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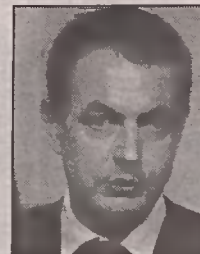
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by Jack Kirven · Q-Notes staff

Spanish PM counters Papal disdain

MADRID, Spain — Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero (pictured) denounced demands by the Vatican to repeal same-sex marriage and abortion in Spain. Pope Benedict XVI, the Cardinal Archbishop of Madrid (Antonio María Rouca Varela) and the Council of Bishops of Spain organized a "Christian family" demonstration to denounce legislation anathema to the Church.



Without bothering to mask his displeasure toward the numerous homophobic and theocratic ideologies represented by the bishops' speeches, Zapatero repeated that the Spanish Constitution ensures the rights of all people, even those who do not support the rights of others. The government issued a statement declaring that it has no intention of considering steps away from democracy and that there is no place in Spain for legislation regarding religion.

Tel Aviv recognizes marriages

TEL AVIV, Israel — People wishing to form unions outside the rituals prescribed by the rabbinate can now apply for identity cards that are signed by both parties in front of a civic officer and witnessing attorney. The move has been spurred by a desire to provide municipal services to more families and to collect taxes from a wider base of couples that had previously been unrecognized.

These unrecognized couples account for as much as 40 percent of the households in Israel and include 18,000 same-sex couples; 250,000 couples who cannot legally wed because one of the partners is not Jewish; and an expanding faction of Israeli Jews who do not wish to have their unions solemnized through the rabbinate.

"First, the couple has to sign a legal contract that details their rights and responsibilities in their shared life, and the card, which is signed in front of a lawyer, declares legally that the two people are parties to this contract," says Irit Rosenblum, founder of New Family, the organization that manages issuance of the ID cards. "It transforms their relationship from a 'normative' one — a common-law one — to a contractual one."

Ugandan church issues manifesto

KAMPALA, Uganda — In an effort to solidify definitions of doctrine against the budding LGBT struggle in East Africa, Rev. Fr. Leonard Lubega published a letter in *The Monitor* newspaper detailing Church views and articulating specific conclusions in response to "scientific" research on homosexuality. However, his arguments are based on scripture and make only passing references to actual developments in science, politics or sociological thought.

"Today, many people especially in Uganda have been scandalised by 'homosexuality'."

The Orthodox Church has not had a clear position regarding homosexuality as a condition since the distinction between homosexual acts and homosexual conditions is as a result of recent developments in scientific knowledge.

An objective definition and understanding of homosexuality is difficult to come by regarding the current widespread controversy on the issue basing on scientific, religious, ethical and

the following views:

Homosexuality is a predominant, persistent and exclusive psychosexual attraction toward members of the same sex. This seeks actual sexual fulfillment of this desire by sexual pleasures. This definition clears out distinction between homosexual acts and the condition of a person attracting them.

Homosexuality is an immoral sexual act which should be shunned by all people irrespective of their sex, calibre and tribe. Regarding homosexual acts, the traditional and exclusive teaching of the Church is condemnatory, seeing such acts as morally wrong... (Rev. Lubega's errata throughout).

Bhutto's death a setback

RAWALPINDI, Pakistan — Prior to her assassination, former two-time Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto had been running on a platform called "The Five E's": employment, education, energy, environment and equality. She stood out in world politics for being the first woman to govern an Islamic nation. Not only did Bhutto successfully campaign to lead Pakistan twice, a remarkable feat in a conservative nation, she ran on a pro-West, liberal platform.

Bhutto's lost potential to influence equality is of particular note. Although homosexuality is a crime punishable with prison or death in Pakistan, and Bhutto never explicitly declared support for LGBT issues within her country, her push for equality for women was reminiscent of feminist movements around the world. These in turn paved the way for crusades for racial and LGBT rights.

Bhutto's death is considered an enormous setback for the development of Western-style democracy in Pakistan. The subsequent turmoil has led to an alarming destabilization of the nuclear-capable nation. Pakistan's neighbor and chief rival, India, is also armed with nuclear weapons.

Officers come out amidst ridicule

SEOUL, South Korea — A second man in a squadron of riot police has outed himself via the internet site for his company. YooJeong Monhshik came out in 2006. He refused to complete his term of service without the implementation of employment protections and was imprisoned as a result. In South Korea men can opt to serve in the riot police rather than enlist in the armed forces; however, military laws apply in both and these codes still describe homosexuality as a mental disorder. Sodomy codes ban homosexual activity and fellow soldiers and policemen can apply for restraining orders against people in their companies found to be homosexual. The Secretary of Defense has said that gays who choose to become straight will have the full support of the government, indicating a residual belief that sexuality is either a conscious choice or a treatable condition.

"The current law on homosexual management is just another way of classifying or segregating gays instead of treating them equally. There is hardly any education offered to soldiers to help them understand homosexuality," said Chang Byung-kwon, a gay rights activist.

According to Democratic Labor Party leader Kim Hyun-jong, there are approximately four million LGBT people in South Korea. Many are male and are therefore subject to military service requirements. "Would you punish them all? Or label all of them lunatics?" Hyun-jong asked. ▀