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EUROPE

PM: Ireland Will Have Civil Unions

Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern said April 3 that his government is committed to full equality for gay people and will try to create civil unions for same-sex couples.

"Our sexual orientation is not an incidental attribute," Ahern said in a speech at the opening of the new offices of the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network. "It is an essential part of who and what we are.... Sexual orientation cannot, and must not, be the basis of a second-class citizenship."

"I want to state clearly today that the government is unequivocally in favor of treating gay and lesbian people as fully equal citizens in our society," he said. "Giving effect to this principle in legislation is necessarily complex and challenging. Legislating for civil partnerships requires thinking through a host of related matters. The British Civil Partnership Act...has 264 sections and 30 schedules. Moreover, our written constitution gives rise to complexities that did not arise in the British case. This challenge, however, is one that the government is determined to meet. We are committed to legislating on this issue."

Scottish MP Marries

Member of Parliament Margaret Smith tied the knot with her girlfriend, Suzanne Main, under Scotland's new civil partnership law March 31.

About 150 friends and family members attended the ceremony at Edinburgh's Apex City Hotel. The couple have been together for three years, before which both were married to men.

Scotland has seen 233 civil partnerships since the law came into force Dec. 20, according to *The Scotsman* newspaper.



Member of Parliament Margaret Smith married her girlfriend under Scotland's new civil partnership law.

Greece Affirms Military Gay Ban

Greece's armed forces affirmed March 28 that it doesn't allow gays in the military.

They are excluded under regulations that ban people with "psychosexual or sexual identity disorders." Gay activists are protesting the ban because in order to obtain a driver's license in Greece, one must present a document proving he completed his compulsory military service—and, as a result, some gay men reportedly have had trouble getting a driver's license.

Warsaw Closes Down Prominent Gay Club

Polish gays staged five days of sleep-ins at the Warsaw gay club and cultural center Le Madame in late March after the City Council ordered police to close it.

At times, more than 200 demonstrators took part in the defense of the establishment. At 6 a.m. March 31, however, when only 50 people were inside the building, police conducted another raid and shut it down.

Activists told blogger and *Gay City News* contributor Doug Ireland that police beat some of the club's defenders who had chained themselves to pipes and railings or went limp as they were hauled away. The defenders regrouped across the street and chanted, "It's not over, it's just the beginning," Ireland said.

The city, which owns the building, said the club had to close because the city needs the space for another use. But the Polish Green Party, whose headquarters were at Le Madame, charged, "In fact, the club has been closed because the right-wing government in Poland wanted to shut down this meeting point for civil society where artists, political activists, homosexuals, feminists and globalization critics met."

MIDEAST/AFRICA

Another Cameroon Publisher Jailed for Outings

Another newspaper publisher has been jailed in Cameroon for printing lists of public figures and celebrities alleged to be gay.

Nouvelle Afrique publisher Biloa Ayissi was fined \$7,319 and sent to prison for one year March 27 for trying to out a prominent doctor and the minister for parliamentary affairs. He plans to appeal the defamation conviction.

On March 3, the editor of *L'Anecdote* was jailed for four months and fined \$1,833 for publishing the same minister's name on a long list of alleged homosexuals.

Gays Win Inheritance Rights in South Africa

South Africa's Pretoria High Court ruled March 31 that Mark Gory is the sole heir to his male partner's estate, the South African Press Agency reported.

Judge Willie Hartzenburg declared the Intestate Succession Act unconstitutional because South Africa's post-apartheid Constitution bans discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Gory's live-in partner of two years, Henry Brooks, died last year without a will. Brooks' family reportedly then began raiding the couple's possessions and eventually forced Gory out of his home and sold it.

Gory will now receive the proceeds from the sale of the dwelling.

ASIA/PACIFIC

Eunuchs and Gays Rally in Bangalore

Several hundred gays and eunuchs rallied March 31 in Bangalore, India, demanding equal rights and repeal of the nation's ban on gay sex.

The eunuchs—of which India has around 1 million—demanded access to marriage, adoption and jobs. Some of India's eunuchs (known as hijras) are born as such, but most are males who were castrated before puberty.

Australian Capital Territory to Enact Civil Union Law

The Australian Capital Territory will enact a civil union law granting registered opposite- and same-sex couples the rights and obligations of marriage.

The government introduced the necessary legislation March 28 in the ACT Assembly. "Civil union legislation will give social and