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WORLDnews

MIDEAST/AFRICA

GROUP POSTS PHOTOS OF TORTURED IRANIAN GAY MAN

The Turkey-based Persian Gay & Lesbian Organization has posted graphic photos on its Web site of an Iranian gay man who escaped Iran after being beaten by the police because of his sexuality. The photos can be seen at pglo.org/pglo-web/english/index.htm.

"Amir" said an undercover policeman made a date with him via the Internet, then arrested him when they met. A week later he was sentenced to 100 lashes, which were administered in jail.

Amir said the police told him that if he is apprehended again, he will be hanged like the two male teens recently executed in the city of Mashad. The government claims those teens were hanged for raping a boy, but some human rights groups say they have information that the teens were executed solely for being gay.

"Iranian homosexuals are...subjected to oppression, injustice and death, and it is likely that only a small fraction of it comes to light," the Persian gay group said. "The largest part of such disaster gets left [in] silence behind the curtain of fear—or many of [those cases] get mixed with...accusations so that the main story gets disguised."

TURKISH OFFICIAL TARGETS GAY GROUP

The deputy governor of Ankara, Turkey, has launched a court action to shut down the 11-year-old group Kaos GL Gay and Lesbian Cultural Research and Solidarity Organization.

The group incurred Selahattin Ekremoglu's wrath when it applied for and received official registration as a nongovernmental organization from the ministry of the interior. He said the group's existence violates Turkish Civil Code articles prohibiting organizations that threaten morality.

Banning the group likely would violate European law.

"We would like to remind the Turkish authorities about their obligation to provide freedom of association under their own constitution as well as under the European Convention on Human Rights and accession negotiation process with the European Union," said Patricia Prendiville, executive director of the European branch of the International Lesbian and Gay Association.

WOMAN ATTACKED AT JOHANNESBURG PRIDE

A lesbian on a float at the Pride parade Sept. 24 in Johannesburg, South Africa, was pierced in the neck with a broken bottle hurled from a high-rise apartment building, *The Cape Times* reported.

"Blood spurted from her neck," said fellow participant Paula Coburn. "I ripped open some packets to get T-shirts out to try and stop the blood, then I phoned the paramedics... We were terrified. The blood was spurting out in big clots, and she looked as if she was having a fit."

The 18-year-old victim, who asked not to be identified, was stitched up and released from the hospital two days later.

"I'm much better now," she told the *Times*. "But my right hand doesn't want to work. I am not going to change because these people have a problem with me. I'll be back next year."

The woman was riding with Forum for the Empowerment of Women, which had the only float in the parade that carried a political message, the newspaper said. It was the target of homophobic abuse all along the route from Constitution Hill to the Heartland gay village in the Braamfontein district, the report said.

Several thousand people—most of them white—took part in the 16th annual march. This year's theme was "The Right to Be, the Freedom to Express."



A gay and lesbian Web site posted photos of Amir after he was allegedly beaten by Iranian police because of his sexuality.

EUROPE

LATVIAN PARLIAMENT VOTES FOR MARRIAGE BAN

Latvia's parliament, the Saeima, voted preliminarily to amend the nation's constitution to ban same-sex marriage, the Itar-Tass news agency reported Sept. 15. The measure faces three more votes in parliament and approval by special commissions before it could come into force.

Fifty-five of the Saeima's 100 members supported the amendment, which was introduced by the right-wing Christian First party, a member of the governing coalition.

At Latvia's first Pride parade in July, about 150 marchers were targeted by about 1,000 anti-gay protesters who hurled insults, bottles and rotten eggs; blocked the streets; and forced the procession to be rerouted. The demonstrators chanted "No sodomy" and "Gays fuck the nation." In the end, police formed a human chain around the marchers to keep them safe.

U.K. GOV'T LAUNCHES CIVIL PARTNERSHIP PUBLICITY DRIVE

The U.K. government has begun advertising the new Civil Partnership Act in the gay press and elsewhere.

"It is ridiculous that we have had a system that does not recognize the relationship of a gay couple who may have lived together for 20 years," said deputy equality minister Meg Munn as she launched the publicity drive. "One partner could be excluded from the funeral if the other died, or lose their joint home because of inheritance tax."

Same-sex couples will be able to register their relationships starting Dec. 21. The act takes effect Dec. 5, but requires couples to give advance notice of their intention to tie the knot.

Registered partners will receive all the rights and obligations of marriage—in areas such as accident compensation, life insurance, immigration, inheritance, intestacy, pensions, taxation, tenancy, spouse and child support and workplace benefits. Couples who have entered a legal same-sex union overseas will not need to reregister in the United Kingdom to be recognized. There will be a formal, court-based process for dissolution of a civil partnership.

LISBON NEO-NAZIS MARCH AGAINST GAYS

About 200 neo-Nazis marched against "the gay lobby and pedophiles" Sept. 17 in Lisbon, Portugal. The protest was organized by the National Renovation Party with support from the far-right National Front.

Renovation President José Pinto Coelho told

reporters the marchers were "not against gay people." "We oppose ideologic homosexuality...the imposition of deviant behavior upon society as if it were normal," he said.

In other Portuguese news, a citizens petition calling for same-sex marriage will be presented to the government Nov. 7, reports PortugalGay.PT. For more information about the project visit www.casamentocivil.org.

ITALY IS BOTHERED BY GAY POSTERS

Family values organizations in Italy are upset about new billboards for the Ra-Re clothing line that show a man clutching another man's crotch and a man pulling his boyfriend on top of him for a kiss, London's *The Observer* reported.

A spokesman for the Italian Parents Movement called the ads "vulgar" and "crass." Photographer Oliviero Toscani, 63, defended his work.

"It's just two men having fun together," he told the newspaper. "These parents who are complaining—their kids already know about this stuff. The Vatican is not too happy with me either, but the church is an anachronism in the world today."

LESBIAN MEP MARRIES GIRLFRIEND

German European Parliament member Lissy Gröner, 51, married her girlfriend Sept. 10 in Brussels, Belgium. Mayor Freddy Thielemans conducted the ceremony.

Germany has a domestic partnership law for same-sex couples, but Belgium allows gay couples access to regular marriage.

"In Belgium, the law offers the same statute to hetero and homosexual couples. That is a positive signal for Europe," Gröner said.

Full marriage also is available to gay couples in Canada, the Netherlands, Spain and Massachusetts.

GAY POP STAR TO MARRY

Newly out pop star Mark Feehily of the British boy band Westlife says he and boyfriend Kevin McDaid of the boy band V are getting married, *The Belfast Telegraph* reported Sept. 10.

Coming out was "the best thing I ever did, like a massive weight off my shoulders," Feehily told the newspaper. "My family and friends always knew who I was, but now I don't have to hide my identity anymore."

Feehily came out in an interview with London's *Sun* newspaper Aug. 19. "I am gay, and I'm very proud of who I am," he said. "I'm not asking for any sympathy or to be a role model to anyone else."

Westlife has released five multiplatinum albums, with worldwide sales of 34 million. The band has had 12 No. 1 singles in the United Kingdom and has won two Brit awards and an MTV Europe award, according to *The Manchester Evening News*.

GAY MOVIE WINS VENICE FILM FESTIVAL

The gay cowboy movie *Brokeback Mountain* won the Venice Film Festival's "Golden Lion" for best film Sept. 10 in Italy.

Set in Wyoming, the movie by Ang Lee tells the 20-year story of two cowboys in love. It stars Heath Ledger and Jake Gyllenhaal and was adapted from a short story by Annie Proulx.

MUSCOVITES PLAN PRIDE PARADE

Moscow gays and lesbians are planning the city's first Pride parade for May 2006, according to Nikolai Alekseev of ProjectGayRussia.ru.

The parade will occur in conjunction with a conference for International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHO), scheduled for May 24 to 28. "Already some European politicians confirmed their participation, including European Parliament deputy Michael Cashman," he said.