

ERATO

Stockholm

www.ilgcn.tupilak.se



November, 2006

ILGCN (*International Lesbian & Gay Cultural Network*) Information Secretariat

Rainbow Cultural Sites for 2007: Mauritius, Vilnius, "Iran & Algeria in Exile:"

WORLD CONFERENCE STAGES: MINSK, POSNAN

Stockholm – The Belarus capital of Minsk will be the site of the 2nd stage of the International Lesbian & Gay Cultural Network's world rainbow culture conference November 10-12, 2006 and the Polish city of Posnan will be the 3rd stage November 18 (replacing Jerusalem -- because of the war).

"Negative statements about homosexuals by President Lukashenko, MPs and religious leaders demonstrate that negative attitudes towards homosexuals exist at the highest levels of government," says ILGCN coordinator for Belarus, Slava Bortnik (www.pride.by) (amnesty_by@gmx.net). (Cont. on page 2)

"International Square" Solidarity with Eastern Europeans, Immigrants & Refugees

1st NORDIC RAINBOW at GOTHENBERG BOOK FAIR

Gothenburg – The first rainbow flags were raised September 21-23, 2006 at the "International Square" – the largest section of the giant Gothenburg Book Fair in this Swedish west coast city – at a colourful stand displaying art work, photography, poems, literature and publications – and including humour-filled, erotic poetry readings and happenings.

"Nordic rainbow cultural co-operation and solidarity with colleagues in Eastern Europe under the title of 'Rainbows in Chains and under Siege' -- and sharing Nordic rainbows with immigrants and refugees were the themes of the our stage presentations and in the information provided at our stand," says Bill Schiller of the Nordic Rainbow Council. (Continued on page 3)

PHOTO

Sweden's erotic poets Filip Vrba & Mats Råsmark of Tupilak-Gothenburg

Continued Solidarity with Refugees, Eastern Europe

NORDIC RAINBOW COUNCIL MEETS in SWEDEN

Gothenburg – The annual session of the newly-renamed Nordic Rainbow Council -- this time in this Swedish west coast city on the sidelines of the giant annual international book fair – approved efforts for continued solidarity over Nordic borders, with rainbow immigrants and refugees in the Nordic region and with colleagues on the barricades in Eastern Europe – including Belarus and Russia.

Priority is to continue to go to events on the Eastern side of the Nordic region – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania struggling with hostile and increasingly homophobic forces. Thanks to co-operation with RFSU (the Swedish sexual information federation), the stage presentation on Eastern European barricades included lawyer Evita Gosa of the Latvian rainbow organization, Mozaika and Anna Kirey of the LGBT organization LABRYS of Kyrgyzstan. (Continued on page 2)

WORLD CONFERENCE STAGES: MINSK, POSNAN..

(from page 1) "Earlier international LGBT events in Belarus have been banned by government and attacked by police, and two years ago cancelled – after the dictatorial regime threatened to expel any visiting queer foreigners and Belarusian neo-Nazis promised to wipe out homosexuality itself in the country. "To prevent the isolation of Belarusian LGBT movement, please come to Minsk and make a difference!" Bortnik adds. _

The ILGCN's Warsaw-based cultural ambassador, Lukasz Palucki (luke.santi@eranet.pl) describes the event in Posnan as of crucial importance – following last year's violent, homophobic attack on the first Posnan Pride parade – with several participants injured and some 70 arrested by the police.

The first stage of this year's ILGCN world rainbow cultural conference took place in Moscow – with the help of the Nordic Culture Fund and the Norwegian Embassy. The conference days ended with the bloody and violent attack at the Red Square ceremony where local and foreign lesbians and gays tried to place flowers at the eternal flame monument.

Photo *Lukasz of Poland*

"Both the Russian organizers and the ILGCN are still facing crushing debts because of the tripling of the conference rent with extra security guards and the cancellation of the fund-raising event out of fear or more homophobic attacks... These debts have crippling affects on trying to arrange future events on the Eastern European barricades any contributions are very welcome," says Bill Schiller, secretary general at the ILGCN Information Secretariat in Stockholm.

ILGCN Conference Stages Selected for 2007

Next year's conference stages are to be in Mauritius in May -- the first ILGCN event in Africa (ILGCN co-ordinator Thierry de Ravel for Mauritius (tderavel@intnet.mu) – and in Vilnius in the same month (ILGCN co-ordinator Arvydas Vogulis for Lithuania (avo@takas.lt)).

The stage in "Iran in Exile" will be in Toronto in June (ILGCN cultural ambassador/co-ordinator for Iran, Arsham Parsi arsham@pgo.net) -- and the "Algeria in Exile" stage in Paris-Marseille in October (ILGCN cultural ambassador/co-ordinator for Algeria, Mohamed Hadj- Kouider amineh.kouider@btintenet.com) . "We've had "exile" events for Belarus in the past and hope that these stages "in exile" can help put a focus on the severe and sometimes fatal conditions for rainbow people in Iran and Algeria," Bill Schiller concludes. "Any assistance for these conference stages are very welcome!"

1st NORDIC RAINBOWS at GOTHENBERG BOOK FAIR...

(from page 1) The stage presentation on immigrants and refugees in the Nordic area included Ardeshir Bibakabadi of Homan, (Persian-speaking and other rainbow immigrants) – helping underline the reality that despite dedicating this year as Sweden's "multi-cultural year," many rainbow immigrants are often left in the shadows of the Nordic rainbows celebrated by the native-born.

"There was great interest in our rainbow stand where we re-discovered old members and recruited new ones, and established working contact with several other International Square colleagues for future co-operation," Schiller adds. "We hope to increase the number of rainbow organizations working together with us next year at this the biggest annual cultural event in the Nordic region." Co-hosts of the 2006 stand included Tupilak, (*Nordic organization of rainbow cultural workers*), Nordic Rainbow Humanists and the Stockholm Information Secretariat of the ILGCN (*International Lesbian & Gay Cultural Network*). Tupilak's annual "Loke's Sisters' Award" for cultural projects outside of the capital helped make the stand a reality.

New Name for 'Nordic Rainbow Council'

On the sidelines of the Gothenberg event, the annual session of the Nordic Homo Council (see separate press release) discussed ongoing and future Nordic co-operation in the Nordic region and in Eastern Europe and approved a proposal to change the name of the Council to the 'Nordic Rainbow Council' to be more inclusive and up-to-date. The change is to be communicated to the ILGA where the Council is a member. At the International Square, over 60 exhibitors work with international issues and development co-operation: NGO's, publishers, businesses and agencies with a program including Swedish and foreign guests, performances, debates and images.

NORDIC RAINBOW COUNCIL MEETS in SWEDEN...

"(from page 1) With the city of Riga banning the Pride Parade again this year and even worse violent homophobic attacks on Pride events there, the visible presence of Latvia was especially important to illustrate the Gothenberg fair's theme this year: "Freedom of Expression," adds Schiller.

"We agreed to change the "Homo" in our name to "Rainbow" to be more up-to date and to make sure that trans people, bisexuals and other supportive "rainbow-minded" colleagues feel welcome," says Bill Schiller, international secretary of the Council.



2007 Nordic Rainbow Flags to Fly at Gothenberg Fair?

The session also agreed to co-ordinate a joint effort in 2007 to repeat this year's succesful pioneering effort of raising Nordic rainbow flags at the International Square – the largest section of the Gothenberg Book Fair , which is the biggest annual culural event in the Nordic area. This was made possible with the financial grant from Tupilak (Nordic rainbow cultural workers) in the form of the Loke Sister's award for Cultural projects outside of the Swedish capital.

The Nordic rainbow stand presented books, poetry, CD's, printed information, art and photography – and also included two stage presentations on Nordic co-operation with Eastern Europe, with rainbow immigrants and refugees in the Nordic zone and also humor-filled erotic poetry happenings.

The Council also agreed to seek further financial support – such as the Nordic Culture Fund assistance for the Nordic delegation to the 1st Moscow Pride, and other institutions. And to send Nordic delegations to the ILGCN (International Lesbian & Gay Cultural Network) world rainbow cultural conference stages in Minsk and Posnan this November, following the first stage in Moscow last May.

The Council also pledged support to the first Nordic rainbow event in the Åland Islands this December and to continue searching for projects in the other semi-independent areas of Greenland and the Faroe Islands.

The session also approved continued membership in the ILGA (International Lesbian & Gay Association) (with the annual fee partly covered by Tupilak, the Nordic Rainbow Humanists, the ILGCN Information Secretariat in Stockholm and others.

Swedish Pol-Balt Solidarity Network Saluted

In co-operation with Tupilak and the ILGCN Information Secretariat, the Council approved the proposal to grant the 2006 ILGCN "Arco Nordica" award diploma to Sweden's newly-created "Pol-Balt Network" – providing assistance, solidarity and exchanges with colleagues in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland.

Decisions were also taken to keep Council bureaucracy to a minimum, charge no membership fee but to survive through voluntary contributions, and to seek more members even among more local sections of national organizations, since some of these are at times more interested in Nordic and internationally co-operation than the mother organizations.

Earlier Council sessions have taken place in Riga, Tallinn, Tampere, Oslo, Wasa and Stockholm. Next year's session is preliminarily planned for Vilnius, Lithuania.



former logo for the new Nordic 'Rainbow' Council....



Nightmare Situation for Ugandans and Other LGBT Asylum Seekers in the United Kingdom:

Refugees Face Detention, FastTrack Removals

Gay youth Isaac Katula, 17, was driven from his rural African homeland by horrifying homophobic beatings and violence. "Where I come from gay people are being tortured and killed by mobs, and no one takes action to stop this," he explains. "Seeking asylum in the UK, I wasn't listened to. I haven't been recognized as a victim of torture, when I had a medical examination and a letter from the *UK Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture* saying that."

"The system is not actually helping asylum seekers," continues young Mr Katula. "If you run away because of torture you should get protection, not be ignored. What I need is protection. Security and safety, that's the thing in my life. I can't live in a place where my life is in danger. And other people need this as well"

"When asylum seekers are put inside UK Immigration Removal Centres they become useless, like an animal in the zoo. Some are beaten, some raped. It's a different kind of life from humanity. But it would be better if they were left to do a little to support themselves, like being given little jobs, wherever they might be allocated, instead of being locked up and eating food! It's expensive, as they can't contribute to society."

Photo

*Gay Ugandan asylum seekers Isaac Katula (far left) and Kizza Musinguzi (far right)
& Peter Tatchell of UK's LGBT OutRage!*

I think people should be allowed freedom as their asylum cases are being processed, instead of being put into detention centers. Young people should be allowed to study and find a place to live, not judged that their situation doesn't qualify. There is no qualification of asylum. It comes on you unexpectedly: it comes without knowing. It is like being born again."

Restricted by combative regulations, Mr Katula faces a hard grind. "When you get protection, you can feel relaxed and gain esteem and get the courage to go on. Like me: I want to work with people. It's not safe for me to do so." The intervention of a network of community groups last autumn saw Mr Katula accorded a highly restricted temporary admission to the UK while his case proceeds.

"I would like people's help, but I wouldn't blame anyone. At the end of the day there should be freedom to move. Asylum seekers should at least be allowed to do something to help themselves, instead of their case being decided in one week, for them to be sent back. People should be accepted."

Ian Stewart, Secretary General for ILGCN Literature Secretariat, London



ILGCN Secretariats History: Minneapolis tretto07@umn.edu

Information: Stockholm www.ilgcn.tupilak.se

Women: Tallinn krissu.@meaculpa.ee Literature: London istewart@alumni.stu.ca

ILGCN Annual Awards Proposals welcomed at all Secretariats:

Rainbow Iceberg -- (*outstanding international work*) **Clio's Silver Cup** (*LGBT history*)

Orfeo Iris (*research in Nazi 6 neo nazi persecution of homosexuals*)

Grizzly Bear (*work in ferocious homophobic situations*)

Orfeo Musica (*international musical co-operation*) **Arco Nordica** (*Nordic co-operation*)

Sappho in Paradise (*libraries, publishing*) **Orfeo Imago** (*graphic art & photography*)