

International News Notes

by David Stout . Q-Notes staff

LGBT Iranians granted asylum

AMSTERDAM, The Netherlands — After studying the matter, the Dutch government has declared that gay and lesbian Iranians constitute a “special group” at risk of violent persecution in their home country and



deserving of asylum protection. Dutch authorities imposed a provisional moratorium on LGBT deportations last year. But in February, Immigration Minister Rita Verdonk (pictured) announced her intention to lift the moratorium.

“The Dutch government has affirmed its international legal obligations in asserting that it will not send gay and lesbian Iranian asylum seekers to a country where they face the risk of torture or execution,” said Scott Long, director of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights Program at Human Rights Watch. “The priority now is to ensure that this policy is implemented fully and fairly, and that no one in the Netherlands is sent back to face torture.”

Sweden, which had imposed a similar moratorium on returning LGBT asylum seekers in late 2005, recently announced that it would resume deportations despite objections from human rights agencies.

Gov't arresting suspected gays

KAMPALA, Uganda — Over the last few weeks at least five men have been arrested in Uganda for allegedly violating the laws that criminalize same-gender sexual conduct. According to human rights advocates it is unclear where the men are being held and under what conditions. The arrests might be related to a list of suspected gay men published in August in the Ugandan tabloid “The Red Pepper,” a daily tabloid known for sensationalism.

In response to the arrests, Paula Ettlbrick, executive director of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, wrote to Uganda's Minister of Justice. “I respectfully urge you to immediately release the men and to dismiss all charges against them.” She also called for the repeal of *Articles 140, 141 and 143* of Uganda's Penal Code, which are used against gays and lesbians.

Under Ugandan law, gay sexual activity is punishable by life imprisonment. “The Red Pepper” received international condemnation when it published its list of alleged homosexuals. Amnesty International reports that many of the men were harassed and some were beaten after being named.

Conference celebrates families

SOFIA, Bulgaria — Over 200 delegates from across Europe gathered in the Bulgarian capital Oct. 26-29 for the International Lesbian and Gay Association-Europe's 10th annual conference. The conference theme was “We are Family - Our families in Europe and the European family” — reflecting ILGA-Europe's decision

to place diversity of family models and their acceptance and recognition atop its priority list.

In a pre-event statement organizers said, “As this is our 10th anniversary conference, we will reflect on our achievements and pay tribute to ILGA-Europe's fathers and mothers. We will also sketch out our next 10 years, identify the main challenges and discuss the best ways of achieving further and fuller equality and human rights for LGBT Europeans.”

Bulgaria will join the European Union next year. Hosting the conference gave Bulgarian LGBT activists and organizations the opportunity to meet their E.U. counterparts. It also provided a chance for Bulgarian officials to see how current member nations address LGBT issues and foster equality for all citizens.

Protests target Pride march

JERUSALEM, Israel — More than a thousand Jews turned out Oct. 18 to protest the gay Pride march scheduled to be held here Nov. 10. The controversial parade was postponed from August's World Pride celebration due to Israel's armed conflict with Lebanon-based Hezbollah. The protest cut off all traffic through Sabbath Square in the Me'ah She'arim neighborhood.

A week later, march opponents gathered and a series of activities was planned with the goal of convincing the police that allowing the parade will be too dangerous. The message is that the expected turnout of anti-parade protesters, as well as the clashes that are likely to result, is likely to deteriorate into violence and possibly even bloodshed.

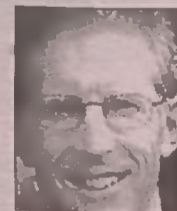
Israel's Chief Rabbi, the Rishon LeTzion Rabbi Shlomo Amar, issued a declaration calling upon “every Jews for whom the existence of the Nation and Land of Israel is important,” as well as rabbis all over the world, to “arouse a tremendous protest until this bad parade is totally called off.”

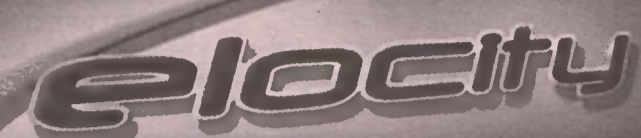
Scots' union push picking up

EDINBURGH, Scotland — Figures show that gay and lesbian couples in Scotland are registering their civil partnerships at about half the rate of same-sex couples in England and Wales. But the move toward registration and the benefits that result, including pension, immigration and property rights, appears to be picking up steam after a slow start last December.

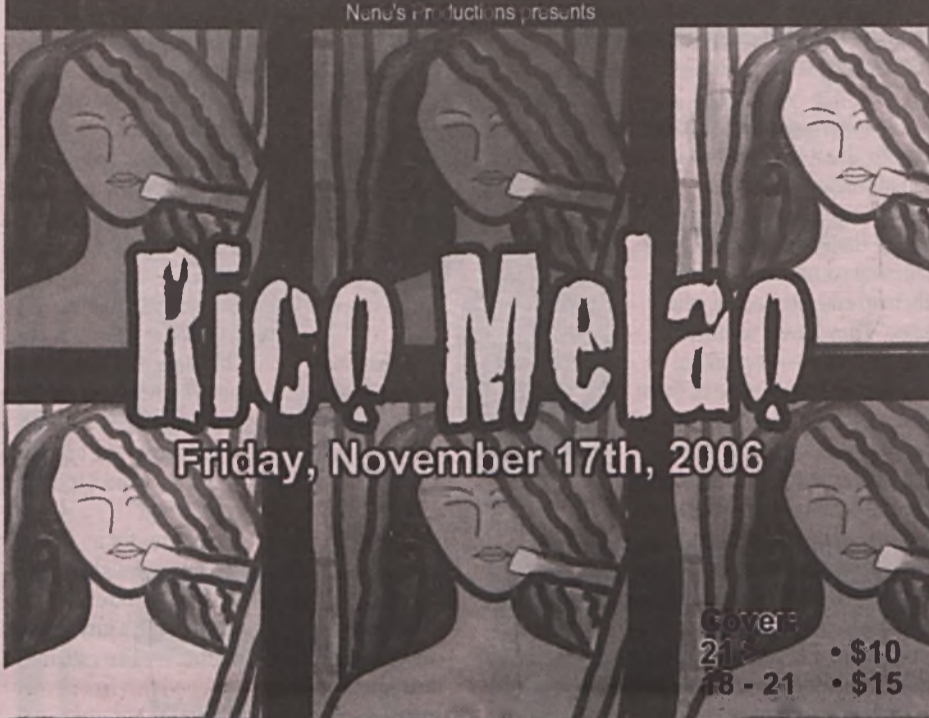
Through the first quarter of 2006, 259 partnerships were registered. The number was up to 315 by the third quarter. According to Duncan Macniven (pictured), Registrar General for Scotland, the gender breakdown among registered couples is close to equal.

In neighboring Ireland, there is currently no legal recognition of same-sex couples. However, a poll taken last month by Dublin's *Sunday Tribune* showed that 64 percent of those polled are in favor of gay and lesbian couples having the same legal and financial rights as married couples. ▀





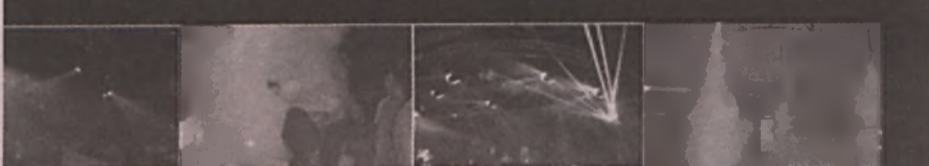
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