

**Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

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Questions

- 1. Is there a weekly university magazine at Mongolian University of Science and Technology (MUST)?**
- 2. Is it known whether the magazine publishes personal information, including gossip or explicit photographs?**
- 3. Is there any material concerning gay/GLBT groups at MUST or other university campuses?**

RESPONSE

Research Background

On 17 January 2008, several individuals and groups were contacted for information to assist in answering these research questions :

- Mongolian Lesbian Community and Information Centre (MILC)
 - firedragonbutch@yahoo.com
 - milc_counseling@yahoo.com
- Talivan (a GLBT group in Mongolia)
 - idre9@hotmail.com
 - tsetseg_1@yahoo.com
 - idrehouse@yahoo.com

(RRT Research & Information 2008, Email to Mongolian Lesbian Community and Information Centre, 'Information Request about GLBT in Mongolia', 17 January –

Attachment 1; RRT Research & Information 2008, Email to Talivan, 'Information Request about GLBT in Mongolia', 17 January - Attachment 2).

A reply was received from Robyn Garner, on behalf of the Mongolian Lesbian Community and Information Centre (MILC) (Garner, R. 2008, Email to RRT Research & Information 'Fwd: Fw: Information Request about GLBT in Mongolia [Scanned]', 31 January – Attachment 3). No other replies were received.

1. Is there a weekly university magazine at Mongolian University of Science and Technology (MUST)?

Little detailed information could be found on the Mongolian University of Science and Technology (MUST) in general. Whilst the university appears to be large, and has high student enrolment, it does not appear to attract a significant deal of international attention, appearing in few press reports of note, and on only a small number of affiliated institutional websites (see for example 'Mongolian University of Science and Technology' (undated), South Dakota School of Mines and Technology website <http://reu.sdsmt.edu/mongolian.html> - Accessed 31 January 2008 – Attachment 4. Note that the link to the MUST website provided on this site is broken).

MUST has both a Mongolian-based and an English-based website, and the English-based site provides an outline of the university (<http://www.must.edu.mn/emust/>). A message from the President of the University states:

The Mongolian University of Science and Technology (MUST), one of the Leading State Universities of the country, is situated on its extensive campuses in Ulaanbaatar City, Darkhan, Erdenet, Uburkhangai, and Sukhbaatar provinces.

MUST is made up of seventeen professional schools, colleges and 3 research institutes and 36 experimental and technology centers whose faculty offer educational opportunities to students ranging from first-year undergraduates through doctoral-level candidates in engineering, technology, and others.

Currently about 20000 students including international students are enrolling and enjoying life at the university, and 120 professors and over thousand staff is engaged in student training, educational and research activities, university administration and management.

MUST cooperates with staff and students in order to achieve the following goals:

§ Implementing Government policy for higher education, technology development, research work, and industrial development; and achieving an excellence that provides quality services to the society in these sectors.

§ Training highly qualified specialists and experts for the new century in field of engineering, technology, economics, humanities, and foreign languages in accordance with market demand and need of community.

§ Becoming a key producer and educational outreach for the constitution of modern technology to ensure the sustainable development of the nation.

§ Advancing and disseminating of knowledge, intellectual and social welfare through student training, research study and creative practice in appropriate technological field of national industry; and assisting in national development of the country.

MUST strives to foster human resources that possess a genuine sense of humanity, high professional caliber, and international experience which enable them to meet every challenge and demand of new era.

We have striven over the last 15 years to maintain a dynamic institution founded on principles of full commitment for contributing to transitional economy and development of the community, the prosperity of Mongolia, with a strong outward-looking, international character. I personally, as a President of MUST, am strongly committed to further strengthening this international character of the University, both internally, by giving our teaching and research an even more broadly-based international perspective, and externally, by extending and deepening our ties with scholars and educational institutions overseas.

It is my hope that this publication will help us in to achieve these goals, giving our friends and colleagues from overseas a deeper understanding of the Mongolian University of Science and Technology and its goals ('Message from the President' (undated), Mongolian University of Science and Technology website http://www.must.edu.mn/emust/?T_ID=1 - Accessed 31 January 2008 – Attachment 5).

In addition, the MUST website has produced online news reports on university matters. Only two reports were available when the site was accessed throughout January 2008, one from November 2006, another from December 2006, suggesting that this aspect of the English site may not have been updated for the past twelve months (see for example Davaa, T. 2006, 'Kwansei Gakuin University of Japan donates 100 computers to Mongolian rural schools', Mongolian University of Science and Technology website http://www.must.edu.mn/emust/?select=news&news_id=11 - Accessed 31 January 2008 – Attachment 6).

The Mongolian Lesbian Community and Information Centre was asked about the presence of magazines at MUST, but a reply from Robyn Garner stated that they "do not have information on general university publications, however we do know that there are no LGBT publications whatsoever" (Garner, R. 2008, Email to RRT Research & Information 'Fwd: Fw: Information Request about GLBT in Mongolia [Scanned]', 31 January – Attachment 3).

Beyond this, little information was available on cultural activities within the university, and no information could be found in the searches conducted on a weekly magazine at MUST.

2. Is it known whether the magazine publishes personal information, including gossip or explicit photographs?

See above.

3. Is there any material concerning gay/GLBT groups at MUST or other university campuses?

The response to this question covers two areas, [GLBT \(Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender/Transsexual\) groups in Mongolia](#), and [GLBT groups in Mongolian Universities](#).

GLBT groups in Mongolia

Several previous RRT Research Responses provide information on GLBT (or LGBT) groups in Mongolia. RRT Research Response MNG31311 provides recent information on the social situation of GLBT people and GLBT groups in Mongolia (RRT Research & Information 2007, *Research Response MNG31311*, 8 February – Attachment 7). RRT Research Response

MNG30364 from 2006 provides similar information, in addition to details on the legal situation of GLBT people and GLBT groups in Mongolia (RRT Research & Information 2006, *Research Response MNG30364*, 25 July – Attachment 8). An Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada response from 2007 outlines similar information (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2007, *MNG102126.E – Mongolia: The treatment of homosexuals by authorities and by society in general; recourse available to those who have been harassed based on their sexual orientation (2004 – March 2007)*, 16 March http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rir/index_e.htm?action=record.viewrec&gotorec=451031 – Accessed 17 January 2008 Attachment 9). Several sources within these responses may provide information relevant to this case and are provided below. For example, the ‘Mongol Dyke’ website, a site that provided information, news, and a forum for GLBT people in Mongolia, posted an article on 18 February 2005 stating that a monthly queer party in *Ulaanbaatar* (Ulan Bator) was no longer held due to security concerns:

The monthly queer party had been held for six months between April 2004 to October 2004 and had attracted numerous out as well as closeted queer folks into the space. It had been said that the party was no longer held for the reasons of community security concerns – the parties had been encroached upon by the police and intelligence agents who had secretly photographed and taken down the names of the partying queer folks, male as well as female. The organizer, The Color Boy, claimed that he had to stop holding the parties not only due to the general threat to the community members, but also due to the repeated threats received on his cell phone and home phone number (‘Up & Around’ 2005, Mongol Dyke website, 18 February http://www.mongoldyke.org.mn/up_around_eng.htm – Accessed 12 April 2005 – Attachment 10).

On The Mongol Dyke website a note indicates that the site was shut down by the site operators in October 2007 (<http://www.mongoldyke.org.mn/>) .

A 2002 article in the *International Institute for Asian Studies Newsletter* reported:

In 1997, the United Nations signed a memorandum of understanding with the government of Mongolia on HIV/AIDS. The government of Mongolia pledged to support interventions for men who have sex with men. A social entrepreneur, Dr Urtnasen, opened an NGO that provided HIV/AIDS/STD prevention and education services to men who have sex with men. They also provided informal counselling with regard to sexual orientation and gender identity issues in general.

Some of Dr Urtnasen’s clients eventually wanted to organize a group by and for gay men. They were inspired partially by the murder of a gay man and the subsequent police interrogation of known men who have sex with men. The group incorporated in March 1999 as Destiny, or in Mongolian, Tavilan. They struggled as an organization as to whether or not they wanted to be a service provider that would seek contracts with the donor community or be a membership organization. Several members accepted interviews with the local press to tell their coming out stories. Members also participated in a peer education-training course sponsored by the United Nations.

In the summer of 2000, Destiny had its second general meeting, but only had five people in attendance. Perhaps queer Mongolians were afraid to meet in the Children’s Palace, a public building in the centre of Ulaanbaatar. At that meeting, a lesbian joined the group as a member of the board of directors. As an employee with a women’s NGO, she held workshops at various universities on gender and was able to come out during some of her presentations.

During the meeting, Destiny discussed the issue of including bisexual and foreign members in the group. One attendee remarked that '[s]ome older gay men have wives and children and have a gay friend in secret. I'm a clean gay person, I've never been with a woman.' And yet, he granted that there were few clean gays, so the group decided to include bisexuals. Although membership waned, the group was able to get a grant from the Mongolian AIDS Foundation to fund a 24-hour hotline for gay, lesbian, and bisexual Mongolians who had questions about HIV/AIDS/STD prevention. Unfortunately, as international donor interest in Mongolia declined, the funding for this grant dried up.

Isolated cybergays?

Email and chat rooms like Mongol.net opened up doors for isolated queers who want to connect with members of Destiny. Students log in from abroad or in Mongolia at one of the many Internet cafés popping up in what used to be first floor apartments and government offices. This climate provides many opportunities for Destiny to achieve its public education and organizing goals in the very first public space where queers can discourse without fear. Yahoo groups presented another forum for communication. The subscribers are a combination of travellers from other countries hoping to visit Mongolia and Mongolians living in the country and abroad. Founding members of Destiny joined a Yahoo group discussion about gay Mongolia and presented their organization with hopes of gaining some interest of others in Ulaanbaatar to join the group and organize activities. Most subscribers, however, use the feature as a classified personal service rather than an organizing tool.

In April 2002, the founder of Destiny posted a call to organize one of the Yahoo groups: 'We just killing [sic] and sad. There is no gay community in Mongolia. And also there is still no gay life in UB. Why do we have no connections, no trust, and no information? We need do something [sic] for gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans, community.' An international virtual community is no replacement for face-to-face organizing and social support. Mongolia has no sodomy laws per se, but it lacks any specific human rights protections on the basis of sexual orientation and does not recognize same-sex relationships though a domestic partnership or civil union policy. Although Mongolia's queers fear rejection from family and friends and some have reported getting into fistfights with family, there are no organized hate groups.

Mongolian queers who immigrate to Europe or North America are not so much escaping persecution by the state or hate groups as they are seeking a place where they can experience their sexuality, free from the expectation that they will have a heterosexual family and kids. Several gay men and some lesbians have gone to North America on student visas and have stayed. Some gay Mongolians were able to immigrate to Europe using a same-sex partner as an immigration vehicle. These opportunities dilute the leadership potential of any queer organization in Mongolia. Thus, the national brain drain disproportionately affects queer Mongolia. In summary, when the iron curtain came down and let in new ideas and possibilities, it also allowed queer people to leave the country and assimilate into the global queer economy. Isolation could be the destiny of those left behind (Smith, R. 2002, 'Queer Mongolians: Is Isolation Their Destiny?', *International Institute for Asian Studies Newsletter*, no. 29, November http://www.ias.nl/iiasn/29/IASNL29_14.pdf – Attachment 11).

An International Federation of Red Cross report from 2006 mentions a group called Youth for Health that provides education, counselling and training in HIV/AIDS prevention:

It takes some time and circling around the backyards of Ulaanbaatar to find the office of "Youth for Health", a voluntary organization. Neither the neighbors nor the landlord know, what these tenants are doing.

It is an organization run by gay men, who are significantly contributing to the battle against HIV in Mongolia. Their activities are supported by Mongolian Red Cross, which they describe as their best and biggest confidential partner.

One of these articulate young men has a degree in International Relations and French, another in Geology, and he is now taking a second degree in Banking. For them it is not possible to live openly as a gay person in Mongolia. **Therefore, it is vital of having a good safe space for running their activities, which provide sexual health education, emotional support and counseling, and also training for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases prevention. The centre has also a website, which is visited by hundreds of people each month** (Laatio, Helena 2006, 'Mongolia in the lead in its battle against HIV/AIDS', International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 27 November, <http://www.aegis.com/news/ifrc/2006/IF061104.html> – Accessed 8 February 2006 – Attachment 12).

The 2004/2005 Spartacus Gay Guide¹ also made brief mention of GLBT groups in Mongolia:

Homosexuality is illegal in Mongolia. According to sub-paragraph 113 of the penal code, homosexuality is defined as “immoral satisfaction of sexual desires”. No further information on the legal or social situation of homosexuals is available. There is no gay scene in Mongolia.

...Mongolia's first gay and lesbians rights group, Tavilan or Destiny, formed in spring 1999 as a result of “police harassment and improper sentencing procedures that violated civilian rights.” This past month Tavilan opened a small office in central Ulaanbaatar to begin building an organization to counter such problems (Gmünder, B. 2004, 'Mongolia', Spartacus International Gay Guide, 33rd Ed, Bruno Gmünder Verlag GMBH, Berlin, p. 706 (RRT Library)).

The above noted RRT Research Response MNG31311 also included correspondence with several GLBT people and groups in Mongolia, relevant extracts of these have been provided below:

The MILC (Mongolian Lesbian Information and Community Centre) was set up in January 2004 as a project office with the funding from the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice. The Centre's mission is to work toward creating safe spaces for lesbians and women-identified women in Mongolia. Major activities of Centre consist of information compilation, information dissemination, community outreach, protection of LGBT people's human rights, civil rights and liberties through printed media, archiving of the lesbian oral history in Mongolia, publication of brochures, biographies and autobiographies of Mongolian LGBT people, propagating feminism and feminist agendas, laying the grounds for lesbian and gay studies in Mongolia. From October 2004, the MILC remains as a virtual space in the Internet, with the same goals and aspirations. Due to reasons of administrative, human resources and plain political natures, the MILC's physical existence have been suspended for the last two years, but the books and materials are still for loan and reference (Olhонууд, A. N. 2006, Email to RRT Country Research: 'Information request on harassment of lesbians in Mongolia', 25 August – Attachment 13).

¹ The Spartacus International Gay Guide is a travel guide for gay males. Gay travellers, gay orientated businesses and gay organisations submit information to the Guide on a voluntary basis. The editor does not verify the accuracy or the currency of the information.

A conference paper by Anaraa Nyamdorj Olhонууд also provides information on GLBT groups in Mongolia:

Mongolia (as in the Government) does not officially recognise the existence of LGBT people on its territory – there is an overwhelming silence regarding LGBT, not once the words ‘homosexual’¹², ‘lesbian’, ‘gay’, ‘transgendered’ or ‘transsexual’ appear in any official legislations or legal instruments.

...Тавилан/Destiny

Founded in March 1999 by several Mongolian gay men and expatriate gay men then living in Mongolia. Funding source: private donations. It was an officially registered non-governmental organisation that was officially active between the early 1999 to 2000, and beginning from 2000 March, upon expiration of the NGO’s registration license, it continued its activities informally. Main areas of concern and engagement within the LGBT community lay in the gay male community of Ulaanbaatar, covering health, human rights and advocacy areas. Activities done by the Tavilan were: providing safe-sex counselling to gay males, conducting initial small-scale advocacy among gay men aimed at empowering the community, providing psychological counselling hotline for the LGBT in Ulaanbaatar from the late 2000 to the early 2001, an expansion of the mandate thanks to the only lesbian who grew involved with their activities. The major achievement of the organisation was that it created a notion that gay people existed in Mongolia, that gay people were not only a figment of the Western imagination.

Залуус Эрүүл Мэнд Төв/Youth for Health Centre

Founded initially in 2001 as a project implementing unit of the Mongolian National AIDS Foundation (NAF), with the funding provided by AIDS Alliance, its mandate was to deal with gay men’s and MSM’s safe-sex practices and further education leading to STI and HIV prevention. It was officially registered and obtained a status of an independent non-governmental organisation in the late 2003, and has been active in the aforementioned areas since then. It provides information and safe-sex and STI/HIV prevention education not only in Ulaanbaatar, but also in other two major cities of Mongolia of Erdenet and Darhan through occasional visits. Conducts gay parties irregularly.

Монголын Лесбиян Олон Нийт, Мэдээллийн Төв/MILC

Founded in January 2004 as a project implementing unit of the Mongolian Women’s Fund, with the funding provided by the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice. It had a fairly short-lived but fruitful existence from January 2004 to October 2004. Since October 2004, it operates till now as a virtual community centre through its bilingual website for the LGBT people of and in Mongolia, the first of its kind to have been established in Mongolia in February 2004. The website hosting funding is done as a personal donation. Main areas of concern and engagement within the LGBT community lay in the lesbian and bisexual female community of Ulaanbaatar as a target, and overall support and information provision for the LGBT. Conducted advocacy of LGBT human rights with the UN agencies hoping for a boomerang effect, cooperated with the print media providing them with positive and true information regarding the LGBT people’s lives, community empowerment through LGBT human rights workshops and movie nights, providing comprehensive information on sexual orientation and related topics through the website, compiling LGBT oral history, laying down the foundation of Queer Studies/Gender Studies/Feminist Studies in Mongolia, running counselling hotline, etc. As someone who had been personally, professionally and passionately involved with the MILC from its inception, I feel extremely saddened and even disheartened with the fact that the great beginning for the LGBT rights in Mongolia had been cut short in its longevity firstly, by the lack of human resources (or in other words, no one

was there to take over what I had begun); secondly, by the harassment of the national security agents' constant ringing on the hotline number; thirdly, by the host organisation's discontinued support to the lesbian cause due to potential loss of their Mongolian donors and their refusal to print the project name, Mongolian Lesbian Information and Community Centre, by its name in their annual report, instead saying that the MILC was merely a 'Feminist Studies Centre'.

Nevertheless, I believe that the major achievement of the MILC lies in the fact that it has been able to connect physically and virtually many coming out younger generation lesbians and gays who feel empowered and confident enough to start their journey of coming out to their friends and families, as it had happened with most of the people who got in touch with MILC (Olhunuud, A. N. 2006, 'Life Denied: LGVT Human Rights in the Context of Mongolia's Democratisation & Development', Paper presented at the Outgames International LGBT Human Rights Conference, 26-29 July, Montral, Canada – Attachment 14).

GLBT groups in Mongolian Universities

Robyn Garner, in an e-mail to RRT Research & Information, stated that, to the best of her knowledge, there were no GLBT groups active in Mongolian Universities (Garner, R. 2008, Email to RRT Research & Information 'Fwd: Fw: Information Request about GLBT in Mongolia [Scanned]', 31 January – Attachment 3). No information could be found on GLBT groups in Mongolian Universities, nor in MUST, in any of the searches conducted. Given the low number of GLBT groups in the country as a whole and their largely suppressed status, as shown above, it may be the case that such groups, if they do exist, choose not to advertise their presence widely.

List of Sources Consulted

Internet Sources:

Google <http://www.google.com.au/>

All the web <http://www.alltheweb.com/>

Altavista <http://www.altavista.com/>

Ask <http://www.ask.com/?ax=5>

Exalead <http://www.exalead.com/search>

Yahoo! <http://search.yahoo.com/>

Government Information & Reports

Immigration & Refugee Board of Canada <http://www.irb.gc.ca/>

UK Home Office <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk>

US Department of State <http://www.state.gov/>

Non-Government Organisations

Amnesty International website <http://www.amnesty.org/>

Human Rights Watch <http://www.hrw.org/>

International News & Politics

BBC News <http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/index.shtml>

Databases:

BACIS (DIMA Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

1. RRT Research & Information 2008, Email to Mongolian Lesbian Community and Information Centre, 'Information Request about GLBT in Mongolia', 17 January.
2. RRT Research & Information 2008, Email to Talivan, 'Information Request about GLBT in Mongolia', 17 January,
3. Garner, R. 2008, Email to RRT Research & Information 'Fwd: Fw: Information Request about GLBT in Mongolia [Scanned]', 31 January.
4. 'Mongolian University of Science and Technology' (undated), South Dakota School of Mines and Technology website <http://reu.sdsmt.edu/mongolian.html> - Accessed 31 January 2008.
5. 'Message from the President' (undated), Mongolian University of Science and Technology website http://www.must.edu.mn/emust/?T_ID=1 - Accessed 31 January 2008.
6. Davaa, T. 2006, 'Kwansei Gakuin University of Japan donates 100 computers to Mongolian rural schools', Mongolian University of Science and Technology website http://www.must.edu.mn/emust/?select=news&news_id=11 - Accessed 31 January 2008.
7. RRT Research & Information 2007, *Research Response MNG31311*, 8 February.
8. RRT Research & Information 2006, *Research Response MNG30364*, 25 July.
9. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2007, *MNG102126.E – Mongolia: The treatment of homosexuals by authorities and by society in general; recourse available to those who have been harassed based on their sexual orientation (2004 – March 2007)*, 16 March http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rir/index_e.htm?action=record.viewrec&gotorec=451031 – Accessed 17 January 2008.
10. 'Up & Around' 2005, Mongol Dyke website, 18 February http://www.mongoldyke.org.mn/up_around_eng.htm – Accessed 12 April 2005.
11. Smith, R. 2002, 'Queer Mongolians: Is Isolation Their Destiny?', *International Institute for Asian Studies Newsletter*, no. 29, November http://www.iias.nl/iiasn/29/IIASNL29_14.pdf - Accessed 4 February 2008.
12. Laatio, Helena 2006, 'Mongolia in the lead in its battle against HIV/AIDS', International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 27 November <http://www.aegis.com/news/ifrc/2006/IF061104.html> – Accessed 8 February 2006.
13. Olhонууд, A. N. 2006, Email to RRT Country Research: 'Information request on harassment of lesbians in Mongolia', 25 August.

14. Olhunuud, A. N. 2006, 'Life Denied: LGVT Human Rights in the Context of Mongolia's Democratisation & Development', Paper presented at the Outgames International LGBT Human Rights Conference, 26-29 July, Montral, Canada.