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world

EUROPE

Latvia Passes Anti-Discrimination Bill

Latvia's Parliament banned anti-gay discrimination in employment Sept. 21, becoming the last of the 25 nations of the European Union to do so. The vote was 46-35 with three abstentions and nine MPs not voting.

It is a requirement of EU membership to protect gays from discrimination on the job. Latvia is among the EU's more homophobic member states.

This year's Gay Pride parade in Riga, the capital, was banned by the City Council and a court. When gays responded by holding a religious service and meetings at a hotel, they were confronted by Christian-fundamentalist, ultranationalist and neo-Nazi protesters who pelted them with eggs, rotten food and human feces.

ILGA and ILGA-Europe Shack Up

ILGA and ILGA-Europe have moved in together.

The 28-year-old International Lesbian and Gay Association and its 10-year-old European region affiliate now operate out of the same offices in Brussels, Belgium.

"Closer collaboration between ILGA and its most structured region...means we'll be able to use the experience and the success we've had in Europe to allow faster development for other regions of the world," said ILGA co-secretary general Philipp Braun.

Founded in 1978, ILGA is the only international federation of queer organizations. It has 550 members.

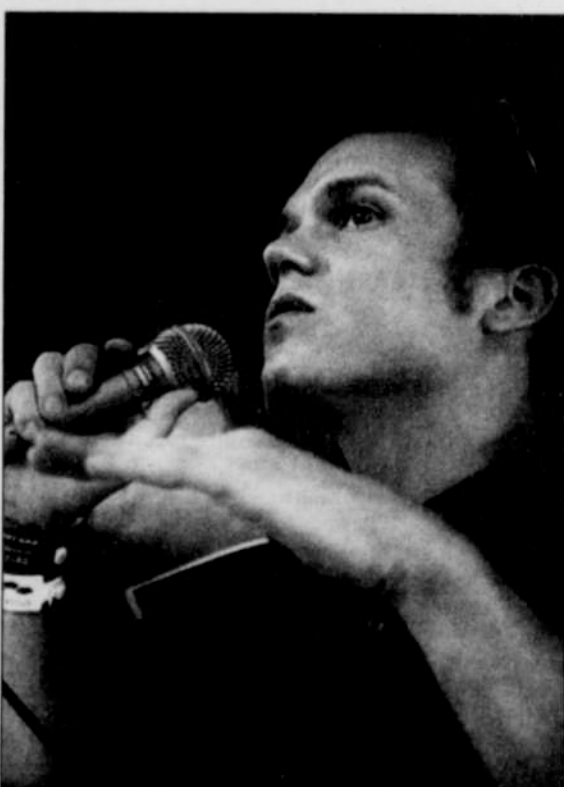
Created in 1996, ILGA-Europe pushes queer equality at the European Union, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and other European-level institutions. It also is a main network for gay organizations throughout the continent.

For more information visit www.ilga.org and www.ilga-europe.org.

Sweden to Deport Gay Iranian

Sweden is preparing to deport a gay Iranian who had sought asylum.

Citing a report from Sweden's Foreign Ministry,



Sören Andersson, head of the Swedish national gay group RFSL, is defending the right for a gay Iranian exile to stay in Sweden.



West Yorkshire police officer Mark Carter is the new Mr. Gay U.K.

a migration court ruled Sept. 29 that most Iranian gays are not persecuted if they live "discreet and withdrawn" lives. The man claimed he had been assaulted and jailed because of his sexual orientation, and raped at a police station.

Sören Andersson, head of the Swedish national gay group RFSL, told *The Local*, a Stockholm English-language publication, that the man could be executed in Iran. Some human rights activists believe they have enough evidence to assert that Iran enforces its death penalty for male anal sex, but Human Rights Watch and the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission have expressed skepticism.

Influenced by that evidence, 138 members of Britain's House of Commons signed a motion in August commemorating "the anniversary of [Iran's] public hanging on 19th July 2005 of two gay teenage boys." The motion also claimed, "As many as 4,000 Iranians have been executed for their homosexuality since the Islamic Revolution in 1979."

Two teenage boys, Mahmoud Asgari and Ayaz Marhoni, were indeed hanged July 19, 2005, in the city of Mashad, but some Iranian and foreign media reported that the executions were punishment for rape of a boy, not for the crime of consensual sodomy. HRW and IGLHRC say they have been unable to determine which version of the events is true.

The claim that 4,000 Iranian homosexuals have been executed since the revolution is put forth by the Iranian exile gay group Homan. Documentation for the claim is lacking, but Peter Tatchell of the British gay group OutRage, which says its extensive research confirms that Iran executes gays, explained: "Homan [based the figure] on Iranian media reports of LGBT executions and personal reports from people who had gay friends executed or arrested at private parties who were never seen again and presumed executed."

"They told me of cases where 20 or 30 or more people were arrested in a single raid and who subsequently disappeared forever. This was mostly in the early 1980s and again in the late 1980s. Tens of thousands of people were executed in the early 1980s alone for all kinds of reasons—mostly students and leftists. So the idea of 4,000 LGBTs executed does not seem wildly off the mark."

All sides in the activist debate agree that Iran tortures, harasses and mistreats the nation's gay population.