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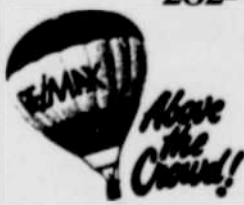
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**WORLD news**

**MEXICO**  
About 1,500 women turned out March 21 for Mexico City's First Lesbian March. They walked from the Monument to the Revolution to the Zócalo, the nation's political epicenter, chanting, "We aren't five, we aren't 10, fucking government, count us right!" At the end "we started running towards the Zócalo and took over almost the entire magnificent plaza," said marcher Monica Taher of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation. "We hugged, screamed and listened to the organizers speak."



A couple ride their bike toward the Zócalo during Mexico City's First Lesbian March

Activists said Mexican lesbians and feminists need to create autonomous spaces where they can work without compromising their ethics to build a society that is critical of heterosexism, neoliberalism and other fundamentalisms.

**LEBANON**  
Police raided the Beirut gay club Acid on March 29. Some patrons reported being beaten with plastic whips. About 10 people were arrested—effeminate men and people whose clothing, tattoos or piercings signaled to cops that they were devil worshippers, according to local reports. Another 30 individuals had their state IDs confiscated and had to retrieve them from a police station.

**TONGA**  
King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV banned *The Times of Tonga* because it reported that the nation's leaders practice sodomy, Police Minister Clive Edwards told the Supreme Court in late March. The king prohibited the paper from publishing and forbade Tongans from possessing it, saying it was seditious and promoted violence and disorder. "They are saying that the leaders of this country are sodomites and poofers, that the leaders are sodomizing each other...without mentioning any names...which means that people might think that any of the leaders could be doing that," Edwards shouted. The newspaper is seeking an interim injunction to lift the ban.



Taufa'ahau Tupou IV

**THE NETHERLANDS**  
The man who murdered gay Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn told a court March 27 that he did it for the sake of the Netherlands' Muslim population. Fortuyn, who founded a popular grassroots political party, called for an end to further Muslim immigration because he believed the foreigners had not integrated into Dutch society, which is arguably the world's most liberal. Confessed killer Volker van der Graaf, 33, told the court Fortuyn was attacking "the weak groups in society to score points with the electorate" and "scapegoating" Muslims. "I could see no other option than to do what I did," he said.

**IRAQ**  
A gay atheist in Baghdad has acquired a worldwide following via his Web log. Salam Pax, a 28-year-old architect, is receiving tens of thousands of hits daily at [www.dearraed.blogspot.com](http://www.dearraed.blogspot.com).

"How could 'support democracy in Iraq' become to mean 'bomb the hell out of Iraq?'" he wrote. "Nobody minded an undemocratic Iraq for a very long time, now people have decided to bomb us to democracy? Well, thank you! How thoughtful."

In another entry, he stated: "There are no waving masses of people welcoming the Americans nor are they surrendering by the thousands. People are...sitting in their homes hoping that a bomb doesn't fall on them."

**UNITED KINGDOM**  
British police let gay activist Peter Tatchell off the hook April 2. He was arrested March 12 for blocking and damaging Prime Minister Tony Blair's limousine in a one-man protest of the war in Iraq.

"The police must have viewed the television footage and decided there was no case to answer," Tatchell said. "Yet again I walk away a free man. It is amazing that after nearly 1,500 human rights protests over the last 38 years I have only one conviction."

The partners of gay British soldiers killed in the war with Iraq will be the first same-sex spouses to receive military pensions, *The London Times* reported March 20.

"The government is aware of the concerns of service personnel whose unmarried partners are currently ineligible for pension benefits," Junior Defense Minister Lewis Moonie said. "We have concluded that it would be appropriate to address now the particular risks associated with conflict."

The surviving partner can prove the relationship existed by producing joint leases, mortgages, wills, children or other evidence of financial interdependence.

**THAILAND**  
The Thai military no longer will draft gay men and transvestites, officials said March 25.

"The military has to keep them out, which is not because we are prejudiced but because we fear that the military will collapse," said Somdhat Attanand, Royal Thai Army commander in chief. Thai males older than 20 must complete two years of military service.

**SOUTH AFRICA**  
South Africa's Constitutional Court ruled March 28 that a lesbian couple who utilized artificial insemination are the "legitimate" parents of their 18-month-old twins.

The court said Section 5 of the Children's Status Act was unconstitutional in not recognizing same-sex couples as legitimate parents. South

PHOTO BY GLA/MONICA TAHER