judge also granted Vieira inheritance rights to Eller's money and copyrights. "The case represents a change in the ideology dominant in Brazil...away from the right of blood to the right of the heart," said Luiz Mott of the Bahia Gay Group. **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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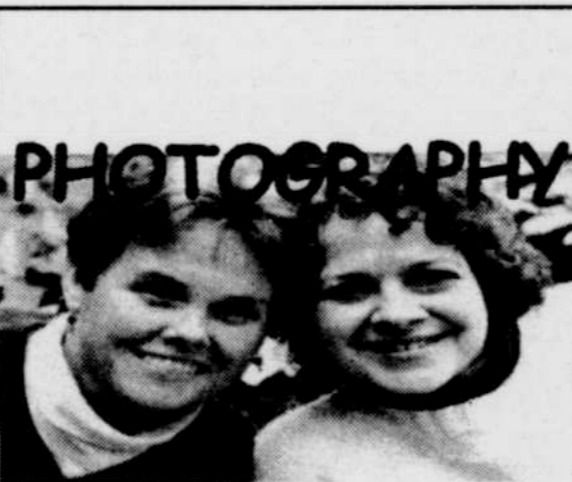
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