



2.4 million take to the streets of São Paulo for Gay Pride 2006.

Since they have been jailed for more than a year after their arrests at a gay bar, they are expected to be released shortly, said the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission. Two other men were found not guilty.

IGLHRC head Paula Ettelbrick said she does not understand "on what basis the convictions were made, as there was no evidence presented by the prosecution of the commission of sodomy." She explained that homosexuality itself is not banned in Cameroon and that a conviction for sodomy requires being apprehended or witnessed in the act.

Minister of Justice Amadou Ali has said the men were jailed to ensure "that positive African cultural values are preserved."

Two other men were convicted on sodomy charges earlier this year and sentenced to one year in prison. Four women are awaiting trial on the same charges.

IGLHRC says Cameroon "has become famous this past year for detention of its citizens on 'sodomy charges,' sanctioning the expelling of young women from secondary schools for their stated sexual orientation and for 'gay baiting' high-level officials and public personalities with charges of homosexuality in local papers."

Gays March in Mauritius

Several hundred people staged the first Gay Pride parade in the Indian Ocean nation of Mauritius on May 20.

Reports said shoppers were shocked by the display in a busy section of Rose Hill. Drag queens led the parade wearing feather boas and high heels, Reuters said.

Attorney General Rama Valayden called the march "a new page in the history of Mauritius...the page of freedom."

Located off the southeast coast of Africa, Mauritius has a population of 1.2 million.

ASIA/PACIFIC

Australian Government Kills Capital's Civil Unions

Australia's federal government June 13 squashed a civil union bill passed by the Legislative Assembly of the Australian Capital Territory, a jurisdiction similar to Washington, D.C.

The feds said the ACT civil unions were too much like marriage, which federal law specifically restricts to opposite-sex couples. The feds killed the law by instructing the queen's representative, Governor General Michael Jeffery, to use his power to block measures passed by the ACT Assembly.

"The ACT civil relationships ordinance has been disallowed," said federal Attorney General

Philip Ruddock. "The legislative amendments introduced to establish a civil arrangement for same-sex parties and others in the ACT will no longer be law."

A day later, an attempt in the federal Senate to override Jeffery's decision failed by a vote of 32-30.

ACT Attorney General Simon Corbell said the territory will now introduce another civil union bill. He said it will not be watered down but will contain different language designed not to provoke the federal government.

In response, the federal Attorney General's Department warned, "If this is more than just another political stunt, the ACT should consult with the commonwealth before enacting legislation to ensure it is drafted in a way that does not seek to equate civil unions with marriage."

AMERICAS

2.4 Million at São Paulo Pride

In the largest Gay Pride parade in the history of the world, 2.4 million people turned out June 17 in São Paulo, Brazil, police said. It was the city's 10th gay parade.

The march continues to grow each year even though activists complain that anti-gay discrimination remains at high levels. At least 81 Brazilians were murdered in anti-gay hate crimes last year.

The parade theme was "Homophobia Is a Crime."

In Mexico City the same day, 160,000 people hit the streets for the city's 28th Pride march. Organizers demanded equal rights and opportunities, legal recognition of same-sex families and reform of the educational system to present queers in a fair manner. The five-hour parade began at the Angel of Independence monument and ended at the Zócalo, a huge square that is Mexico's political epicenter.

Speakers at the post-parade rally included the president of the Mexico City Human Rights Commission and the director of the National Center for the Prevention and Control of AIDS. Among several politicians in attendance was presidential candidate Patricia Mercado of the Social Democratic and Farmer Alternative party.

Pop singer Gloria Trevi performed her latest single, "Everybody's Watching Me." She said, "You should not have to fight for your rights to acquire them or have them, because you were born with them." ☐

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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