



Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez squashed a gay rumor.

Of the married same-sex couples counted in the Canadian census, 53.7 percent were male couples and 46.3 percent female. About 16 percent of female couples had children living with them, as did 3 percent of male couples.

Chávez Denies Gay Rumor

Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez says he isn't gay.

"I've been accused of everything," Chávez said Sept. 15 at a rally in Barquisimeto. "The only thing they haven't accused me of is being homosexual. Well, now they've started to accuse me of being homosexual. I don't have anything against homosexuals because I respect whichever human condition, but the thing is: I consider myself sufficiently macho to pulverize any accusation along those lines."

"It doesn't matter to me," Chávez continued. "Let them say about me whatever they have the urge to.... I couldn't care less that they say what they say about me and that they threaten me with what they threaten me with."

ASIA/PACIFIC

Air New Zealand Goes Gay

Air New Zealand will offer a gay flight Feb. 26 from San Francisco to Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras in Sydney, Australia.

The flight will feature drag queens, flight attendants performing a cabaret show, pink cocktails, pink feather boas, gay movies (not that kind), gay music, gay goodie bags and contests, among other gimmicks the airline thinks appeal to gay men. The affair reportedly also includes a "Get Onboard, Girlfriend" party before departure.

The round-trip fare for the 14-hour flight is around \$1,000.

MIDEAST/AFRICA

Ugandan Tabloid Outs Gay Citizens

The Ugandan tabloid newspaper *Red Pepper* again outed several citizens as gay Sept. 9.

Under the headline "Homo Terror! We Name and Shame Top Gays in the City," the paper called homosexuality "an unnatural habit that is eating up our beloved nation."

The paper named 40 people, by first name only, but in many cases provided details about their physical appearance, place of employment, neighborhood of residence and the kind of car they drive.

In response, a new international grassroots activist network called Gays Without Borders has been organizing various actions against the newspaper and protests to the Ugandan government. But a spokesman for the European Region of the International Lesbian and Gay Association urged Gays Without Borders to reconsider its campaign.

"[The] coalition of LGBT organizations in Uganda SMUG (Sexual Minorities Uganda) have decided to ignore the publication, as did even most of those who were outed," wrote Maxim Anmeghichean, who just returned from Uganda. "[In the] absence of any national pressure, letters...from abroad may be

strategically awkward and support the idea promoted by the government that the fight for LGBT rights in the country does not belong to Ugandans and is promoted by the West. Think twice before sending a letter, and check with a number of Ugandan activists before proceeding with action!"

Human Rights Watch queer program director Scott Long agreed that foreign activists should take care to work through established Ugandan gay organizations, such as member groups of Sexual Minorities Uganda, both to be certain the foreign assistance is welcome and because some people in Uganda have attempted to raise money from abroad by setting up sham gay groups.

Money for Safe Houses Needed

A London-based gay Iraqi group says it has run out of money to finance its five "safe houses" in Iraq.

Targeted gays flee to the houses to hide out from the Mahdi Army, the police and other "militant death squads" that have executed "hundreds" of gay people solely for being gay, the group said.

"Since the U.S. invasion of Iraq, gay people in Iraq have suffered particularly intense persecution," Iraqi LGBT said in its plea. "The United Nations and the U.S. State Department have issued reports documenting some of the more recent killings."

The group said each safe house costs about \$1,800 a month to operate—\$800 for rent, \$400 to pay two armed guards and \$600 "for gas, fuel for electricity generators, food, clean drinking water, hygienic supplies and the like."

Each house has between 10 and 12 residents, the group said.

Iraqi LGBT said it has been financed in the past by its own members, friends, Heartland Alliance, the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission and the Rev. Patricia Ackerman, an Anglican priest.

Checks or money orders can be sent to K. Sahi, 13 Campden Hill Mansions, Edge Street, London W8 7PL, England. More information is available at www.iraqilgbt.org.uk. 

REX WOCKNER 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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