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WORLD news

EUROPE

GAYS MARCH AGAINST IRAQ WAR

Members of the British gay direct-action group OutRage joined a 100,000-strong anti-war rally March 19 in London.

The group believes the United States and the United Kingdom should set a timetable for withdrawal of troops from Iraq—but take care not to leave so quickly that Islamic fundamentalists or loyalists of Saddam Hussein are able to seize power.

"If the Saddamites or Islamists won power, it would be disastrous for democracy and human rights in Iraq," said OutRage's Peter Tatchell. "Women and gay people would suffer terrible persecution. The biggest danger to Iraqi freedom right now is the imposition of a theocratic state, along the lines of neighboring Iran, where an estimated 4,000 lesbians and gays have been executed since the ayatollahs seized power in 1979.... The Islamist parties in Iraq are pressing for the introduction of an Islamic constitution and Shariah law, which would result in the execution of gay people and women who have sex outside marriage."

LESBIANS DEMAND U.K.

RECOGNIZE CANADIAN MARRIAGE

A British lesbian couple married in Canada is demanding that the United Kingdom recognize their marriage, London's *The Pink Paper* reported March 17. Celia Kitzinger and Sue Wilkinson have filed a complaint under the Human Rights Act.

Britain routinely recognizes foreign marriages, but officials have said the women's marriage will be recognized only as a civil partnership, after Britain's civil partnership law comes into effect in December. The couple's lawyer, Karon Monaghan, said that's not acceptable because civil partners will not receive all the rights of matrimony.

SCOTTISH EPISCOPAL CHURCH OKS SEXUALLY ACTIVE GAY PRIESTS

The Scottish Episcopal Church said March 22 that it has no ban on sexually active gay priests.

The church is part of the worldwide Anglican Communion, which does have such a ban, though national churches and local dioceses are somewhat free to set their own policies.

The Scottish church's College of Bishops said it has "never regarded the fact that someone was in a close relationship with a member of the same sex as in itself constituting a bar to the exercise of an ordained ministry."

Some dioceses in the U.S. Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada have ordained noncelibate gay priests and blessed gay unions, and the Diocese of New Hampshire has an openly gay bishop who is in a relationship with a man.

But, as a result, Anglican leaders recently urged the U.S. and Canadian churches to withdraw from the Anglican Consultative Council, a key governing body of the communion.

In the same statement, the Scottish bishops disagreed with that move.

"As a church we are much indebted in our life both to a significant presence of persons of homosexual orientation, and also those whose theology and stance would be critical of attitudes to sexuality other than abstinence outside marriage. We rejoice in both," they said.

HUNGARIAN POLITICIAN COMES OUT

A veteran party leader in Hungary's governing coalition, Free Democrat Klára Ungár, came out March 10 on the television talk show *Strucc*.

"It is simpler for me to say that I am homosexual rather than having others saying this to me," the 46-year-old said. A former member of Parliament, Ungár now serves on the Free Democrats' management committee and is a party spokeswoman.

CHIEF CONSTABLE APOLOGIZES FOR SLUR

The chief constable of North Wales apologized for calling gays "queer," the British Broadcasting Corp. reported March 12.

Richard Brunstrom used the word during an internal department meeting, was challenged on it by one of his officers and immediately apologized, the report said. The Gay Police Association said it was "shocked and disappointed" at his "abusive and insulting language."

"His words will have affected the confidence that his lesbian and gay staff and the gay communities in North Wales he serves have in him," the group said. "He should act quickly to demonstrate that this error of judgment is not indicative of a homophobic culture within his force."



Constable Richard Brunstrom is in hot water for using the word "queer," and not in a good way.

MIDEAST/AFRICA

SAUDI 'GAY WEDDING' PARTY RAIDED

Saudi Arabian police arrested 110 men at a "gay wedding" party in Jeddah, the Al-Wifaq Web site reported March 17.

Security forces allegedly raided a wedding hall after receiving a tip and found the men dancing and "behaving like women." The report said 77 of the men used influential connections to secure their release, while 33 appeared in court March 16 to face charges.

Under Saudi law, gay sex can be punished with flogging, imprisonment or death.

ISRAELI ATTORNEY GENERAL ORDERS PARTNER BENEFITS

Israeli Attorney General Menachem Mazur ordered the National Insurance Institute to begin paying survivor benefits to same-sex partners March 15.

The decision came in response to a lawsuit filed by Giora Raz, who quit working to care for his cancer-stricken partner of 23 years, a former employee of El Al Israel Airlines. Mazur's ruling also will apply to areas such as work accident insurance, childbirth allowances and disability pensions.

WHITE SOUTH AFRICANS TOUR BLACK PUBS

This year's Gay Pride festivities in Cape Town, South Africa, included a pub crawl by white gays in the nearby black townships, the British Broadcasting Corp. reported March 8.

Five minibuses of gay white folks visited three gay-friendly "shebeens" in the townships.

"Being black and gay is a very different place to being white and gay in Cape Town," said Juanita Jacobs, one of the Pride organizers. "This year we decided to take Pride into the townships to engender understanding.... A lot of people don't come out to



Politician Klára Ungár is out and proud in Hungary.