



HIV AND SEXUAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR MINORITY ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

# NAZ UPGRADES HIV SERVICES

IMPROVED SUPPORT BACKED BY THE COMMUNITY FUND

Naz is upgrading its support services for people with HIV. From September, the project will give special advice, support and interpreting to people with HIV from South Asia, the Horn of Africa and Latin America in London. The initiative is funded by the National Lottery's Community Fund, which funds projects that improve quality of life for people 'affected by poverty and disadvantage'.

Building on experience, the new Advocacy and Client Support Service (ACSS) plans to improve life for HIV/AIDS patients from ethnic minorities by giving appropriate support. This will "ensure they go from largely living alone and unsupported through their illness to being surrounded by people who can improve their quality of life with the appropriate provision of available services," says Naz.

Naz knows some 80 people who will benefit directly from this service. Its research shows ethnic minority people with HIV don't access mainstream services because of language problems, inappropriate materials, unawareness, fear, immigration worries and low self-esteem. The project's work to help ethnic minorities enjoy mainstream sexual health services has been complicated by new HIV funding arrangements.

The initiative expects at least 100 people to take up the service in the first year. Naz will help its clients access HIV drug therapy, and mainstream services in immigration, welfare, housing, health and employment. It also hopes to prevent HIV spreading through unsafe behaviour. Specialised Naz workers will provide appropriate information, advice, support and interpreting, and even accompany clients to services. The ..

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## NAZ BOSS STRESSES EFFICIENCY

The new Naz director wants the project to work more efficiently with its users and supporters. Bryan Teixeira (pronounced Tay-shay-rah), in this way, expects to see Naz recognised as one of Britain's prime ethnic sexual health organisations. "That's the potential I see," says Teixeira, who took up the job in June.

He talks firmly about commitments. "We are only going to do what we can do effectively within our remit. We will be effective in providing the services that we say we'll provide," says Teixeira. But he also wants users to become more involved, particularly ethnic communities and people with HIV. "We invite users and stakeholders to become more involved with Naz in giving feedback, suggestions and ideas, as volunteers, and at the committee level," he says.

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## WORLD LEADERS DECLARE WAR ON AIDS

World leaders have declared war on AIDS, with rich countries pledging more money and poor countries facing up to the pandemic. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has set up a global 'war chest,' but disagreements could undermine the war effort.

In a massive initiative, the world's richest nations at the G8 summit in Genoa promised a US\$1.3bn global health fund to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria in developing countries. "For the first time, we are seeing the emergence of a response to this deadly disease that begins to match the scale of the epidemic itself," said Annan. Rich countries are keen to fight AIDS with broader healthcare initiatives to tackle malaria and TB, also massive killers.

The funding, however, falls well short of the US\$10 billion target set by the UN at a special session on HIV/AIDS in June. That session recognised the AIDS epidemic as a global crisis, and agreed to the first global "battle plan" to fight it. "As we declare global war on AIDS, we will need a war chest to fight it. We need to mobilise an additional US\$7bn to US\$10bn a year to fight this disease well," said Annan in April, urging both countries and private organisations to contribute.

The UN battle plan is a diplomatic document. It shied away from frank language, making no direct mention of prostitution and men who have sex with men, despite the vulnerability of these groups to HIV. Islamic governments supported by American

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## Subscriptions

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*Rasaneh Khaberie is edited by Andrew Lawday*

## A MESSAGE FROM THE NEW DIRECTOR

By Bryan Teixeira

It is an honour for me to have been selected as the new Director of Naz Project London (NPL). I am grateful to have this opportunity. And a special thanks to Manjeet Edwards, the Chair of the Board, and Krishna Maharaj, the former Director, for their support and encouragement. I believe my goals for the remainder of this fiscal year are modest:

- To clarify NPL's mission and produce a three-year strategic plan for 2002-2005

I have contracted Tahera Aanchawan to conduct a review of NPL and its services, and identify any changes needed. She will complete her work by December 31, 2001. As of January, 2002, detailed work targets will be developed building on the results of this review, and inform plans and funding proposals for the coming fiscal year.

- To ensure our staffing pattern and job descriptions meet current and future needs

As the face of HIV, AIDS and sexual health evolves, so must NPL. I have been working with our key Health Authority funders to clarify high priority service needs and ensure realistic targets given our current level of resources. I also want to ensure that we have the appropriate level of management and administrative support for the range of our service provision.

- To start an effective volunteer programme, including a volunteer 'fundraising team'

The goals of a voluntary organisation cannot be achieved by staff alone. A significant number of trained and supported volunteers is needed. I hope to eventually have volunteer teams linked to all lead staff and every major project area in NPL. Volunteer training is part of the work of our new Advocacy and Client Support Services project (supported by the Community Fund).

- To ensure 10th anniversary celebrations, including media coverage

NPL's origins go back to October 1991. The organisation has changed to respond to the changing times. Many people have contributed to what NPL has become. It is time to celebrate our achievements and the creative gifts that so many others have brought to NPL over the past 10 years.

- To continue to build effective partnerships with other HIV, AIDS and sexual health services providers

No voluntary organisation exists in a vacuum. We must work together with a variety of partners in meeting the needs of our target populations. NPL communities include a range of people, from those who are well integrated to those who feel very marginalised and excluded. We cannot hope to effectively serve our people without cooperatively working with other service providers and partners.

I look forward to an exciting future for Naz Project London!



# NP Mission Statement

- To challenge the myths and prejudices that exist about our communities and within our communities.
- To campaign vigorously to ensure that our diverse communities are not excluded from HIV, AIDS and sexual health services due to culturally and linguistically inappropriate service provision.
- To educate and empower our communities to face up to the challenges of the AIDS pandemic and mobilise the strong family and support networks that exist, to care for people living with HIV and AIDS.
- To ensure that service users are at the heart of assessing need and play a central role at all levels within the Naz Project.
- To pioneer the development of culturally sensitive, linguistically appropriate needs-led high quality services.
- To promote greater understanding of the diversity that exists within our communities in terms of sexuality and sexual behaviour.
- To challenge racism, homophobia, sexism, communalism and religious intolerance and to promote an understanding and awareness of the negative impact of these issues on our communities.
- To educate the public in general, and our target communities in particular, of HIV and AIDS transmission, treatment and impact.

## Aims & objectives

- To provide culturally and linguistically appropriate HIV, AIDS and sexual health prevention care and support services for the South Asian, Middle Eastern, North African, Horn of African and Latin American communities in London.
- To enhance the quality of life for people from our communities affected by HIV and AIDS by promoting self help and empowerment.
- To foster the development of a non-judgemental approach to those affected by HIV and AIDS.
- To respond quickly, imaginatively and effectively to the ever-changing local and international epidemiology, causes and consequences of the HIV and AIDS pandemic.
- To address where possible the needs of those communities comparable to our own but which are marginalised by other mainstream HIV and AIDS agencies.

## NAZ BOSS STRESSES EFFICIENCY

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...Looking ahead at the main challenges, Teixeira says Naz will have to learn to adapt. "AIDS, 20 years on, is evolving and affecting new communities. People with HIV are living longer. At the same time, the Government is making significant changes to the way HIV and sexual health services are provided in the UK." Naz, he says, will have to learn constantly to keep up with these changes. "In a time of change, your best insurance is that staff are continually developing and learning. A big challenge is to make Naz a learning organisation ready for the next change or adjustment."

Teixeira brings valuable personal experience to the job. "I'm someone who has had to deal with issues of ethnicity and sexual health in my own life. I also bring experience of services and possible services from my work in Canada, the United States and India," he says.

Teixeira was born and brought up in Guyana, a multiethnic society in South America. The country's population is mainly of African and South Asian descent, with sizeable ethnic Chinese and European minorities. Growing up in a mainly Catholic culture, Teixeira remembers that sex was often a very contentious issue. "Working through my own sexual identity in that cultural and religious context, I eventually came out as gay. I got involved with others trying to understand their own sexual identity, doing workshops and counselling."

"I first experienced the feeling of being an outsider when I went to North America for higher education. My skin was a bit darker and people laughed at my accent," remembers Teixeira. He then began to work with outsiders. First with aboriginal people in Canada displaced by development projects, and then doing freelance work and training for various ethnic minority groups. He moved to San Francisco in the early 1980s to begin a PhD in psychology, focusing on cultural issues. This was at the beginning of the AIDS epidemic. On his return to Canada he helped start a group called AIDS Vancouver, one of the world's first HIV/AIDS organisations. He ran their first support groups, and has been involved with HIV/AIDS ever since.

## NAZ UPGRADES HIV SERVICES

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...project will help to start support groups and mobilise patients' families. As always, Naz will challenge discrimination at every turn, and press statutory services to reach out to ethnic minority communities.

In Britain, some 7,000 people from ethnic minorities are thought to be infected with HIV, many of them living outside the health system. They often face isolation and rejection, compounded by taboos and ignorance from within their communities. Some are becoming ever more excluded, and missing out on medical treatments. They also suffer greatly from poverty and disadvantage. About 90% are unemployed, many of them living on welfare benefits. About a third don't get benefits because they are illegal immigrants or asylum seekers. Many don't speak English, and are clueless about services.

South Asian gay men often suffer racism from mainstream British society, homophobia from their South Asian communities and stigmatisation for their HIV status. A growing number of South Asian women face isolation after being infected by husbands, who may now have died. People with HIV from the Horn of Africa have arrived more recently after fleeing war, repression and displacement in Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea. Their attempts to cope are often undermined by the hardship of life as asylum seekers, hostility, fear of deportation, urgent housing problems and life on vouchers. Latin American clients tend to be illegal immigrants, with no rights to work, welfare or medical treatment.

Naz plans to strengthen its relations with the Terrence Higgins Trust / Lighthouse, the Globe Centre, London East AIDS Network and Blackliners while building new partnerships with HIV treatment centres, GUM clinics and other such services. Naz has assured the Community Fund that its work "clearly supplements [...existing projects] by providing information and services in a variety of languages, taking cultural and religious factors into account."

# NAZ MARCHES WITH GAY PRIDE

NAZ AND FRIENDS MADE A STIR AT GAY PRIDE THIS YEAR



*"It was nice to share ideas, exchange comments on outfits and make up tips. A fun and frantic evening with a brilliant outcome of the best float around in town".*

*Drag Queen, Club Kali*

Marching through London at the Gay Pride event in June, Naz turned out its most beautiful South Asians, Latin Americans and others who marched with love and pride. Naz and friends prepared a float especially for the occasion. Brimming with Bollywood divas and Latina cholitas, members of the women's group Kiss and the Asian men's group Masala went for maximum visibility and audibility, waving banners, saris and other assets to the sound of Indian drummers from the Dhol Foundation.

"We danced ourselves ragged through the streets of Piccadilly, up to Victoria, stopping briefly outside Number 10 to convey our resilience and passion for life in the face of adversity, bigotry and outright discrimination," said one Naz member. "We'll come together again next year - inshallah - and maybe more people will join our march for the right to love who we choose without fear," he added.



The theme for Gay Pride 2001 was partnership rights for gays and lesbians. "We have achieved much during this year in our fight for equality but we still have a long way to go," said a spokesman. "Our theme complements Stonewall's campaign and reflects Ken Livingstone's GLA registry initiative." London Mayor Livingstone recently said he backed the right for gays to marry and set up a register for interested couples.

*"The drummers were sensational, the outfits were stunning, the crowds were sizzling with support. The march was effortless, the photo shoot was phenomenal, the publicity for Naz was visible and so the march went on & on".*

## GRANTS TO COMBAT PREJUDICE

You could get £5,000 to work with others for equality, against prejudice.

Voluntary and community groups in England can apply jointly with one or more other groups who face discrimination. Stonewall, the Gay and Lesbian lobby group, with funding from the National Lottery's Community Fund, is offering the grants of up to £5,000 under its Citizenship 21 Awards Scheme. The idea is to "enable

communities to work together against prejudice and discrimination by looking beyond labels and finding the links that unite different communities, to respect each others' differences and work together to achieve equality for all."

Deadlines for applications are 30 September 2001, 31 March 2002 and 30 September 2002. To find out more, contact Andy Forrest on 0207 881 9440.



*Suki, Naz worker, Naz Pride coordinator*

Meanwhile Richard Ansett, a distinguished photographer, is taking pictures of those registering and happy gay couples to show mainstream audiences. He needs lesbian couples and people from London's ethnic communities, so please support his work by posing for him. Contact him through Par-minder at Naz or at his e-mail address: richardansett@kirion.net.

Partnership rights are an important issue for Naz and other groups. Naz has been asked to address the MSF Trade Union's lesbian,

gay and bisexual members on the issue of partnership rights from the 'Black' perspective. The presentation will include practical workshops aimed at empowering participants for situations that may occur in the workplace. The event will take place at Bishop Stortford in mid-September.

Naz wishes to give special thanks to Clone Zone, EHH Gay Men's Project and Club Kali for funding the float, and to Sam and Neil for their work.

## SEX WORKER CARDS BANNED

Sex workers, from this September, will no longer be able to advertise with cards placed in phone boxes. This was decided under the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001, passed by parliament just before the last election. According to the Home Office, any person who places an advert relating to prostitution in or near a public telephone box will be liable to a maximum penalty of six months imprisonment and/or a fine of up to £5000. Police will have power of arrest.

## GAY MUSLIMS REJECT ATTACK

An international gay Muslim group has rejected a verbal attack from an Islamist organisation. The Al-Fatiha Foundation for Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgendered Muslims dismissed rumours of a "fatwa" issued by the hardline UK-based group Al-Muhajiroun. It could not confirm if the "fatwa" was official, but said the rhetoric used was extreme and caused concern. "We regret that leaders of the Al-Muhajiroun feel that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered Muslims are 'apostates'," said Al-Fatiha in a statement on July 10. "Members of Al-Fatiha continue to believe in their faith but also believe that their sexual orientation or gender identity is integral part of their lives. This does not take them out of the folds of Islam." No mention of the alleged 'fatwa' could be found on the website of Al-Muhajiroun. It appears to have been the personal opinion of one member reacting to an Al-Fatiha conference in San Francisco, and the group's participation in the city's LGBT Pride Parade. Al-Fatiha said it had received nothing more than the two hate-calls it usually receives weekly.

# MR LATIN GAY

## 'HOT EVENT OF THE YEAR'

Don't miss Mr. Latin Gay, one of the hottest events in Britain this year. In December 2001, some 700 people are expected to turn out to see who takes this sexy, hot and desirable prize. Contestants will parade in swimwear and formal wear, and face an on-stage interview about their other talents. The winner will be chosen by a suitably qualified panel of judges. Someone has to do it! Visit [www.exilio.co.uk](http://www.exilio.co.uk) or call Naz Latina on 0208 741 1879 to find out more. The idea is to raise the profile of the Latin Gay community.

So if you wish to lend a helping hand, then call Gloria on 07931 374 391.



# NAZ BRASIL'S NEW COORDINATOR



**J**osé Henrique Resinente, a London-based Brazilian counsellor, welcomes the chance to serve the capital's growing Brazilian community.

*Hi, my name is José Henrique Resinente, and I'm the new Naz Brasil coordinator.*

*First, I'd like to thank all the Naz Project staff for their support and warm welcome, which made me feel instantly at home.*

*My interest in HIV, AIDS and STIs (sexually transmitted infections) goes back a long way. I came out as gay in the mid 1980s in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. At that time in my life exploring my sexuality was carefree and fun - until I heard about HIV and AIDS, perceived by many as 'The Gay Disease.' I still remember my bewilderment on learning that a famous pop singer was dying of AIDS at the time.*

*In those same days, two of my closest friends were diagnosed as HIV positive, and developed AIDS shortly after. It felt like a nightmare. I saw them going through their pain without much support or care since HIV/AIDS was considered a deviant's disease. Looking back now, I realise that as a sexually active young man I was completely ignorant of the reality five years into the worldwide epidemic. This kind of ignorance is still widespread in Brazil today.*

*A few years later, I came to London and started studying counselling. Seven years later, I have reached the last stage of my diploma-level-training, and am delighted with this opportunity to help the Brazilian community with my skills, experience and know-how.*

*Some 100,000 Brazilians are thought to live in London today. Most of them are under 40 years old. It is hard to overestimate the importance of this project which aims to provide the community with a culturally and linguistically appropriate sexual health service, raising awareness and giving support and care.*

*Thanks for this opportunity.*

## NAZ SPREADS ITS KNOWLEDGE IN FINLAND

### NAZ WORKER TRAINS FINNISH HEALTH WORKERS, SEES HUGE DIFFICULTIES

**A** Naz worker has just returned from providing training in Finland. Luca Santoro-Gomes said the trip, sponsored by the pan-European AIDS and Mobility project, was a huge success and an eye-opener. Mr Santoro-Gomes was invited to the town of Tampere 8-10 August to provide training to the newly-established organisation MAP (the Migrant Association for Social and Health Promotion).

"The training brought into focus the huge difficulties that migrants and asylum seekers face in Finland," said Mr Santoro-Gomes. "The level of trust we established made it possible for migrants to really unload their worries and concerns, and talk freely to Finnish professionals - and vice versa - in a very safe and caring group. A dialogue was established, which could act as a stepping stone towards professionals meeting the needs of migrants.

They recognised the need for change, for migrants to have a voice, and to overcome racism and institutional complacency."

The training looked into overcoming communication barriers and reinforcing support for people with HIV/AIDS. Attending were Finnish health providers and migrants, mainly from African communities. A growing number of asylum seekers have arrived in homogenous Finland to find few services that meet their special needs.

The Naz visitor stressed that he was extremely grateful for care and support from Chris Clarke, the national Aids and Mobility focal point in Finland, and chair of MAP. "I was moved by the welcome and hospitality I received from Finnish people I met. Everybody wears white socks and sandals, and there were many plastic flowers around. They have delicious chocolate too," he added.

The visit follows a visit by MAP vice-chair Rajkumar Sabanadesan to London in June. The Finnish-based Sri Lankan nurse and asylum-seeker, visited Naz, Blackliners, the Terrence Higgins Trust's Africa team and the drop-in at Riverhouse. Rajkumar said he found the experience very useful, and would write a report to Finnish authorities to learn lessons from Britain's more established systems.

The Aids and Mobility programme aims to encourage cooperation, exchange information and build skills in Europe's HIV sector. Aids and Mobility, a European networking project, is financed by the European Commission and the Netherlands Aids Fonds. It is currently carrying out two research projects: "African Communities in Northern Europe - HIV-related Health Risks and Responses" and "AIDS Prevention and Care for Migrants and Ethnic Minorities in Europe." Check out its website at [www.aidsmobility.org](http://www.aidsmobility.org).

## IMMIGRATION LOSES AIDS COMPASSION

Since April this year, HIV agencies have seen many of their clients refused the right to remain in the Britain. Until new immigration rules introduced April 21, most applications claiming 'compelling compassionate circumstances' were accepted on the basis that they were HIV positive and could not get treatment in their home country. "We had no refusals till February this year," says Malcolm Bryant, immigration solicitor for the Terrence Higgins Trust (THT). "We are now getting refusals almost weekly, and this is for seriously ill people."

Meanwhile the policy of 'dispersal' for asylum seekers has meant some HIV agencies outside London have experienced sudden increases in demand. One doctor at a regional HIV clinic told THT: "Our patient numbers went from 80 to 150 in one year, and at least half that increase are southern Africans staying in dispersal hostels. They worry that seeing an HIV clinic will mean their records being passed on to the Home Office."

## HIV NEGLECT IN PAKISTAN

A scandal is looming in Pakistan over the sale of black market HIV test kits said to give false results. The country's health ministry has also been accused of faking data on new HIV cases. It says that it has done 2.5 million HIV tests but that only 1,550 are positive. A Pakistan World Bank spokesman said: "How can a country think of controlling HIV when it is spending less than one US cent per person per century on Aids?"

## VIRGINITY TESTS IN TURKISH SCHOOLS

Turkey is planning to introduce virginity tests in schools. A new move by the Minister of Health appears to by-pass a ban on such examinations brought into force two years ago after protests by women's groups. Now Women for Women's Human Rights urges you to send letters to the Turkish government, expressing your shock and noting that such moves in the past have caused nothing but despair and death among young women in Turkey. The government has no right to interfere with young women's control of their own bodies, and these examinations would violate the Turkish Constitution, as well as international and European rights conventions. Please write to Mr Bulent Ecevit, the Prime Minister, and Mr Osman Durmus, the Minister of Health.

## 'ASIAN CONDOMS TOO SMALL FOR AFRICANS'

Complaints are growing in South Africa over the size of condoms imported from India and China. A national survey of prostitutes revealed that African men have problems using Asian-size condoms, complaining they are too small. Dr Liz Floyd, of the Gauteng Province Aids programme, said: "We are quite sure the condoms can fit anyone. You can get a condom over your head if you want to."

## THT TACKLES AFRICAN PREJUDICE

The Terrence Higgins Trust has launched a new campaign against prejudice in the African community. Initiated by the African Health Promotion Team, it aims to challenge misconceptions that Africans have about HIV and AIDS. Adverts and posters will feature in five national black publications and be distributed in minicab offices, hairdressers, bars, clubs, social centres, universities and churches.



# PREJUDICE IS ROOTED IN IGNORANCE

**AS ANYONE LIVING WITH HIV WILL TELL YOU**

HIV can't be passed on by living with, working with or even caring for someone who has HIV. So why are we so prejudiced against people with HIV? People with HIV are still people - parents, children, professionals and members of our community - with the same rights to human dignity and equal opportunities as anyone else. And like anyone else, need the love and support of family, friends and the whole community. Prejudice? Think about it.

# EGYPT MOVES AGAINST GAYS

The trial of 52 suspected homosexuals accused of “immoral behaviour” and “contempt of religion” resumed in mid-August in Cairo. The men have been held since their arrest on 11 May 2001. The case has drawn sharp criticism from international rights groups.

## POLICE RAID GAY VENUE

Fifty-two men were detained when police raided a popular gay venue in Cairo called the “Queen Boat,” which floats on the Nile. Dozens of men without women partners were detained. Later, in custody, they were subjected to internal examinations. The men face charges of “practising sexual immorality” – a local euphemism for homosexuality. This carries a maximum penalty of three years in prison. The two main defendants face additional charges of “forming a group which aims to exploit the Islamic religion to propagate extremist ideas” and “denigrating monotheistic religions,” which carry a maximum sentence of five years in prison.

Many of the defendants, who all pleaded not guilty, cried as they protested their innocence to the judge.

“I am not gay, I am a man ... this is something that’s not allowed under my religion,” said one man in the first hearing. The judge had released evidence against the 52 men, including 893 photographs allegedly showing them in indecent positions.

## MEDIA PREJUDICE

Outside the courtroom, the defendants’ families attacked journalists, accusing them of bringing shame to their loved ones. “The media has condemned the accused through a savage campaign against them before they have been sentenced,” said Farid al-Dib, a defence lawyer. “In all the Egyptian media they’ve been attacking homosexuals and describing them as agents of Israel and of course they don’t mention the word ‘homosexuals’ - they say ‘perverts,’” says a gay activist.

The case has received extensive coverage and aroused strong passions in conservative Egypt, where homosexuality is taboo but not expressly prohibited by law. Newspapers routinely refer to the case as “the homosexual trial,” even though homosexuality is not on the charge sheet. There were lurid accounts of what was alleged to have happened on the Queen Boat, including false reports of a gay wedding on board. The names and workplaces of the defendants were also put into print.

## GAYS PUSHED UNDERGROUND

The activist says that as Egypt’s gay community has come out on the web, there has been a change of attitude on the part of the

authorities. “They used to say that we don’t have homosexuals ... homosexuals are only in the West. Just lately they started arresting homosexuals through the net by going to matchmakers websites and making dates with gay men and then arresting them,” he says. Now most of the mailing lists have closed down, and Horus says gay Egyptians, who can, are trying to leave the country. An already stigmatised community has been pushed even further underground.

Homosexuality is a major taboo, and there is little sympathy on the street for the 52 men now on trial. Egyptian gay men therefore are unlikely to make a stand, at the risk of losing their jobs, families, friends and social status, or spending up to five years in prison.

## PROTESTS FROM ABROAD

A cultural clash has now erupted between Egyptian and foreign human rights activists, who are disappointed that local groups have not wanted to get involved. Abroad, demonstrators protested against the trial in 11 cities.

Amnesty International has expressed its ‘grave concern’ and called for their immediate and unconditional release. The London-based rights group believes the men are being held purely for their alleged sexual orientation, which makes them prisoners of conscience. It criticized Egyptian media coverage for portraying the men in a negative light, and for publishing their personal details. Amnesty took issue with the medical examinations to find out if they had anal sex, and worried about allegations that the men were tortured and ill-treated. Egyptian authorities have given no reply to Amnesty.

## GAY EGYPTIANS, WHO CAN, ARE TRYING TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY.

## END TO QUIET TOLERANCE

In an attempt to explain the incident, Egyptian journalist Hossam Bahgat wrote an article in July that lost him his job at the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights. The group has refused to become involved in the case. Bahgat said the trial “signaled an end to long years of discreet and quietly tolerated public activity by the Egyptian gay community” and revealed “a deep political crisis faced by an insecure regime, a threatened gay community, a mediocre press and a shattered rights movement.”

The May 11 assault on gay men fits into the regime’s efforts to present an image as the guardian of public virtue, to deflate an Islamist opposition movement that appears to be gaining support every day. Perhaps for this reason, Egypt led several other Islamic countries during the recent UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS, in a failed attempt to ban the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission from taking part.

## YOU TAKE ACTION

To take action, Amnesty asks you to write letters expressing your concern at the detentions on the grounds of alleged sexual orientation, making the men prisoners of conscience. Call for their immediate and unconditional release, expressing your concern at allegations of torture and ill-treatment during their arrest and detention, and call on authorities to conduct prompt investigations into these serious allegations, says Amnesty. Address your letter to Counsellor Maher ‘Abd al-Wahid, Public Prosecutor, Dar al-Qadha al-‘Ali Ramesses Street, Cairo, Egypt. Send copies to the Egyptian Embassy in London.

You could e-mail the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights, asking them to respect and defend the rights of all people, in accordance with international standards and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Send an e-mail to the organisation’s secretary-general, Hafez Abu Saada, at: [ehrh@link.com.eg](mailto:ehrh@link.com.eg).

# WORLD LEADERS DECLARE WAR ON AIDS

*continued from cover* ....right-wingers found such references offensive and threatened to withdraw support. While the talks lasted, 18,000 more people in Africa died of the virus.

## MASSIVE NEEDS GROWING

AIDS has so far killed 22m people worldwide. With millions dying each year, it is the leading cause of premature death in some countries. In sub-Saharan Africa, it has left more than 12 million children orphaned. Gender inequality is making things worse, with infection levels for teenage girls in many African countries five times those of males. Treatment remains costly and inaccessible, so millions are dying who might have survived if they had the life-saving drugs available in rich countries. Recently, 39 companies contesting a South African law that could provide cheaper versions of branded AIDS drugs dropped their case, clearing the way for governments to import or manufacture the cheaper drugs.

Meanwhile, the number of Americans developing AIDS and dying from it appears to have stopped falling, United States health officials have said. After declining sharply in the mid-1990s, the number of U.S. AIDS cases and deaths stopped falling in mid-1998 and remained stable through mid-2000, according to new government figures. Health officials and AIDS researchers expressed concern about the disturbing trend, especially coupled with new signs of high rates of risky behaviour and HIV infection in some groups, especially young gay men and low-income black women.

## FUNDS INSUFFICIENT

Against this background, experts were quick to deride the G8 pledge as insufficient. "The pledges to the fund proposed at Genoa are still outrageously low," said David Bryden of the Global AIDS Alliance. Some observers noted it amounted to just a quarter of what the US will spend on its plans for a missile defence shield in 2002. When the US originally pledged US\$200m in May, President George Bush said more money would be available when Washington had established where its

support would be most effective. At the UN conference in June, in the media spotlight, the fund swelled to around US\$600m, with a US\$200m contribution from Britain offered on condition the fund is robustly managed.

## PREVENTION OR CARE?

Others addressed the old prickly question of whether money should be used to provide drugs for those suffering from disease, to prevent it, or to find effective vaccines. The UK charity Christian Aid says the emphasis should be on building up national and local health infrastructures. But the medical charity Medicins Sans Frontieres (MSF) argues the opposite, calling for more emphasis on treatment. "You cannot simply write off millions of people," said Dr Anne-Valerie Kaninda of MSF, "Prevention alone will not solve the problem." But the UN AIDS chief, Dr Peter Piot, has tried to cool the debate, saying both are needed together.

## GROWING RECOGNITION

Meanwhile African leaders appear to be finally facing up to the catastrophic epidemic sweeping their continent. Fourteen Southern African leaders meeting in Malawi this month talked emphatically about the negative impact HIV/AIDS is having on the economies of their states. The region's Roman Catholic bishops meeting in Pretoria last month discussed authorising the use of condoms for AIDS prevention, despite the Vatican's ban on condoms.

South African President Thabo Mbeki, who has questioned the link between HIV and AIDS, recently stressed that violence and not AIDS was the main killer in his country. He argues that poverty is a key factor in causing AIDS. Major drug firms have offered South Africa and other African countries a range of price discounts on AIDS-related drugs but Pretoria has been reluctant to accept, questioning the sustainability of the price offers and the ability of health systems to dispense the drugs. Meanwhile getting the message across to people in war-ravaged nations in Africa is a huge challenge.

# INDIA'S 'BANDIT QUEEN' MURDERED



**P**hoolan Devi, the 'Bandit Queen,' was shot dead on July 25 in New Delhi.

The folk hero and former outlaw, now 38, was an opposition MP when she was killed. Born into an impoverished low-caste family, she was married off aged 11 to a much older man - and a sadist.

A gang of upper-caste robbers later abducted her and Phoolan began a career in crime. In 1980 she was gang-raped by upper-caste Dhakur bandits. She took her revenge in 1981, slaughtering 22 of them, including her one-time gang leader and lover. Amid sensation and shock across India, a massive, fruitless hunt was launched for Phoolan. In 1983, she surrendered to authorities, reportedly in return for a promise that she would stay behind bars for only eight years. She was released only in 1994.

Although charged with 49 heinous crimes, Phoolan was never convicted. And politically, times had changed in India with backward-castes gaining power. In 1996 she was elected to parliament with a big majority for the Samajwadi (Socialist Party). She was a cult figure with a large following, especially among the lower-caste and former untouchables. But she remarried, went to beauty parlours and wore designer clothes, which connected her to the great Indian middle class.

Since her death, large-scale and at times violent demonstrations have erupted in her state, Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous, and a key political area. The leaders of her party have accused the Nationalist Hindu Party (BJP) of conspiracy to kill Phoolan.

# HEALTH WORKERS ARRESTED IN INDIA

## NAZ INTERNATIONAL RAISES ALARM

Six health workers have been arrested in India under outdated obscenity laws. Police in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, raided the offices of Naz Foundation International (NFI) and Bharosa Trust, both organisations that promote AIDS prevention among men who have sex with men. Alarmed at this police action on July 7, international rights groups requested their immediate release. The men have now been released, but the court case is still pending.

The workers were charged with possession of obscene materials and conspiracy to commit sodomy. Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code outlaws "Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature," and recommends 10 years in prison as punishment. NFI says the police violated their colleagues' rights to health, privacy, association and freedom from discrimination - as well as their rights as human rights defenders.

Naz London and other rights groups have taken a stand, and expressed concern to the Indian government. Concerned individuals and groups can still write to demand that charges be dropped. The Lucknow police action should be probed, the police and judiciary should be trained in the area of AIDS prevention, and the penal code should be amended for this purpose.

Rights groups say the workers were carrying out legitimate, life-saving HIV/AIDS work. "India has the second highest number of people living with HIV (3.7 millions, according to the United Nations) in the world," says NFI. "Invoking these laws to prevent HIV/AIDS interventions with any recognised high-risk

group puts those lives at risk. It violates fundamental rights and is unconstitutional."

Naz International notes that the Indian government has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) in 1979 and is bound by other relevant international conventions. At the UN General Assembly on AIDS in New York in June, the Indian delegation recognised homosexuals as a marginalised community critically affected by the AIDS epidemic.

International rights groups that expressed concern included the Paris-based International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH), the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission.

Please write a letter to Indian authorities expressing your concern and asking that charges be dropped against Aris Jafar, Mohamad Shahid, Sudhish Kumar Singh, Parmeshwar Nayar and Pankaj Kumar. Copy your letters to the Ambassador of India in London.

**"INDIA  
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# INDIA FERTILE FOR AIDS - LETTER

Oscar-nominated film director Robert Bilheimer spoke at the South Asians Against AIDS Foundation first Annual Gala on July 12th and presented 'A Closer Walk', his documentary on the global AIDS pandemic. Here is an extract from his Letter from India.

Dear Friends

The cliché is that India is a land of contrasts and contradictions. But there is some truth in this. Here we have the most brilliant and sought-after computer specialists, while more than half the country's population cannot read or write. Corporate hospitals offer world-class care, but rural hospitals, serving the majority of the country's population, frequently run out of aspirin, and have little else to offer. In the land of the Kama Sutra, the revered discourse on human sexuality, parents are unable to discuss the subject with their adolescent offspring. The oppression of women is a pervasive problem. I am pretty well convinced that the virus will do better here than anywhere else so far, if only because Indian society is offering it so many opportunities.

A defining moment for me was at the Hospital of Thoracic Medicine outside Chennai, a government-run campus complex for tuberculosis treatment in Tamil Nadu. It has now, by default, become a principal HIV/AIDS treatment centre as well. There are about 1,000 HIV/AIDS in-patients, children, women, and men. The bed occupancy rate for AIDS in-patients is 130%, meaning that there are not enough beds for all. Hundreds of other HIV patients come to the hospital every day on an outpatient basis. The queues are long, and new patients are presenting themselves at an exponentially increasing rate.

First we visited the children's ward, shared by HIV and tuberculosis patients. The children ranged from about 8 months to 5 years old. All were definitely on the young side. Mother-to-child transmission can be prevented. Easy-to-administer drugs can prevent HIV-positive mothers from passing the virus along to their children in uterus. But where are the programmes? Where are the delivery systems? Where are the drugs themselves, particularly for the poor? Where is compassion? Where is the will? Where, for God's sake, is common sense?

The women's ward wasn't much fun either, although it was beautiful because the women themselves were beautiful – all in their 20s so far as I could tell – and dressed in colourful sarwals. There were about 30 beds in this ward, all women with AIDS. Some were clearly dying. At the foot of each bed, on bamboo mats, sat other women, also with AIDS, who represented the overflow. Not enough beds, so they sat on the floor. The ward was immaculately clean, and quiet. For the most part, the women just stared off into space, their thoughts and emotions difficult to read.

The doctor said about half as many women are infected as men. But that is slowly, steadily changing. More women are coming to the hospital. And their demographics are changing. Previously most of the women coming in were commercial sex workers. Now they are seeing more and more "housewives," who arrive when they are invariably very, very sick. Unlike the men, the women stay in their homes as long as they possibly can. Women are expected to keep the

home fires burning, as it were, and make the appropriate sacrifices. And then, to add insult to injury, when a woman is finally diagnosed with a deadly disease like AIDS, she is then shunned, and, for all intents and purposes, deemed to be worthless. There were no visitors in the ward.

But the men's ward affected me the most, because it so powerfully represented the reality of AIDS in India, and the reality of AIDS anywhere. Three or four wards at the hospital were devoted strictly to AIDS, with 25 beds on each side of a room easily a 100 feet long and 30 feet wide. On each of the beds was lying or sitting an emaciated, dying man, stunned, as it were, by the maturation of the deadly virus that had been living in him – without his knowledge, of course – for the last three years or so, methodically dismantling his immune system. At the bedside of some of these men were women – mostly mothers as far as I could tell – or other men, brothers, perhaps, or cousins, or friends. I didn't see many fathers. The men were all fully dressed, except for shoes. Some slept. Most simply lay still, staring vacantly at a window, a wall, or the man lying in a bed next to him.

Like the others, this ward was immaculately clean, and eerily silent.

## HUNDREDS OF HIV PATIENTS COME TO THE HOSPITAL EVERY DAY

Nurses hovered. One dying man was vomiting blood and periodically these wonderful nurses, dressed in grey with white hats that flared out on the sides like wings, would encircle him. But beyond that, there was little activity. Bear in mind that there are no – or only very limited – drugs to treat these patients, so they are usually discharged – sent home to die, basically – after a couple of weeks to make room for the new wave of admissions. It's an overlapping, rotating thing, like the trains that brought the Jews to Auschwitz, Belsen, and Dachau.

Only this time the genocide is not being committed by an evil lunatic, but by the very world we ourselves have created through our indifference, greed, and neglect. I increasingly feel ashamed to be living in such a world. Standing in this ward on the outskirts of Chennai, I felt for the first time in a year and a half that I was smack dab in the middle of the global AIDS pandemic, palpably in its midst.

With much love from India,

Robert

## Gay Men's Counselling Project for Black and Asian gay and bisexual men

A free and confidential service by professional Black and Asian gay counsellors, organised by Blackliners with support from Naz.

For details please contact: Manjit Rooprah on 0208 741 1879; or Anup Karia on 0207 738 7468.

## Naz Latina Support Group

Grupo Amigos, a support group for Spanish speaking Latin Americans affected by HIV currently meets every month.

For further information, contact Naz Latina on 0208 741 1879 (or call London Lighthouse, Wednesdays from 2:00pm, on 0207 792 1200).

## Make Friends at DOST!

Naz London's social support group for South Asian, Middle Eastern and North African gay identified men and men who have sex with men. A safe, confidential and informal space to socialise and discuss issues around sexuality, safer sex, drug use, marriage and culture.

Meet at Mondo Bar, 12-13 Greek Street, Soho on first Wednesday of each month 7-9pm.

Call 020 8741 1879 for more information.



## KISS

Kiss Group is a group for lesbian and bisexual identified women from the South Asian and Middle Eastern communities. Whatever your age, whether you are married or single, or if you are confused about your sexuality and want to meet other lesbians and bisexual women for friendship and support in a safe women only space then call Parminder confidentially on 020 8741 1879.

The Kiss group meets on the last Thursday of each month at the Glass Bar in Euston between 7:30 - 9:30pm (opposite Euston BR Station).

Check website: [www.planetkiss.org.uk](http://www.planetkiss.org.uk)

## Club Kali

"An authentic mix of South Asian Spices with Bhangra and House, Hindi and Soul, Swing and Arabic flavours". Naz has a stall on the third Friday of each month offering information, advice and resources on sexual health, HIV and AIDS.

Club Kali is held on the first and third Fridays of each month: 7 & 21 September and 5 & 19 October. 10pm-3am.

Club Kali is at The Dome nightclub,

1 Dartmouth Park Hill, London N19

Nearest tube: Tufnell Park (Northern Line)

## Masala

A friendly social support group for gay and bisexual men aged 16-26 from the South Asian community.

Meets every second Tuesday of the month at Govinda's Restaurant in Soho at 6:30pm.

For more information call Suki on 0208 741 1879

## Naz Brasil

Naz Brasil offers advice and support on HIV, AIDS and sexual health issues for the Portuguese-speaking community in London.

Contact Naz Brasil on 0208 741 1879 for further information.

## River House

A Drop-In Centre for Caring and Sharing Akairah is a River House Drop-in Support Service for people from the black communities living with HIV and AIDS. Naz Project at Akairah provides services which include:

- \* Access to a social and health worker
- \* Advice service on housing, welfare rights, health and new treatments
- \* Support groups

You can also have access to Social Workers, Complementary and other therapies.

Lunch and refreshments are available at a reasonable low price. A nutritionally balanced cooked meal is available for both vegetarians and non-vegetarians (suitable for Muslims, i.e. halal).

The Naz Horn of Africa drop-in worker will be at Akairah on the first Thursday of every month from 12:00 - 4:30pm.

For further information contact Bisrat (Mon, Tues, Wed) on 020 8741 1879 or Helen at River House on 020 8741 4772.

## Survey needs YOU!!!

Tell us your experiences of sex, sexuality and HIV. Sigma Research is carrying out two important surveys until the end of September. Vital Statistics, the yearly men's sex survey, focuses on the risks that gay, bisexual and men who have sex with men may be taking. It is one of Britain's largest sex surveys of gay men. What Do You Need? is a nation-wide survey about living with HIV. In both areas, we need more information and would very much appreciate your help. So please contact Suki at Naz on 020 87411879, and ask to fill in a Vital Statistics or What do you need? questionnaire.

## Events

### Naz's 10th Anniversary:

Naz will be holding its annual general conference, and 10th birthday on November 1<sup>st</sup> 2001. For more information, visit the Naz website at [www.naz.org.uk](http://www.naz.org.uk) or call us on 0208 741 1879.



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