



Activists attend a vigil for slain Jamaican gay leader Brian Williamson

THAILAND

Thailand's Culture Ministry has told television stations to reduce their portrayals of gay behavior, Bangkok's *The Nation* reported June 5.

The ministry's deputy permanent secretary for culture, Kla Somtrakul, said several television programs have gotten so gay, they risk crossing the line to obscenity. "Many parents told me that they are worried that their children would have sexually deviant behavior after viewing such behaviors on TV," he said.

SOMALIA

The group Queer Somalia says the biggest problem for Somali gays is fear of being murdered. Islamic law is applied haphazardly in the nation, which continues to lack a central government.

"My people don't understand what a homosexual is," activist Faro told the African gay Web site Behind the Mask. "They only know that through their religious law, the solution is to kill. There is no law to protect or help queers in Somalia, and Queer Somalia cannot be public or make demands on the government because there is no government with whom we can talk. The situation for queer people in Somalia is very dangerous."

Faro also said Somali gays seem to have a higher suicide rate than the general population, in part because of extremely homophobic family situations.

JAMAICA

Jamaica's best-known gay activist was murdered June 9 in Kingston. Brian Williamson, 59, was found lying in a pool of blood in his bedroom with multiple knife wounds.

"The condition of his body...and his visibility as a gay man lead us to suspect this is a hate-related crime," the Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays said in a statement.

Police say the murder was more likely related to robbery, pointing out that Williamson's room was ransacked and that his safe was missing. They are looking for two men who were seen at the residence shortly before the crime.

Williamson's roommate, Desmond Chambers, said of one of the suspects: "I have seen him here about six times [and] anything him want, Brian give him. Brian give him money, Brian give him food and help him to purchase [newspaper] to sell on the road."

The head of Amnesty International USA's gay rights program, Michael Heflin, commented, "Brian Williamson was a courageous individual prepared to speak out for one of the most marginalized and persecuted communities in Jamaica: the gay and lesbian community."

Jamaica is considered one of the world's most

homophobic nations, a fact that was noted in the report on Williamson's murder in *The Jamaica Observer*.

"Jamaica has an international reputation for being highly intolerant of homosexuals and has, in the past, fallen under pressure from the international community, especially Britain," the daily newspaper said. "Some local artists have been banned from performing in other countries because of their strong anti-homosexual lyrics."

SWEDEN

An Iranian transsexual woman denied asylum in Sweden committed suicide in Stockholm, *Aftonbladet* reported June 3. Fatemeh had been sentenced to 50 lashes for homosexuality and feared for her life if she were forced to return home.

But the Swedish Migration Board rejected her application for asylum, and the decision was upheld by the Aliens Appeals Board. Gay organizations demonstrated outside the offices of the two boards June 2.



German Justice Minister Brigitte Zypries is pushing for equal rights for same-sex couples

GERMANY

Germany's government has proposed legislation to equalize the rights of registered same-sex partners with those of married people, *Deutsche Welle* reported June 5.

Justice Minister Brigitte Zypries said the first of two bills will go to the Bundestag, the lower house of Parliament, this summer and will be crafted to not require consent from the Bundesrat, the upper house, where it probably would be rejected.

"Lesbian and gay couples are a social reality in Germany," Zypries told the daily *Berliner Zeitung*. "That is why we also want to grant them, to the extent it complies with the constitution and its unique protections of marriage and family, the same rights as married couples."

Registered same-sex couples lack spousal

rights and obligations in such areas as adoption, pensions, inheritance, taxation, financial support, court testimony and social welfare benefits.

A second piece of legislation that does require Bundesrat approval is needed to address some of these areas. That bill will be introduced this fall, Zypries said.

Germany's partnership law came into force three years ago, but only about 5,000 same-sex couples have taken advantage of it.

"The problem with the same-sex life partnerships is that it brings only obligations and virtually no rights. It has not been popular," activist Michael Schmidt told Britain's *The Guardian*.

CHILE

The Chilean Supreme Court denied a woman custody of her three daughters June 2 because she's a lesbian, Human Rights Watch reported.

Karen Atala, a judge from the town of Los Andes, had been awarded custody of her children by an appeal court. Her former husband contested the decision, arguing the court wrongfully put her rights before those of her kids.

In a 3-2 decision, the Supreme Court panel agreed, saying the children's emotional and sexual development could be harmed by the absence of a father in the home and "his replacement by another person of the female gender." It also expressed concern that Atala's kids could suffer discrimination and rejection since "their exceptional family situation is significantly different from that of their classmates and neighborhood peers."

The justices also criticized the lower court for "a serious fault or abuse" because it chose not to uphold "the preferential right of the children to live and grow up in a normally structured and socially reputable family, according to the proper traditional model." No further appeal is possible.

ISRAEL

Jerusalem's third Gay Pride parade attracted thousands June 3, *Ha'aretz* reported. Two anti-gay demonstrators were arrested for throwing eggs.

Dozens of armed police officers escorted the march from the Ben Yehuda pedestrian mall to Liberty Bell Park, via King George and Keren Hayesod streets. A "happening" and party followed in the park.

Uri Lupolianski

Jerusalem Mayor Uri Lupolianski later told reporters he tried to prevent the parade but lacked the power to do so.

"If I had the legal means for stopping a parade that harms the city and its residents, I would prevent the parade," he said. "I tried to do so, but it was made clear to me that I don't have the authority."

"This parade is not only ugly, it's also a provocation," the mayor said. "Even people distant from Jerusalem must grasp that this is a sacred city for the Jewish people and the world as a whole. This isn't Paris, and it isn't London. I'm not talking about what a person does privately in his home—a parade in public is something else.... If somebody has some sort of deviant trait, it doesn't mean that he has to raise its banner in public."

Lupolianski likened the parade to Jews marching with pork in the middle of an Arab neighborhood. "They came just to arouse anger, to fight and bring about disgusting things," he said. □

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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