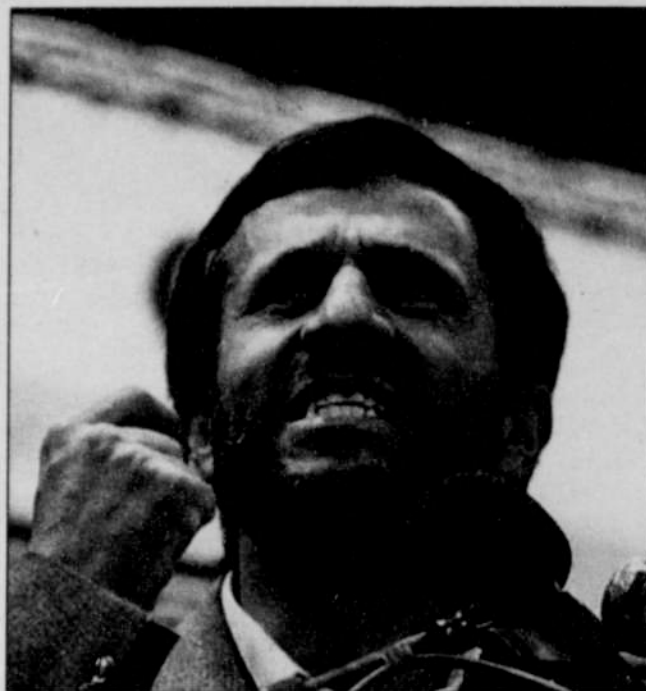




A crowd of Columbia University students laughed and booed when President Ahmadinejad said Iran has no gays.

Tverskoi District Court Judge Natalya Dyatlova determined the demonstrators had violated Article 20.2 of the Code on Administrative Offenses by staging an unauthorized public event. Only protest organizer Alexey Davydov received the higher fine.

Russia banned gays from donating blood in 2001. The general prosecutor's office has since determined that the ban is illegal, but the ministry has failed to lift it, said Nikolai Alekseev of Project GayRussia.Ru.

"We are going to appeal the court decision [and if] necessary, we are ready to take the cases of those activists up to the European Court of Human Rights," he said.

AMERICAS

Guatemalan Bill Targets Gay Families

Legislation pending in Guatemala's Congress would define "family" solely as a father, a mother and their child or children.

The Integral Protection for Marriage and Family Act would bar single parents and same-sex couples from the definition of "family" and punish any Guatemalan official who publicly contradicts the definition.

"Family essentially originates, exclusively, from the conjugal union between a man and a woman... through marriage or through a legally declared de facto union and other social forms, such as a religious ceremony or ritual, custom or cultural practice, as the only natural design," the bill states.

Human Rights Watch denounced the measure Oct. 1, saying it "would declare that nearly 40 percent of Guatemalan families... are not families at all."

"This bill takes aim at lesbian and gay couples, but it has almost half of Guatemalan children and parents in its sights," said HRW gay rights researcher Juliana Cano Nieto. "Targeting children and their caregivers in the name of a political agenda is not only unjustifiable, it is morally reprehensible."

Gay Soccer Championship Held in Buenos Aires

The International Gay and Lesbian Football Association held its 10th World Championship from Sept. 23 to 29 in Buenos Aires, drawing 500 soccer players from 28 teams around the world.

Argentina's Los Dogos defeated reigning champ Stonewall Football Club from London in a 1-0 shut-out Sept. 29 to capture the gay soccer world cup.

It was the first time the event, which received substantial support from the Argentine Football Association, had been held in Latin America. Other sponsors included Delta Air Lines, Manhunt.net and the local gay clubs Amerika and Titanic.

MIDEAST/AFRICA

Saudi Men Sentenced to 7,000 Lashes

Two Saudi men convicted of sodomy have received the first set of 7,000 lashes in punishment, the *Okaz* daily newspaper reported Oct. 4.

The public whipping took place Oct. 2 in the southwestern city of Al Bahah, the paper said. The men were not named.

After the beatings, they were returned to prison to await further sets of whippings. The report did not specify how many lashes are meted out each time.

President Ahmadinejad: Iran Has No Homosexuals

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said Sept. 24 that there are no homosexuals in Iran.

Answering students' questions at Columbia University in New York City, he said: "In Iran, we don't have homosexuals like in your country. We don't have that in our country. In Iran, we do not have this phenomenon; I don't know who's told you that we have it."

The audience laughed and booed.

Arsham Parsi, head of the Toronto-based Iranian Queer Organization, posted a reply online that said: "Mr. Ahmadi Nejad, please tell me...who I am?"

International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission executive director Paula Ettelbrick commented: "The Iranian president's stark denial of our reality reflects his government's ongoing refusal to recognize the basic human rights of LGBT people. IGLHRC and other human rights organizations have documented widespread and systematic violations of the rights of members of the...LGBT community in Iran."

Human Rights Campaign president Joe Solmonese said: "Today's assertions...would be simply absurd were it not for the fact that international human rights watchers have long documented some of the most horrific acts of persecution and violence committed against gay people in Iran. These acts of terror have included incarcerations, beatings and brutal executions. Ahmadinejad's denial that there are gay people in Iran shows the extent to which he devalues the lives of the many citizens his government has and continues to violate."

Scott Long, director of Human Rights Watch's LGBT Rights Program, called Ahmadinejad's denial of the existence of Iranian gays "a sick joke," affirming that Iran tortures gays and that the penal code punishes sex between men with the death penalty.

The Columbia Queer Alliance, however, had a different take on the matter.

The alliance's executive board issued a letter to its members Sept. 23 that contained this admonition: "We would like to strongly caution media and campus organizations against the use of such words as 'gay,' 'lesbian' or 'homosexual' to describe people in Iran who engage in same-sex practices and feel same-sex desire. The construction of sexual orientation as a social and political identity and all of the vocabulary therein is a Western cultural idiom. As such, scholars of sexuality in the Middle East generally use the terms 'same-sex practices' and 'same-sex desire' in recognition of the inadequacy of Western terminology." 10

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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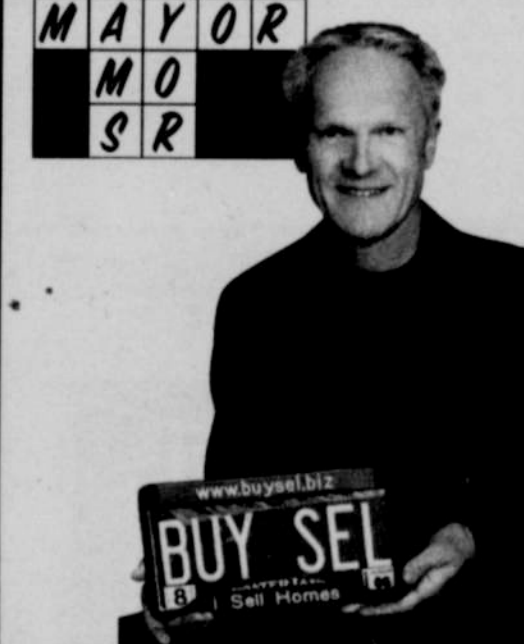
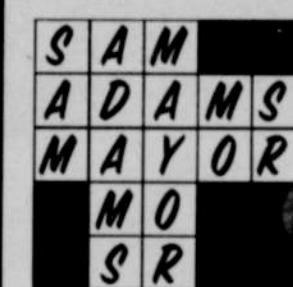
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