

WORLD news

But the continental court said that scientific opinion is split on whether it harms children to be raised by gay parents, that the Council of Europe's 41 member nations are not of one mind on the issue, that gay adoption law is in a state of flux and that "a broad margin of appreciation had to be left to the authorities of each state, who [are] in principle better placed than an international court to evaluate local needs and conditions." Frette, 47, has three months to appeal the 4-3 ruling to the court's full 17-member chamber.

EGYPT

The number of men jailed in Egypt solely for being gay is in the "hundreds," *Newsweek* reported Feb. 16. Human rights activists have provided details on only about 40 people who have been imprisoned during recent months in an ongoing crackdown on gay bars and Internet sites and on suspected homosexuals in general.

"Nobody knows how many gays are languishing in Egyptian jails—the number is certainly in the hundreds—or what prompted the massive dragnet," *Newsweek* said. "Every day brings new stories of roundups of homosexuals in Cairo and other cities."

VENEZUELA

Amnesty International has mobilized its membership on behalf of trans people in Valencia who have experienced several attacks and arrests during recent weeks.

"The abuses, reportedly at the hands of police officials, follow the murder of Michelle Paz on Jan. 11 and indicate that the transgender community continues to be at risk for extrajudicial execution due to their perceived sexual orientation and gender identity," the group said. "Furthermore, transgender activists have publicly denounced police brutality, leaving them easy targets for reprisals."

Among the recent incidents, according to Amnesty:

- Two days after Paz's murder, a man in civilian clothes thought to be an officer shot at trans activist Paola Sanchez. She escaped unharmed, but police arrested her a few hours later at home.
- Trans activists Vicky Martinez and Kevin Capote were arrested Jan. 16 and held for three days at La Isabela prison. Capote reported being severely beaten by police before being incarcerated.
- Officers from the Cathedral Parish Command forced Gabriela Ojeda into a squad car Feb. 5. She was taken to police headquarters and interrogated on the whereabouts of Maury Oviedo, president of Respect for the Personality, a trans rights group.

The intelligence department of Police General Headquarters issued a search warrant Feb. 8 for Oviedo. She had filed a complaint with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in October 2000 alleging a policeman killed trans person Dayana Nieves. Oviedo is in hiding and fears for her life, Amnesty said.

"We are disturbed by reports that the police may be behind the attacks on the transgender community," said Michael Heflin, director of Amnesty USA's OUTfront program. "The government must send a clear message that this will not be tolerated and take action to ensure that human rights will be respected."



Robert Mugabe

GREENLAND

Greenland's first gay group came into existence Feb. 9, the Swedish newspaper *QX* reported. About 30 people gathered in the capital city, Nuuk, to form the organization.

A self-governing overseas administrative division of Denmark, Greenland adopted the nation's sweeping gay partnership law in 1994, five years after it took effect, but never had a gay group until now, *QX* said. The island has a population of 56,352.

AUSTRALIA

Australia finally gave British gay activist Peter Tatchell a visa Feb. 19—too late for him to attend his stepfather's funeral or, he says, the upcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. He had announced plans to sue the government a week earlier.

"This ends nearly six months of delay and obstruction," Tatchell said. "There was never any lawful basis for excluding me under legislation that was intended to bar war criminals, terrorists, drug traffickers and murderers."

The delays likely resulted from his announced plans to effect a citizens arrest of vociferously anti-gay Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe at the Commonwealth conference, which was rescheduled for this month after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. He should be jailed for numerous egregious human rights violations, Tatchell says.

About 2,000 people rallied Feb. 19 outside Parliament House in Perth, the capital of Western Australia, in opposition to a gay law reform bill that has passed the Lower House.

According to the *West Australian*, the measure lowers the state's legal age for gay sex from 21 to 16 and grants same-sex couples the same legal rights as married couples, including access to adoption and in vitro fertilization. The bill is expected to pass the Upper House easily, the newspaper said.

POLAND

Poznan Catholic Archbishop Monsignor Juliusz Paetz was ousted Feb. 23 as a gay man who repeatedly has sexually harassed priests and seminarians.

The exposé appeared in the daily newspaper *Rzeczpospolita*. The incidents were so frequent, the rector of the seminary banned Paetz from the property, the publication said.

"Despite the protests of priests and lay Catholics, Monsignor Paetz has not changed his ways," the paper said. "Letters sent to the Polish episcopate, to the apostolic nuncio, the pope's representative in Warsaw and to Rome have not received any reply." □



Trans woman Michelle Paz (left) was murdered Jan. 11 in Venezuela

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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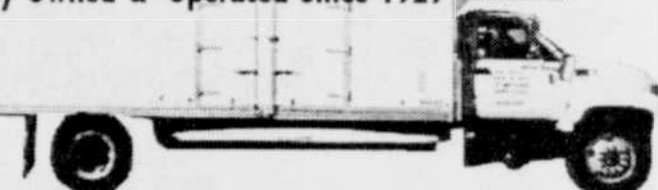
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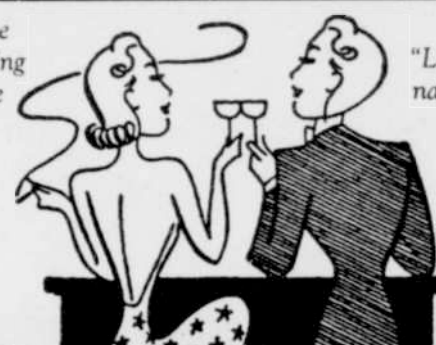
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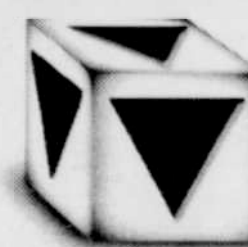
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