

comes right up to me and knocks me cold. My mother, after going out once after Baghdad was taken by the U.S. Army, decided she is not going out again, not until I promise it looks kind of normal and OK. So I guess the ostrich maneuver runs in the family.

"Things are looking kind of OK these days," he says. "Life has a way of moving on. Your senses are numbed, things stop shocking you. If there is one thing you should believe in, it is that life will find a way to push on, humans are adaptable, that is the only way to explain how such a foolish species has kept itself on this planet without wiping itself out."

Saddam Hussein's Iraq quarantined all AIDS patients and their families at "a prison of shame and death," the French Press Agency reported May 4.

"The patients and their families were treated like prisoners in guarded secret locations because the government decided that there was no AIDS in the country," said Dr. Karim Nada, director of the quarantine facility. "The families remained locked up until the death of their relatives."

The Ibn Zuhur "hospital" was located "on the ragged outskirts of Baghdad," the report said.

FRANCE

Retired French film actress and former sex-pot Brigitte Bardot will be sued by human rights groups for statements in her new book



Brigitte Bardot (then and now) attacks gays in her new book, *A Cry in the Silence*

attacking Muslims, gays, unemployed people, teachers, illegal immigrants, modern art, trash television, politicians and fast food, among other things.

In *A Cry in the Silence*, the 68-year-old says of gays, "They jiggle their bottoms, put their little fingers in the air and with their little castrato voices moan about what those ghostly heteros put them through." Lawsuits are planned by the League of Human Rights and the Movement Against Racism and for the Friendship of Peoples.

"We expect justice to hit her hard," movement president Mauloud Aounit said. "We need a ruling which will dissuade and prevent her from making further outbursts."

Bardot, an animal rights activist, has been fined previously for inciting racial hatred. In one instance, she said France was being overrun by sheep-slaughtering Muslims.

RUSSIA

The manager of the Russian lesbian pop duo t.A.T.u. was arrested May 15 in Red Square as he prepared to shoot a video with 300 girls, some of them reportedly as young as 7.

Ivan Shapovalov, 36, was accused of perverting the morals of minors and later reprimanded by a judge.

t.A.T.u. singers Julia Volkova and Lena Katina, both 18, have been denounced and banned from television in Britain for kissing and making out on stage—with some critics calling their antics "pedophile porn." The 300 extras were clad in t.A.T.u.'s signature school-girl uniforms for a video shoot for last month's Eurovision Song Contest.

"He threatened the girls' morality by seeking to pay them [32 cents] to pose," a Moscow cop told Britain's *The Sun*. "We wanted to stop him exploiting these young children. We didn't know what he was going to do with them."

t.A.T.u.'s biggest hit, "All the Things She Said," hit No. 1 in several nations earlier this year. In the video, Volkova and Katina make out passionately.

The two have said they plan to marry each other but still have sex with men as well. Russian journalists claim that the girls really are heterosexual and that Shapovalov invented the lesbian shtick for commercial reasons.

CROATIA

"Queer Zagreb" conference April 25 to 30 attracted people from Austria, Britain, Bosnia, Croatia, Germany, Serbia, Slovenia, Sweden and elsewhere.

Well-known academics Dennis Altman of Australia and Jonathan Katz of the United States were among the presenters. Three live cultural performances played to full theaters, although police and security guards were required to protect attendees at a cost of thousands of euros.

The opening-night performance and one day of the conference were picketed by evangelical Christians. News coverage of the events was balanced, participants said.

INTERNATIONAL

Southern Africa is a hotbed of homophobia, Human Rights Watch and the International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission said May 14.

In a report unveiled in Cape Town, South Africa, the two organizations accused officials in Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe of singling out queers "as scapegoats for their countries' problems." Paula

Ettelbrick, IGLHRC executive director, said sexual minority "people have been vilified by presidents and political leaders, which has led to a culture of intolerance."

The 298-page report—*More Than a Name: State-Sponsored Homophobia and Its Consequences in Southern Africa*—details police harassment, official crackdowns and community violence. Victims allegedly have been evicted, fired, assaulted, imprisoned, expelled from school, denied access to medical care and driven into exile or to suicide.

"When southern African political leaders like President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe make speeches saying that gays and lesbians are 'worse than dogs and pigs,' it should be no surprise that violent attacks follow," said Scott Long of Human Rights Watch.

On paper, South Africa is one of the world's most pro-gay nations: Its post-apartheid constitution bans all anti-gay discrimination, and it has seen a long string of gay-friendly court rul-



Paula Ettelbrick (right, with U.S. Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y.) says southern Africa is singling out queers "as scapegoats for their countries' problems"

ings. However, "based on interviews with numerous individuals and activists, the report concludes that the equality guaranteed [queer] people is fragile and even endangered by the silence and foot-dragging of political leaders in South Africa," the groups said.

SOUTH KOREA

An activist with Seoul's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transsexual Human Rights Federation committed suicide April 26 in the group's office. Okoodang, 19, left a note saying he no longer could live with society's discrimination against queers.

"How cruel and anti-biblical it is to discriminate against sexual minorities," he wrote. "After death, I can proudly say I am gay, with no need to suffer, no need to hide myself anymore."

Okoodang left his savings of \$300 beside the note with instructions that it be used "for the liberation of sexual minorities."

AUSTRALIA

A gay bathhouse in Melbourne is set to begin advertising on over-the-air television.

The ad "is for men who like men and want a venue to explore that," Damien Kimber, manager of Wet on Wellington, told *The Melbourne Herald Sun*. "The biggest hidden market we have is men who do not identify with the gay community. That is clearly where the advert is directed."

The ad shows two men and two women in a bar. When the women leave, the men give each other the eye, then depart for the bathhouse.

The Australian Family Association is unhappy about the ad. "It seems like it is really almost a recruitment drive," vice president Bill Muehlenberg said. "They are trying to get new recruits, fresh blood almost, into the community."



Bill Muehlenberg

NEPAL

Nepalese queers staged a groundbreaking beauty pageant and fashion show early last month at the National Theater in Kathmandu, OneWorld.net reported. The event was organized by the Blue Diamond Society, a gay rights group created in September 2001.

"Our society has denied the existence of homosexuals for too long," executive director Sunil Babu Pant said. "This event was to show their existence and work towards building acceptance."

Nepalese gays and cross-dressers say they experience widespread societal disapproval and abuse, including beatings, torture and sexual assaults at the hands of police. [E]

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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