

**WORLD news**

**EGYPT**

At least eight more men have been arrested on suspicion of homosexual behavior, the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission reported Jan. 21. "The arrests, following on last year's trial of 52 men for homosexuality, suggest a steadily growing pattern of persecution," the group said.

Several other anti-gay arrests have occurred in recent months as well, some of them related to alleged sexual advertising on the Internet.

"Enough is enough," IGLHRC's Scott Long said. "Too many people are sitting in jail whose only crime is to be suspected of homosexuality. Homosexuality is not perverse; the behavior of the Egyptian government is."

The newest arrests took place in Damanhour, capital of Al-Beheira province. A local newspaper suggested further arrests are possible because an address book was confiscated containing "the names and addresses of a large number of perverts."

Damanhour prosecutor Yaseen Zaghoul reportedly ordered that the men's genitals and anuses be examined to confirm their homosexuality, a practice that was seen in the earlier cases as well.

Cairo's Emergency State Security Court handed down verdicts Nov. 14, 2001, in the cases of 52 men who had been detained for six months on charges of obscene behavior and contempt for religion. A total of 23 of them were sentenced to between one and five years of hard labor, and 29 were acquitted.

Police say they were arrested in and around the gay club Queen Boat. International human rights activists maintain many of the men were nowhere near the bar when they were taken into custody May 11 and following days and have denounced the prosecutions as a sham.



Former Tory vice chairman Steven Norris says the party will become more gay-friendly

**UNITED KINGDOM**

Britain's Conservative Party plans to become more gay-friendly, the BBC reported Jan. 25.

"There is indeed an intent to alter the tone of the party's approach to gay people," former Tory vice chairman Steven Norris said. Front-bencher John Bercow recently acknowledged Conservatives still are viewed as "racist, sexist, homophobic and anti-youth."

Boy George threw the switch to launch a new digital gay radio station Jan. 25 in England.

Purple Radio, which was formerly available only via the Internet, now can be heard via digital cable and satellite television. "Lesbians and gay men are one of the many communities that make London such a wonderful place to live, and we need to have a range of broadcast outlets to ensure the capital's diversity is reflected," Mayor Ken Livingston commented.



Boy George switched on Purple Radio

Britain's national gay newsmagazine, *Gay Times*, is being kept inside a folder rather than openly on display with other publications at the National Police Training Center's Multicultural Community Information Center near Coventry, England.

A spokesman said the decision was made because "National Police Training does not wish to create the potential for offense. NPT believes this is a measured, pragmatic approach to what is a sensitive issue."

The college's president called *Gay Times*, which is similar to the *Advocate*, "salacious and suggestive."

Gay activists and the magazine's publisher denounced the policy. "If the police were treating ethnic minority publications in this way, there would be an absolute outcry," activist Peter Tatchell said.

*Gay Times* media critic Terry Anderson asked the BBC, "How on earth will the recruits be able to go on the frontline and deal with the gay community when in their training the attitude is that there is something salacious, something undesirable and something that has to be hidden about homosexuality?"

About 20 members of the National Union of Students Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Campaign picketed the training center Jan. 23. "If they are taking steps to keep magazines like *Gay Times* out of sight, then how are we supposed to have any confidence in them and believe that they will help us with our problems when the time comes?" protester Adrian Bradley asked ICCoventry.co.uk.

**COLOMBIA**

Congress has delayed until its next session a vote on extending some marriage rights to same-sex couples. The measure was approved 9-1 in an initial Senate committee vote but has several more hurdles to clear before it would become law.

The bill creates a partnership registration procedure and grants spousal rights in areas such as inheritance, property rights, social security benefits, health care, alimony and pensions. Justice Minister Rómulo González Trujillo opposes the legislation, saying it violates Article 42 of the constitution, which defines the family as a heterosexual institution.

**ISRAEL**

Leading Jerusalem rabbi David Batzri thinks gays should be "put to death" in accordance with religious law, the daily newspaper *Ma'ariv* reported Jan. 24. "Homosexuals and lesbians are not only a sickness, they are an abomination which should be removed from every city in the country, also from those districts where they feel protected, like in Tel Aviv," he said.

Some legislators and other rabbis denounced the remarks, which were made during a lecture at a seminary. Last month, Batzri, a leading scholar in Jewish mysticism, blamed "nearly all" of the nation's "troubles, agonies, wars, diseases and poverty" on excessive masturbation.

**JAMAICA**

The government said Jan. 21 it has no intention of decriminalizing gay sex despite a report from Parliament's joint select committee on the Charter of Rights Bill. "We will not be considering the issue of homosexuality," Information Minister Colin Campbell said.

The committee recommended the government consider "the issue of the repeal of the Offenses Against the Persons Act insofar as it relates to the offense of buggery between consenting adults in private." Buggery is punished with imprisonment at hard labor for up to 10 years.

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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