

WORLDnews

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Since then, the council has demanded proof that no member organization is soft on pedophilia, which the association has been unable to document to U.N. satisfaction.

ILGA—composed of hundreds of gay organizations from around the globe—acquired consultative status in July 1993, which allowed it to observe meetings and conferences and present papers to U.N. human rights bodies.

"This is a sad day for human rights at the United Nations," said Kursad Kahramanoglu, ILGA co-secretary general. "Governments who have no interest in observing the fundamental principles of human rights have triumphed. The homophobic position of so many countries only emphasizes yet again the need for energetic and effective campaigning around the world for the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered persons. A fundamental human right has been sacrificed at the altars of Islam and Catholicism."

AUSTRIA

The International Lesbian & Gay Association denounced Austria for its discriminatory age of consent law April 17. Article 209 of the nation's penal code sets the legal age for male-male sex at 18, four years higher than for male-female or female-female sex.

"It [is] the most serious human rights violation against gay men not only in the European Union but in the whole of Europe," ILGA-Europe said. "Any case coming to the knowledge of the authorities must be officially prosecuted [with] a minimum sentence of six months in jail."

Austria's Constitutional Court is expected to rule by June in a case challenging the legality of Article 209. "Austria is creating a huge credibility problem for the European Union, which is demanding the strict observance of human rights by accession [former East Bloc] countries and putting the repeal of any anti-homosexual law provision as a precondition for admission to the EU while Austria is allowed to continue its human rights violations against gay men," said Kurt Krickler of Homosexual Initiative Vienna.

CANADA

The justice minister of Quebec says a gay civil unions bill will be law by June. The measure was "tabled" April 26 in the province's National Assembly.

Paul Bégin said same-sex couples who tie the knot will have all rights and obligations of matrimony, such as access to adoption, insemination technology and joint parenting—including having their names on their child's birth certificate. "This is a historic event for gays and lesbians, for their families and for all of society," said Irène Demczuk, Quebec Coalition for the Recognition of Same-Sex Spouses president.

Three teens were suspended from school and arrested for assault April 17 after beating up a gay student in London, Ontario. The suspects—two students and a former student—attacked him after a dance April 12, punching him and telling him they were going to kill him.

"Our policy is zero tolerance for any of those type of things," Principal David Brent told the *London Free Press*. "This school is very tolerant; we have a great community here. [Discrimination] is not an issue most of the time."

RUSSIA

A bill to recriminalize gay sex was introduced April 22 in the lower house of Russia's parliament, the Duma. The measure would punish "the unnatural satisfaction of sexual desire of one male with another male" with up to five years in prison.

The bill's authors say it will uphold morality, reduce prostitution and pornography, protect marriage and combat the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Russian legislators deleted the old Soviet Union's ban on gay sex nine years ago.

Gays protested April 26 outside the Duma wearing concentration camp attire and pink triangles. "All that's left now to be completely in line with Hitler's ideas is to demand re-establishment of the death penalty for homosexuals," protester Nikolai Kramov said.

AUSTRALIA

Prime Minister John Howard said April 19 that kids are more fulfilled when they grow



Kurt Krickler is fighting to overturn Austria's discriminatory age of consent law

up with a mom and a dad rather than gay parents. "The evidence does suggest that children raised in the environment of having both a mother and a father are more likely to have happier, more fulfilled lives," he said, failing to reference his data. According to the *Age* newspaper, the government hopes to overturn a recent High Court ruling that upheld access to fertility treatments for single women and lesbians.

EL SALVADOR

Responding to the ongoing priestly pedophilia scandal, El Salvador's Catholic archbishop, Fernando Saenz Lacalle, said April 22 that gay men should be banned from the priesthood.

"There is an exclamation mark on homosexual tendency among those who commit these crimes," he said. "There must be a greater selection [process]. It is advisable that people who have this [homosexual] tendency not enter seminaries."

In the United States, estimates are that half or more of Catholic priests are gay. [E]



Fernando Saenz Lacalle

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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