

More than 1,000 queers and allies took part in the march.

Poland has seen a sharp increase in overt homophobia since the conservative Law and Justice Party came to power last year—including anti-gay statements by President Lech Kaczynski, party leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski and Prime Minister Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz.

President Kaczynski reportedly has called gays “perverts,” and Marcinkiewicz said that if a homosexual “tries to infect others with their homosexuality, then the state must intervene in this violation of freedom.”

Authorities have tried, usually unsuccessfully, to block several Gay Pride parades in recent years, and the Krakow march was not the first to see violence.

British Group Documents Iran's Executions of Gays

The Iranian government is executing gay and bisexual men under the cover of rape and kidnapping charges, according to the British gay group OutRage.

A nine-month investigation by group member Simon Forbes, who accessed “credible, verified sources inside Iran,” uncovered evidence of lynchings by Iran's security forces, “honor killings” by families in the southwestern province of Khuzestan, secret hangings in prison and “a pattern of framing gay people on charges of kidnap, rape and pedophilia.”

“[Our] research confirms a pattern of framing same-sex lovers...in order to discredit them, discourage public protests and deflect international condemnation,” said OutRage leader Peter Tatchell.

The Iranian exile gay group Homan has claimed that 4,000 people have been executed for sodomy since 1979. The OutRage report said that an attempt to set up a gay organization in the early 1980s led to 70 executions and that around 100 gays were sentenced to death following a raid on a private party in 1992.

“A very large number were executed, or rather lynched without trial, as the Ayatollahs began to hijack the Iranian Revolution by the end of 1979,” Forbes said. “That year gay activists from the Lavender Crescent Society in San Francisco were taken from the airport in Tehran shortly after their arrival and summarily shot dead. Gay and bisexual men were quite literally hanged from trees at that time.”

Belgium OKs Gay Adoption

Belgium OK'd gay adoption April 20. A narrow 34-33 vote in the Senate followed an earlier 77-62 vote in the House.

European gay couples also can adopt in Sweden, Spain, the Netherlands, England and Wales. Some other European nations allow gay people to adopt only a partner's biological children.

MIDEAST/AFRICA Cameroonian Gays Held Despite Acquittal

The International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission says nine Cameroonian men acquitted April 21 of engaging in homosexual activity remain in prison nonetheless.



César Cigliutti's organization, Argentine Homosexual Community, will file criminal charges following the raid of a gay club in Buenos Aires by Argentina's Federal Police.

“The government is forcing the men to stand trial again,” the organization said. IGLHRC previously had said the men were released April 24 after a High Court judge, in a 10-minute trial, determined that prosecutors had no proof of the men's alleged crimes.

The men were arrested in May 2005 at a nightclub in the capital city, Yaoundé, and have been imprisoned since. In March, they were adopted by Amnesty International as prisoners of conscience.

“You arrest people unfairly, violate their rights for almost a year and then refuse to release them—this constitutes an abuse of power,” said Duga Titanji, one of the men's lawyers. “This development constitutes a major violation of due process. With no new arrest warrant being served, this is now a blatant case of arbitrary detention.”

Section 347 of Cameroon's penal code bans the practice of homosexuality under penalty of five years in prison.

AMERICAS

Police Raid Buenos Aires Gay Bar

The Buenos Aires gay bar Zero Consequence was raided April 18 by Argentina's Federal Police while the venue was hosting a private party.

According to the group CHA (Argentine Homosexual Community), the cops turned on the lights, stopped the music and forced the 120 people present to stand with their hands against a wall for an hour without telling them why. Information from the individuals' identity cards was recorded in a notebook.

When CHA activists arrived on the scene, the police responded by calling for backup, doubling their presence. “It was like the worst times of the military dictatorship...30 years ago,” said CHA president César Cigliutti.

The police occupation continued for nearly four hours. In the end, no one was arrested.

Some journalists speculated that the club might have failed to pay routine expected bribes.

“Perhaps there was pending ‘business’ between the cops and the owners of the bar,” said correspondent Mariano Lago. “The fact that it was a gay bar only made it worse, as military and police forces are deeply homophobic. Anyway, what happened was absolutely illegal. These people were taken hostage.”

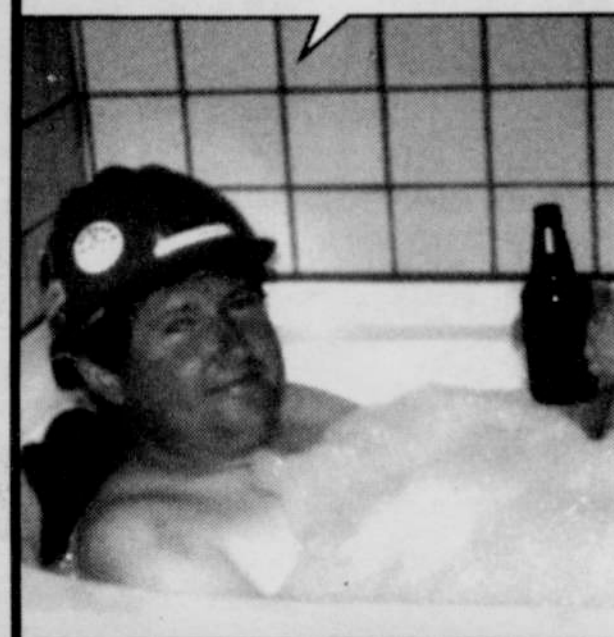
CHA said it planned to file criminal charges alleging “illegal deprivation of freedom,” meet with the Interior Ministry and file a complaint of “police violence” with the secretary of human rights. **10**

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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