

MP Waleed Al-Tabtabaei said visitors choose a masseur from a catalog of photos of Southeast Asian men.

"The masseurs are young and soft, and their mannerisms and movements arouse suspicion," he told *The Kuwait Times* Oct. 23. "I consider these parlors to be windows of evil and corruption, and they must be closed."

Parlor owners told the *Times* the allegations are false and an insult to alternative medicine.

**SOUTH AFRICA**

The South Africa Constitution may have been the first one in the world to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation, but the people of South Africa still overwhelmingly disapprove of same-sex relationships, *Afrol News* reported Oct. 21.

About 78 percent of 5,000 people surveyed by the Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa said homosexual relationships are "always wrong." Less than 7 percent said they are "not wrong at all."

The results varied by race. About 81 percent of blacks said gay sex is always wrong, compared with 76 percent of Indians, 70 percent of whites and 64 percent of what South Africans call "coloreds," or mixed-race people.

Geography is also a factor. Disapproval was highest in Limpopo and Eastern Cape provinces, around 90 percent, and lowest in the Free State and Western Cape, around 75 percent. Cape Town, South Africa's gay capital, is in Western Cape province.

**TAIWAN**

Taiwan is tracking 15 HIV-positive gay men and their sexual partners after the seropositive men attended a sex party at a private home, the Department of Health said Oct. 20.

Officials said that if the men are found to have engaged in unprotected sex, they could be jailed for seven years.



Despite police tracking of HIV-positive gay men, Pride went on as scheduled Nov. 6 in Taiwan

HIV diagnoses jumped 40 percent in Taiwan during the first 10 months of 2004 compared with 2003, *The China Post* said. Last January, Taipei police raided a "gay orgy" at a private apartment, detained 92 men and force-tested them for sexually transmitted diseases. A total of 28 tested HIV-positive and 46 had syphilis, officials said.

The seropositive men were added to the government's official list of people with HIV.

**UNITED KINGDOM**

One man was killed and four were injured Oct. 30 in an apparent gay-bashing spree against people leaving Heaven nightclub near Royal Festival Hall in London's Charing Cross district.

David Morley, 37, died in the hospital after emergency surgery. He was a survivor of a 1999 nail-bomb attack on the gay Admiral Duncan pub, where he worked. Three people died and 73 were injured in that explosion.

On Nov. 6, police charged Barry Lee, 19, and two 16-year-old boys with Morley's murder. A fourth boy and a 14-year-old girl were charged Nov. 9. They also were charged with attempted grievous bodily harm



A vigil was held for hate crime victims in London



David Morley

of two other victims, robbery, violent disorder and conspiracy to commit robbery.

"That David should survive one instance of hate crime against London's gay population only to then be killed in a later attack makes this weekend's appalling incident even worse," Ben Summerskill, head of the gay rights group Stonewall, told the British Broadcasting Corp.

About 60 percent of sailors and 75 percent of Royal Marines are uncomfortable with the United Kingdom's open policy toward gays in the military, London's *Sun* newspaper reported Oct. 30.

Polling conducted by the military also found that 29 percent of ships' hands and 47 percent of commandos object strongly to the policy.

Liberal Democrat defense spokesman Paul Keetch told the paper: "If we want a 21st century fighting force, some of the 20th century attitudes need to be tackled. Just like our society, our armed forces have some way to go before there is full acceptance of human differences."

**UZBEKISTAN**

Uzbek gay journalist Ruslan Sharipov, 26, has been granted asylum in the United States, the World Association of Newspapers reported Oct. 25.

Sharipov was imprisoned in Uzbekistan in 2003 for 5 1/2 years for sodomy and for what he and international human rights organizations said were trumped-up charges of sex with minors. He had written extensively about alleged human rights abuses by Uzbek authorities.

This past June, Sharipov's sentence was changed to two years of community service in the city of Bukhara, 345 miles from his home in Tashkent. He fled the country before his transfer to Bukhara took place.

Uzbeks protest the detention of Ruslan Sharipov

In a 2003 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."

In its announcement, the newspaper association said: "We are relieved that Mr. Sharipov is beyond the reach of the Uzbek authorities, and we hope that he can one day return to a free and democratic Uzbekistan."

Sharipov is now in Sacramento, Calif., and is planning to write about his prison experience. **JM**



Ruslan Sharipov

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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