

"I am a revolutionary, a pioneer," Gogolev told Reuters. "I am a Russian citizen, an Orthodox Christian and a homosexual. I simply wanted to marry the man I love."

The church voided the wedding, suspended the priest who performed it and launched an investigation. "Such marriages are strictly forbidden," said a spokesman for Patriarch Alexy II, the Russian Orthodox primate.

Nizhny Novgorod, previously named Gorky, is 248 miles east of Moscow on the Volga and Oka rivers. It is Russia's third-largest city.

SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa's Supreme Court of Appeal has ruled that a gay man whose partner was killed in a car crash is eligible for support payments from the Road Accident Fund. News reports said the ruling effectively extends to gay partners all the financial rights of marriage.

Antonie Michael du Plessis and the late Albert Ernest Clack had lived together since 1988 with Clack as the breadwinner. The Supreme Court of Appeal and the Constitutional Court share the position of South Africa's highest court.



Actor Hong Suk-chon, who was banished from television after revealing he is gay, has made a comeback, indicating South Korea is slowly opening up to homosexuality

SOUTH KOREA

Well-known South Korean actor Hong Suk-chon, who was blacklisted from the television industry three years ago after coming out as gay, is appearing in a new program. He plays a gay designer on the SBC network's twice-weekly miniseries *Perfect Love*.

"The night before [we started taping], I didn't sleep, I was too nervous," the 32-year-old told *The New York Times*. "I was terrible.... I made a lot of bloopers. But the other actors, they understood."

"Before I came out, no one talked about homosexuality in Korea," Hong added. "But then everybody was talking about it. I think Koreans are starting to accept homosexuality."

UKRAINE

Thugs attacked a gay and lesbian information booth at a U.N.-sponsored AIDS information fair Sept. 21 in Kiev.

The stand, staffed by Our World Gay and Lesbian Center and the gay magazine *One of Us*, was assaulted by about 20 anti-gay hoodlums who shouted threats, upset a table and tried to destroy the structure. Police intervened and quickly ended the attack.



Openly gay British talk show host Graham Norton will hit U.S. airwaves next June

UNITED KINGDOM

Smash British talk show host Graham Norton, who is openly gay, will have a new program on the U.S. cable network Comedy Central next June. The initial agreement calls for 13 episodes.

Norton's British show, *So Graham Norton*, already has a cult following on the BBC America channel. He is now on a standup comedy tour of the United States.

UZBEKISTAN

Openly gay Uzbek journalist Ruslan Sharipov—jailed on what he and human rights activists say are bogus charges of sodomy, sex with minors and enticing minors to anti-social activity—saw his 5 1/2-year sentence reduced on appeal Sept. 25.

The Tashkent City Court dropped the third charge and cut 18 months from his prison term. Additional appeals are planned.

Sharipov arrived at the courthouse with a swollen eye, a facial laceration and broken glasses. Officials blamed a minor vehicle accident in which he was the only one injured.

In a Sept. 5 letter to U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, Sharipov said he was coerced into pleading guilty via harsh torture and threats that his mother would be harmed.

"They put a gas mask on my head and sprayed an unknown substance into my throat, after which I could hardly breathe," he wrote. "They also injected an unknown substance into my veins and warned me that if I did not follow their instructions they would give me an injection of the AIDS virus. I could not withstand such excesses, and now I am writing only a small part of what I faced."

Human Rights Watch and the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission believe the government targeted Sharipov to silence his journalistic criticism of human rights abuses and police corruption.

ISRAEL

A team of gay people armed with video cameras has begun confronting Israel Police Force officers who are beating up cruisers in Tel Aviv's Independence Park and Electricity Park.

More than 20 men have been roughed up in Independence Park during what activists say are almost nightly raids. According to GayMiddleEast.com, several cops were chased out of the park Sept. 20 by chanting activists carrying rainbow flags and anti-homophobia placards, and no violent incidents have been reported since the camera patrols began. **JM**

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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