

WORLDnews

"It basically infringes upon the constitution," said coordinator Carlos Perera. "Why have they marched? Nobody called for the legalization of marriage."

"We don't choose to be gay," he added. "Who wants to be gay in a country that still treats gays with so much discrimination? It's a life of hardship."

VIETNAMESE PRIME MINISTER: WE HAVE FEW GAYS

There aren't very many gays in Vietnam, Prime Minister Phan Van Khai said June 27.

Visiting Canada, Khai was asked how his government handles the equality rights of gays and lesbians, according to the Canadian Press wire service.

He laughed and said: "This is not a serious problem in Vietnam at the moment. Only a few people, I think. The issue has not been rising or debated in Vietnam."

MIDEAST/AFRICA

UGANDA BANS SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

Uganda's Parliament amended the constitution to ban same-sex marriage July 7 by a vote of 111-17 with three abstentions.

Legislators also criminalized the act of staging a same-sex wedding. Penalties will be determined during an upcoming revision of the nation's penal code.

PRIDE MARCHERS STABBED IN JERUSALEM

An ultra-Orthodox man stabbed three

marchers during Jerusalem's fourth Gay Pride parade June 30, *The Jerusalem Post* reported. The attack occurred at Ben Yehuda and Hahistradut streets.

A woman was stabbed in the arm; a man was stabbed in the arm, hand and chest; and a third marcher received a minor injury. All three were taken to Bikur Holim Hospital. Two were treated and released. Adam David Russo was moved to Shaare Zedek Medical Center, where he is recovering from deep gashes to his arm, the back of his hand and his chest.

"They tried to murder me because I'm gay," Russo told the *Haaretz* newspaper. "In the ambulance I thought I wouldn't dare set foot again in Jerusalem. Now I've calmed down, but I still think I won't go downtown alone. On the other hand, now I view my community activism almost as a mission, so I want to stand out."

Yishai Schlissel, 30, was arrested for the attack, and police say others may have been involved.

Separately, police arrested 13 religious Jews who tried to block the march. More than 1,000 people demonstrated against the parade—throwing bottles of urine and bags of feces at the marchers, the *Post* said.

Mayor Uri Lupolianski had tried to prevent the parade, which drew about 10,000 marchers, but he was thwarted by the Jerusalem District Court. Gay activists blamed Lupolianski's "incitement" for the violence.

Interior Minister Ophir Pines-Paz agreed, saying, "The heads of the Jerusalem municipali-



Israeli Interior Minister Ophir Pines-Paz suggested the municipality of Jerusalem should consider its responsibility for the violence that took place there during the Pride parade.

ty should self-reflect on their contribution to the incitement leading up to today's violence." □

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.

SPANISH PRESIDENT SPEAKS OUT

The following is a complete text of the speech issued June 30 in Madrid, Spain, by President José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero to Congress in defense of the reform of the civil code to permit matrimony between people of the same sex.

Today my government submits the definitive approval of the Senate the bill by which the civil law is modified on the matter of the right to form a marriage contract in an effort to comply with a promise made to our citizens in our electoral campaign.

We recognize today in Spain the rights of same-sex couples to enter in a marriage contract. Before Spain, Belgium, Holland and, two days ago, Canada did the same. We have not been the first, but I am sure that we will not be the last. After us there will be many more countries motivated, honorable members, by two unstoppable forces: liberty and equality.

It is nothing more than a small change to the legal text that adds but a paragraph in which we establish that marriage will have the same requisites and the same rights when the couple is either of different sexes or the same sex. It is a very small change in the letter that creates an immense change in the lives of thousands of our citizens.

We are not legislating, honorable members, for people far away and not known by us. We are enlarging the opportunity for happiness to our neighbors, our co-workers, our friends and our families. At the same time we are making a more decent society, because a decent society is one that does not humiliate its members.

In the poem "The Family," our poet Luis Ceruda was sorry because "How does man lives in denial in vain/by giving rules that prohibit and condemn."

Today, the Spanish society answers to a group of people that during many years have been humiliated, whose rights have been ignored, whose dignity has been offended, their identity denied and their liberty oppressed. Today, the Spanish society grants them the respect they deserve, recognizes their rights, restores their dignity, affirms their identity and restores their liberty.

It is true that they are only a minority, but their triumph is everyone's triumph. It is also the triumph of those who oppose this law, even though they do not know this yet: because it is the triumph of liberty. Their victory makes all of us—even those who oppose the law—better people. It makes our society better.

Honorable members, there is no damage against marriage or to the con-

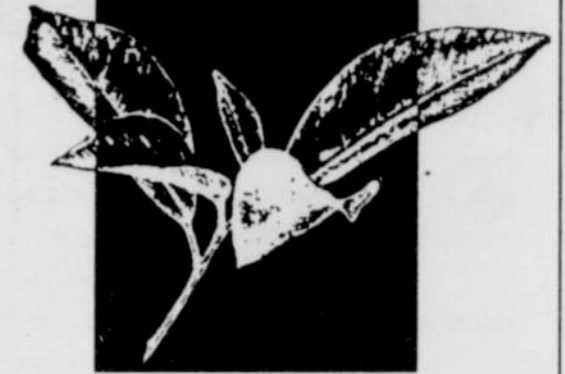
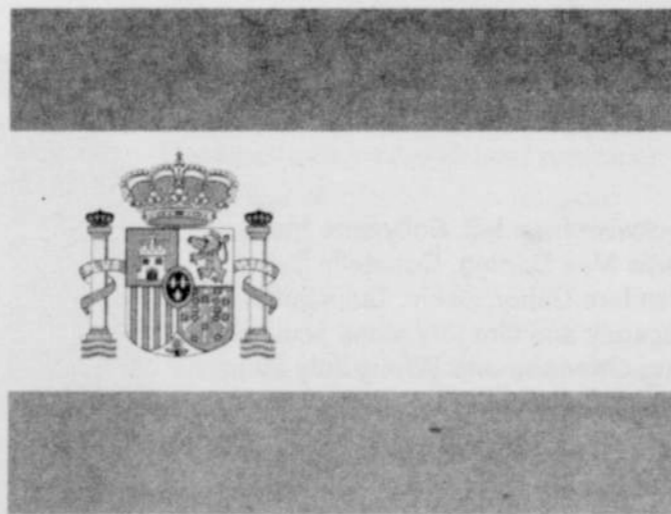
cept of family in allowing two people of the same sex to get married. To the contrary, what happens is these set of Spanish citizens get the potential to organize their lives with the rights and privileges of marriage and family. There is no danger to the institution of marriage, but precisely the opposite: This law enhances and respects marriage.

Today, conscious that some people and institutions are in a profound disagreement with this change in our civil law, I wish to express that like other reforms to the marriage code that preceded this one, this law will generate no evil, that its only consequence will be the avoiding of senseless suffering of decent human beings. A society that avoids senseless suffering of decent human beings is a better society.

I wish to express my profound respect to those people and institutions [that oppose this law], and I also want to ask for the same respect for all of those who approve of this law. To the homosexuals that have tolerated personally the abuse and insults for many years, I ask of you that the courage you have demonstrated in your struggle for your civil rights will contribute now an example of generosity and express your happiness with respect to those who think different than you.

With the approval of this bill, our country takes another step in the path of liberty and tolerance that was stated by the democratic change of government. Our children will see us with incredulity if we tell them that many years ago, our mothers had less rights than our fathers, or if we tell them that people had to stay married against their will even though they were unable to share their lives. Today we can offer them a beautiful lesson: Every right gained, each access to liberty has been the result of the struggle and sacrifice of many people that deserve our recognition and praise.

Today we demonstrate with this bill that societies can better themselves and can cross barriers and create tolerance by putting a stop to the unhappiness and humiliation of some of our citizens. Today, for many of our countrymen, comes the day predicted by Kavafis one century ago: "Later was said of the most perfect society/someone else, made like me/certainly will come out and act freely." □



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