

## [Gates of Vienna News Feed 2/27/2009](#)

Gates of Vienna

February 28, 2009 Saturday 12:33 AM EST

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**Length:** 20986 words

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### **Body**

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Feb. 28, 2009 ([Gates of Vienna](#) delivered by Newstex) --

This news feed is clogged up with some of the late tips from last night, and also I havent done all of todays stories.

The most important news item is that the US has withdrawn from Durban II.

Thanks to C. Cantoni, Insubria, [Islam in Action](#), JD, [KGS](#), TB, Tuan Jim, and all the other tipsters who sent these in. Headlines and articles are below the fold.

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### [Crisis: Tunisia, Outlook Good for Call-Centres](#)

(ANSAméd) " TUNIS, FEBRUARY 18 " The international financial crisis will favour the setting up of new call-centres in Tunisia, according to experts. The President of the Professional Union of French call-centres made the claim on the basis that the cost of workers in Tunisia, with the same professional qualifications as those in France, is on average a third less. There are currently around ten thousand workers in these centres, most of them young professionals. France holds first place for the number of call-centres set up in Tunisia, followed by Italy and Germany. (ANSAméd).

[Whats Wrong With the Stimulus?](#)

There are three big problems with the Pelosi/Reid stimulus plan Mr. Obama has now signed into law:

1. the Keynesian macro economic ideas underlying the stimulus part of the bill do not fit the problem and will not work; 2. the bill is heavily loaded with unreviewed and undiscussed agenda spending; and, 3. there has been no significant discussion of alternatives on either the agenda or the economic policy issues.

At this point, of course, it would take a miracle to stop implementation of the bill " so thats what this article is about: proposing an alternative and then discussing two ways of getting it accepted in place of this bill.

" Hat tip: JD

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[Al-Arabiya: US Senator Screens Anti-Islam Film "Fitna](#)

A Republican Senator was to hold a private screening of the controversial anti-Islam film "Fitna Thursday for congressional staff and invited guests, including the filmmaker Geert Wilders, who was recently deported from Britain and faces prosecution for incitement in Holland.

Arizona Senator Jon Kyle reserved the congressional room for the event sponsored by Wilders International Free Press Society and the Washington-based Center for Security Policy (CPS). Wilder, a member of parliament, lives under 24-hour police protection and is facing prosecution for incitement to hatred and discrimination because of his anti-Islam film.

The 17-minute film accuses the Quran of inciting violence, juxtaposing verses of the Quran with violent images of terrorism, the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks and virulent speeches by Muslim imams in a montage that links the Islamic faith to support for terrorism.

Dutch television refused to air "Fitna as it was released online in March 2008 where it generated intense anger among Muslim communities and attempts by several governments to censor the film. Al-Qaeda even issued a fatwa against Wilders,

One of the co-sponsors of Thursdays screenings refused to comment on the accusation that the film is anti-Islamic and equates Islam with terrorism, suggesting that people should decide for themselves if the film incited hatred.

The best answer to any question about the film is to watch the film yourself, Christine Brim, senior vice-president of CPS, told AlArabiya.net.

Wilders was prevented to from entering Britain earlier this month, where he hoped to show his film in the British parliament, because British authorities said his presence in would pose a genuine, present and sufficiently serious threat to one of the fundamental interests of society.

The Center for Security Policy headed by a former advisor to Ronald Reagan, Frank Gaffney, and advocates an American foreign policy of Peace through Strength with a primary goal combating the ideology of Islamist extremism.

CAIR reaction

The Arizona chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) called on Kyl to invite Muslim representatives to offer a balancing perspective to the screening.

It seems that Senator Kyl is oblivious to the fact that there are Muslims in his own state who will take offense at this cheap anti-Islam publicity stunt designed to promote a person who is under indictment for inciting religious hatred, said CAIR-AZ Executive Director Ahmad Daniels.

Geert Wilders is just one of many self-promoting Islamophobes traveling the world in search of attention for their hate-filled views. We ask that Americans of all faiths ignore Mr. Wilders, thereby depriving him of the attention he so desperately seeks. Wilders has the right to spew his hate, but he does not have the right to a taxpayer-funded platform in the United States Congress.

Wilders was in Washington for the screening and to promote a new initiative by IFPS, which he heads, to protect free speech from laws that criminalize any criticisms of Islam or the doctrines of Sharia, to be launched Friday at the National Press Club.

It's not our position that people should be kept out of the country for

their views but it doesn't mean you have to give them a platform, paid for by the taxpayers, CAIR National Communications Director Ibrahim Hooper, told AlArabiya.net, adding that the closed-door screening meant no media or public access to the event.

Why do they have to hide it if they're so proud of it? he added.

Several attempts by AlArabiya.net to seek comment from the Senators office went unanswered.

Senator Keith Ellison, the only Muslim member of congress, refused requests from AlArabiya.net for comment on whether he would attend the screening and what he thought about the film.

" Hat tip: TB

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### [\*Chorus of "Fairness Doctrine Fans Adds Another\*](#)

Ohio senator supports "goals underlying government speech rules

Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, has joined up with other influential Democrats, including President Bill Clinton, Sen. Tom Harkin of Iowa and Sen. Debbie Stabenow of Michigan, in calling for a resurrection of the so-called "Fairness Doctrine.

" Hat tip: JD

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### [\*Defense Budget Under Tighter Scrutiny\*](#)

Lawmakers in the **Senate** and House are pushing initiatives to curb " and in some cases drastically reduce " defense spending, as the tough economic climate brings increased scrutiny to the massive Pentagon budget.

Sens. Carl Levin (D-Mich.) and John McCain (R-Ariz.) on Tuesday introduced a bill seeking to reform the way the Pentagon buys weapons systems. The ultimate goal of the bill is to rein in the ballooning costs of high-tech weapons and, eventually, to establish fixed-price contracts for most weapons systems, according to Levin.

" Hat tip: JD

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### [EPA Says Farm Dust Requires Regulation](#)

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) " Nothing says summer in Iowa like a cloud of dust behind a combine.

But what may be a fact of life for farmers is a cause for concern to federal regulators, who are refusing to exempt growers from new environmental regulations.

Its left some farmers feeling bemused and more than a little frustrated.

œlts such a non-commonsense idea that you can keep dust within a property line when the wind blows, said Sen. Charles Grassley, a member of the **Senate** Agriculture Committee who still farms in northeast Iowa.

Under rules imposed in 2006, rural areas would be kept to the same standards as urban areas for what the Environmental Protection Agency calls œcoarse particulate matter in the air.

The American Farm Bureau Federation and the National Pork Producers Council had petitioned the government to provide an exemption to farmers. They argued that evidence of harm caused by dust in rural areas hasnt been determined.

But the U.S. District Court of Appeals in Washington ruled Tuesday that the EPA had already provided the evidence necessary to determine farm dust œlikely is not safe.

Michael Formica, a lawyer for the pork council, said this means farmers now face the daunting task of proving a negative " that the dust is not harmful.

Formica said his and other groups will **consider** a further appeal.

Farmers said they will be hard-pressed to meet the standards.

In a letter sent Wednesday to the EPA, Grassley wrote that compliance would be impossible because of the dust produced in farmers day-to-day activities.

Grassley also has noted that because many rural roads are not paved, particulate readings could be affected by wind gusts that constantly change.

œAfter all, God decides when the wind blows, not Chuck Grassley, he said.

But the EPA said the regulation was overdue.

Every five years, the Clean Air Act requires the agency to review the newest scientific information and recommend changes to its standards.

In 2006, the EPA determined larger particles in the air than previously thought were a danger to the public. The increased threshold covered air mixes that occur in rural areas.

EPA spokeswoman Cathy Milbourn said the changes are not just a matter of regulating dust. They serve the public's well-being and, regardless of whether someone lives in a rural or urban area, the threshold for unsafe levels of dust in the air must remain consistent nationally.

It's health-based, she said. "We don't look at a particular industry. The goal is to protect public health.

When counties reach non-attainment levels, it becomes a state's responsibility to bring the county back into acceptable levels.

Milbourn said various options exist for states, such as retrofitting buses that run on diesel engines.

But farmers insist the regulation will affect their operations and eventually their bottom lines. And they said unlike fixing a bus, they have few options for limiting dust from their fields and roads.

Roger Zylstra, a director with the Iowa Corn Growers Association, said if left alone, farmers can compete worldwide. But regulation could impede their success.

He said there seems to be a disconnect between farmers and policymakers.

"Many of the people that are making the rules, it feels like they really don't know what (farming) issues are, said Zylstra, a Lynnville resident who has worked on a farm for 35 years.

Zylstra said it's hard not to get frustrated.

"We think we've met the demands that have been put upon us and lo and behold, we have new and even more stringent demands. It seems really unrealistic.

" Hat tip: Tuan Jim

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### [Ex-CAIR Leader Starts New Front Group](#)

Ahemd Bedier who last year had stepped down as the Executive Director of the Tampa Bay office of The Council on American Islamic Relations, has now started up a new front group called The United Voices of America to help advance his Islamic agenda!

" Hat tip: <http://islaminaction08.blogspot.com/Islam> in Action

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### [Join Nearly 40 Nationwide Tea Parties Across U.S.](#)

Americans say "enough is enough, unite to protest spending

Americans are saying enough is enough to extravagant government spending and throwing nearly 40 tea parties across the nation to protest.

Kellen Giuda, a laid-off architect, is organizing his own New York City tea party. He has invited several prominent guest speakers, including politicians, elected officials, an author, blogger, a bond trader and a former contestant on *æAmericas Next Top Model* to speak out against excessive government spending.

æI saw Rick Santellis rant, live, and thought it was awesome, he told WND. æAll of this fiscal irresponsibility is absurd.

He continued, æThen I started hearing about tea parties, and I decided to do it. Its really exciting. There are a lot of people getting involved now.

" Hat tip: JD

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### [\*Likely Intel Pick: Muslims Were Here First\*](#)

Pushed Saudi-funded textbook that wildly fabricates history

The Obama administrations reported pick for a top intelligence post once peddled a book to U.S. public schools that falsely claims Muslims inhabited North America far before European explorers.

The book, funded by Saudi Arabia, also contains widely inaccurate anti-Israel Arab propaganda.

Charles æChas Freeman, the U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia during the first Gulf War, is slated to head the National Intelligence Council, according to multiple reports. Yesterday, it came to light Freeman has financial ties to the infamous bin Laden family " including dealings he defended after Sept. 11, 2001.

" Hat tip: JD

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### [\*Likely Intel Pick Works for Chinese\*](#)

Companys deals were seen as attempt to expand communist nations influence

The Obama administrations reported pick for a top intelligence post sits on the board of a major oil company owned by the Chinese government that is widely seen as conducting business deals meant to expand Chinas influence worldwide, WND has learned.

Charles æChas Freeman, the U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia during the first Gulf War, is slated to head the U.S. National Intelligence Council, according to multiple reports. The NIC is a crucial component of the U.S. intelligence apparatus, serving as the center for midterm and long-term strategic thinking within the American intelligence community. It provides intelligence briefs for Obama and key U.S. agencies and produces reports that help determine American policy on crucial issues, such as Irans nuclear program.

" Hat tip: JD

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### [\*Major General Says Presidents Eligibility Needs Proof\*](#)

~Most important, what I really want is the truth



On the heels of two active duty members of the U.S. military serving in Iraq calling for President Obama to prove his eligibility to be president, a retired major general has agreed to join the case, saying he just wants æthe truth.

" Hat tip: JD

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### [Mr. Wilders Goes to Washington](#)

Mr. Wilders has said that the film is meant to demonstrate how verses from the Koran push Muslims toward violence. Mr. Wilders has defended the film and his positions by saying in interviews, æI dont hate Muslims " I hate Islam.

In an interview with the conservative talk-show host Glenn Beck on Tuesday, Mr. Wilders said:

æI have nothing against Muslims. But my point is, that the Islam is a totalitarian ideology that should be compared not so much with other religions but with other totalitarian ideologies " like communism or fascism.

Mr. Wilders appearance on the Beck program was one of several stops on a media tour of conservative outlets in the United States. He has posted video of that interview and links to many blog posts and Web site articles about him on his own blog.

At least one congressman has publicly opposed his visit to Washington. Keith Ellison, Democrat of Minnesota, who is Muslim, compared the screening of æFitna on Capitol Hill to showing the infamously racist film æThe Birth of a Nation at the White House. In a statement, Mr. Ellison said the movie compares Islam to Nazism, and added that he was disappointed by Sen. Kyls decision to screen it in the Capitol:

æI am a strong advocate of First Amendment free speech. However, this is not about free speech, but rather an issue of propriety, timing and venue. Senator Kyl has every right to host anyone he chooses. However, it becomes a question of propriety to use the United States Capitol as a venue for the condemnation of an entire religion.

" Hat tip: JD

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### [Obama Wants to Raise Money Via Pollution Caps: Reports](#)

President Barack Obama will propose raising new revenue through a greenhouse gas cap and emissions trading scheme when he unveils his first budget on Thursday, US media reported.

The budget he will present assumes an emissions trading system will generate revenue by 2012, the Washington Post reported.

" Hat tip: JD

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### [Psychiatrist: Obama Corrupting America With Socialism](#)

Book author warns economic ~rescue will turn citizens into ~wards of state

Only a month into Barack Obamas presidency, an acclaimed psychiatrist is warning that Americans are being slowly corrupted by socialism as Obamas policies intrude into their economic, social and political lives " a tactic he believes will secure future votes for the Democratic Party.

œWe have a desperate population, and its feeling even more desperate than usual, Dr. Lyle Rossiter told WND. œPeople are really quite frightened. Theyre looking for magic, and they think they are going to find it in this man.

" Hat tip: JD

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### [Race Baiter Eric Holder](#)

Theres been a lot of attention focused on Attorney General Eric Holders indictment of America as œa nation of cowards on issues of race.

It was a shockingly divisive statement.

But lost to most observers was the way the end of speech about Black History Month paid tribute to racially divisive and extremist black leaders of the past " often overlooking more significant black historical figures who accomplished more and promoted racial unity.

What does that tell you?

It tells me Holder was sending a signal.

The race-baiting is not about to end, now that Barack Obama has become president. Its about to go into overdrive. [!]

" Hat tip: JD

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### [U.S. Pulling Out of ~Durban II Conference](#)

WASHINGTON (JTA) " The Obama administration has decided to boycott the so-called Durban II conference out of concerns for anti-Semitism.

Multiple sources on a conference call with the White House on Friday told JTA that the Obama administration had opted not to attend any further preparatory meetings ahead of the planned U.N. conference against racism in Geneva in April.

The conference reprises the 2001 conference in Durban, South Africa that devolved into an anti-Jewish free-for-all. Canada and Israel have opted not to attend the conference, and some U.S. Jewish groups had been pressing the United States to do the same.

Preparations for a draft document so far have seen Iran leading a coterie of nations blocking inclusion of anything that might guarantee Jewish protections " including mention of the Holocaust " while inserting draconian language guarding Islam against œinsult.

The State Department sent a delegation, including a senior staffer from the American Jewish Committee, to this months preparatory talks. The delegations conclusions were that the anti-Israel and anti-Western tendencies were too deeply entrenched to excise.

Now that the United States is withdrawing from the conference, European nations are expected to follow.

Speaking for the White House on Fridays call were Samantha Power and James Warlick, who handle international organizations for, respectively, the national security council and the State Department; and Jennifer Simon, an adviser to Susan Rice, the U.S. envoy to the United Nations.

" Hat tip: <http://tundratabloid.blogspot.com/JKGS>

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### [Denmark: Nørrebro ~Too Dangerous for Safety Volunteers](#)

The Night Owls organisation is fearful for its volunteers patrolling the streets of Nørrebro due to ongoing violence

The voluntary Night Owls organisation, which patrols the streets at night to help young people stay out of trouble, is pulling out of the Nørrebro district in Copenhagen over safety fears.

Erik Thorsted, of the National Night Owls Association told Politiken newspaper that this is the first time the organisation has had to give up on an area.

"It has become too dangerous, said Thorsted, "all of the shootings which are taking place have made it unsafe for people to walk around there, especially at night. The Night Owls represent a visible presence on the streets at night in their identifiable yellow jackets and are there to offer advice or help to young people if they need it. It is not their aim to interfere in situations, but hoped that their presence would act as a deterrent to young people who otherwise might engage in violence or vandalism.

Thorsted said he hoped that the violence in inner Nørrebro would soon abate so they could get their volunteers back on the streets, especially the teams comprised of women from ethnic backgrounds.

"We have had a massive success with the female teams in the different ethnically-dominated areas of Copenhagen, where they have an incredibly good dialogue with the youngsters.

There are at least 7,000 active volunteers nationwide involved with 223 local Night Owls associations.

" Hat tip: Tuan Jim

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### [Denmark: Applause Marks Soldiers Return](#)

The tide of public opinion seems to have changed as returning soldiers are given a heros welcome

People lined the streets of Holstebro yesterday to welcome home the Danish troops who recently returned from their tour of duty in Afghanistan

Spontaneous applause greeted the 600 soldiers returning from their tour of duty with the Nato-led Afghanistan mission yesterday, as they took part in an official parade through the streets of Holstebro, northern Jutland.

Defence Minister Søren Gade attended the parade and was surprised by the reaction of the crowd. "When people suddenly started to clap it was like an out of body experience for me. If I had said five or six years ago that people would applaud returning Danish soldiers, people would have thought I was drunk. It really was a moving experience, said Gade.

The event in Holstebro marked the first time in recent years that the Defence Command has arranged a parade for returning soldiers. The soldiers were part of the sixth team deployed to serve with the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan for the last six months.

The parade marked the end of the official de-briefing period for the 600 men and women, where they had undergone medical evaluation and met with trained psychologists.

The soldiers and their families were also welcomed home by Mayor Arne Lægaard at the Musikteatret, where they were treated to musical and comedy performances.

There was also time set aside to remember the six members of the deployed team who lost their lives in Afghanistan. Major General Niels Bundsgaard asked for a minutes silence to remember the fallen at the local Dragoon Regiment Barracks.

" Hat tip: Tuan Jim

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### [Finland: Disputes Over Scarves Split Employers](#)

Employers face a re-examination of attitudes to religious symbols worn by staff. For example, some retailers permit the wearing of scarves by Islamic women employees while others have discouraged their use. Employers can freely decide on the issue in the absence of legislation.

In some cases, employers have asked during the recruitment **process** whether women want to wear a scarf while at work. The Kesko retailing group has adopted a positive approach and allows the wearing of scarves if they do not endanger work safety. However, the Helsinki based HOK-Elanto retailer has prohibited the use of religious symbols by employees.

HOK-Elanto Personnel Director Antero Levonen denies the company imposes a ban on scarves. He says a small scarf can be used if it adheres to the style and colour of the companys own staff uniform.

Currently, employers can prohibit the use of scarves in the absence of legislation on the issue. Professor of Business Law, Kari-Pekka Tiitinen of the University of Helsinki told YLE Television News, he hopes common sense and flexibility will prevail. He does not favour specific legislation on the use of scarves, an issue that has enflamed tensions in several European nations.

" Hat tip: Tuan Jim

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### [Finland: Survey Indicates Half of Helsinki Residents Believe the Citys Security Situation Has Deteriorated](#)

Study team surprised by apparent fear of **immigrants**

Roughly half of the Helsinki residents questioned said that they felt the city's security situation had worsened in the three years since the last survey was taken. The City of Helsinki examined the sense of security in the city felt by locals and visitors, and the results are published today, Tuesday. The last such comprehensive survey was made in 2006.

Answers from respondents on such matters as the sense of safety they feel in public transport " buses, trams, the Metro " were much the same as in 2006. For example, around 60% felt that travelling on the Metro in the evenings contained either a moderate or strong element of insecurity. Roughly half had the same views when out and about in the city centre after dark, but nearly 80% felt safe in their own residential area regardless of the time of day.

What was new and surprising to the compilers of the study was the residents' opinions on the influence of immigrants on city safety. Of those who felt that things had got worse on the security front, no fewer than 70% listed immigrants as a reason for the development, even though this was not included as a specific alternative on the questionnaire sheet. Respondents were troubled by the increasing number of immigrants. Immigrants were also associated in the minds of those taking part with crime and disturbances.

The City's Johanna Seppälä, project manager at the Safety and Preparedness Co-ordinating Division, reported that the results had surprised the survey team. She estimated that the recent prominent media coverage of matters relating to immigrants may go some way towards explaining the outcome. "Whatever the reason, this is such a strong signal of the city's mindset that a good deal of work will have to be done to respond to it, said Seppälä on Monday. "If we do not intervene in possible problem-areas now, the situation in a couple of years could be very serious.

Seppälä feels it is critically important to avoid a situation where different areas of the city have a starkly different tone. "We do not want problem suburbs in Helsinki, into which people are afraid to go. Aside from concerns about immigration, the Helsinki residents expressed worries over marginalisation, passive indifference, the lack of any sense of community, street violence and the threat of it, the security on public transport, and road safety in general. The survey was taken by 765 Helsinki residents and visitors.

" Hat tip: Tuan Jim

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### [Greece: Escapes and Ladders by Paschos Mandravelis](#)

According to a police statement issued in the wake of Wednesday's grenade attack on the premises of an immigrant support network in Exarchia, the suspects left the scene in a vehicle bearing "unregistered [false] number plates. It's hard to see why the perpetrators went to all this trouble. After all, thousands of cars drive without plates in the center of Athens and no one seems bothered. They could have driven all the way to Exarchia without anyone stopping them. First, Exarchia is a no-go area for the police and, second, the police do nothing about cars without plates. There is simply no monitoring of petty offenses.

A second question is this: Given the large number of cars without plates in Athens, can you imagine the number of unregistered prepaid mobile phones? If the government does scrap anonymous prepaid mobile phones, millions of users will go to the trouble of registering their phone devices while those who really need an unidentified connection will simply import one from abroad " like those who drive around with false number plates. A car with no registration is clearly illegal. But more than 700,000 such cars circulate in Athens. Lack of policing means their number is rising.

Of course, as everyone knows, the problem is not the absence of laws, but the failure to implement them. If terrorists are not caught, it's not because they are using mobiles with phone cards, but because no one is there to

check if they're using unregistered cars. When a helicopter can land right in the country's best-guarded prison it's ridiculous to talk about banning anonymous phones.

Security has been reduced to a public relations stunt for the minister of the day.

Each time a government fails it's the people who bear the brunt. If the government really must unveil some new measure, it should enforce the registry of rope ladders. For these are more useful than phones to those seeking to escape and since they are cheaper than cell phones, the social cost will be smaller too.

" Hat tip: Tuan Jim

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### [Greece: Anarchists Target Newspaper Offices](#)

Hundreds of suspected anarchists caused serious damage to the central offices of conservative newspaper Apogevmatini and torched several parked cars early yesterday afternoon after breaking off from a rally protesting a hand grenade attack on a left-wing human rights group and **immigrant** support network in Exarchia on Tuesday night.

About 1,000 people participated in the protest rally which began in Exarchia in the early afternoon and culminated with a peaceful march to Parliament. At about 7.30 p.m. a crowd of anarchists, numbering some 300 according to police, converged around the entrance to Apogevmatini's offices on Feidiou Street, a parallel road to Panepistimiou Street, where they used sledgehammers, iron bars, sticks and stones to smash up the facade and torch several parked cars. There were no reports of injuries.

Police fired tear gas and threw stun grenades to disperse the vandals. But they returned later, using sticks and rocks to attack a riot police unit stationed at the junction of Harilaou Trikoupi and Didotou streets, near opposition PASOK's offices, and vandalizing the building housing the Council of State on Stadiou Street.

Ruling New Democracy issued a statement condemning the attack on Apogevmatini's offices. "The hooded assailants involved in this attack once again targeted the freedom of the press and the free exchange of ideas, the statement said, adding that it condemned all mindless violence and destructive rage.

Members of leftist and anarchist groups on Wednesday participated in a debate about the hand grenade attack against the premises of the Network for Political and Social Rights, which has the same address as the so-called **Immigrants** Hangout. The leftist network called the attack "a fascist para-state murder attempt but police said the hit could have been carried out by rival anarchists or leftists.

" Hat tip: Tuan Jim

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### [Italy: Migrants and Sex Offenders Face Tough New Measures](#)

Rome, 20 Feb. (AKI) " The Italian government on Friday issued an emergency decree to crack down on illegal immigration and sexual violence, following a number of high-profile rape cases allegedly committed by Romanian **immigrants**. The emergency decree provides for a mandatory life sentence for the rape of minors or attacks where the victim is murdered.

It also speeds up trials for sex offenders, removes the possibility of house arrest, and offers free legal assistance for rape victims.

Rome's mayor Gianni Alemanno said he was satisfied with the emergency decree, following several shocking rape cases that occurred in and around the Italian capital, Rome, recently.

I am very satisfied, Alemanno said. We will organise a massive protest against sexual violence to support this cause and create a groundswell against this abominable plague of sexual abuse in all its forms, from family abuse to those that take place on the outskirts of the city.

The decree, which takes effect immediately, must be approved by both houses of parliament within 60 days.

Under the decree's provisions, illegal immigrants can be kept in preventative custody for up to six months " instead of the current two months. During this period, he or she will be properly identified and any asylum claims processed. Immigrants denied asylum or special protection who are not allowed to stay in Italy will be deported.

Another controversial measure provides for vigilante-style or unarmed "citizen street patrols.

City mayors will be able to approve the patrols. Volunteer groups in charge of the patrols will have to register with the police. Priority for membership will be given to retired police and military on leave.

They will not carry weapons, and will only be equipped with radio transmitters or mobile phones to alert police, said Italy's interior minister Roberto Maroni, who comes from the anti-immigrant Northern League party.

Video surveillance will be introduced in public places and an extra 100 million euros will be given to Italy's ministry of the interior to pay for the recruitment of 2,500 new police and other measures.

Arrest will be mandatory in cases of rape with the possibility of a "summary judgment within 48 hours. Victims of sexual abuse will have all their expenses paid by the state as well as free legal counsel.

The crime of stalking that could lead to a sex-related crime or homicide carries a minimum sentence of six months and up to four years in jail.

The decree still has to be approved by both houses of parliament within 60 days, however, conservative Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi and his coalition enjoy an ample majority.

The measures were adopted by the conservative government as racial tension and attacks against immigrants are rising throughout Italy. Gangs of thugs attack Romanians in a Rome neighbourhood following the rape last weekend of a 14-year-old girl by two Romanian suspects.

On 1 February, a homeless Indian labourer was savagely attacked and set on fire, in the coastal town of Nettuno, 70 kilometres south of Rome, allegedly by three young men.

In a separate incident in late January, four Romanian immigrants were arrested in the town of Guidonia, near Rome, for allegedly gang-raping an Italian woman.

A day after the attack, groups of Albanians and Romanians were beaten up by a mob and there were attempts to burn down Romanian-owned shops.

Last November, four youths beat up and set alight a homeless Italian man sleeping on a park bench in the northern city of Padova.

Official estimates say 68 percent of rape victims are Italian. However, 58 percent of rapists are Italian, while 9.2 percent are Romanian.

" Hat tip: C. Cantoni

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[Italy: Atheists Get Original Message Out](#)

Pescara agrees to slogan rejected by Genoa

(ANSA) " Pescara, February 26 " Italian atheists are getting the message they want out in Pescara after having to tone down it down in Genoa.

The message " The Bad News Is God Doesnt Exist, The Good News Is You Dont Need Him " will appear on posters for the next month and a half in the northeastern city.

Roberto Anzelotti, head of the local chapter of the Italian Union of Atheists, Agnostics and Rationalists (UAAR), lauded Pescara city council for granting them permission. ??The council showed itself to be very broad-minded and didnt have anything to say against the message, which demonstrates that the polemics in Genoa were ideological, he said.

The UAAR launched Italys first ~atheist bus in the northwestern port earlier this month but only after its slogan was watered down because of religious protests. The message that has now been OKd in Pescara was changed to: The Good News Is There Are Millions of Atheists In Italy; The Excellent News Is They Believe In Freedom Of Expression.

The bus started its daily trips on February 16, after what the UAAR called a ??curious battery problem, and is set to keep running until mid-March.

UAAR Treasurer Isabella Cazzoli says the association is optimistic about getting the original message out in other Italian cities aside from Pescara.

??Were at an advanced state of negotiation with other cities but after what happened in Genoa we dont want to say which, she said.

A Facebook group in favour of the UAARs drive has drawn thousands of supporters.

The Italian campaign follows similar ads in London, Barcelona and Washington where the slogan was: ??Theres probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life.

The UAAR has 4,000 members across Italy.

photo: the original Genoa bus slogan at a preview before it was rejected

" Hat tip: Insubria

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[Netherlands: List of Most Problem Neighbourhoods Made Public](#)



Housing Minister Eberhard van der Laan has published the controversial list of the so-called 40 problem neighbourhoods. The minister had originally refused to name the areas, as he was afraid that the neighbourhoods and their residents would be stigmatised.

The list actually contains the names of 83 problem areas. The worst in the country is in the west of Amsterdam, the Kolenkit district. The next three are in Rotterdam " Pendrecht, het Oude Noorden and Bloemhof, followed in fifth place by an Utrecht neighbourhood, Ondiep.

The list, originally devised by former housing minister Ella Vogelaar two years ago, was compiled on the basis of the household income of the residents and the lack of security in the neighbourhood. Ms Vogelaar proposed to identify and invest in the problem areas as part of an urban renewal plan, addressing economic and social difficulties.

" Hat tip: Tuan Jim

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### [Norway: Latest Poll: New Gains for the Progress Party](#)

The right wing Progress Party (FrP) regains lost ground and now has the support of 29.4 per cent of the electorate, according to Norstats February poll. This is up by 6.3 points from January, and only 3.6 points behind the Labour Party. The poll was made for the newspaper Vaart Land, shortly after FrP-leader Siv Jensen made her controversial speech in which she said that "Norway is undergoing a subtle islamification, and after Justice Minister Knut Storberget announced his turnaound on the police hijab-issue.

After a 2.6-point set-back for Prime Minister Stoltenbergs Labour and a 1.9 point loss for coalition partner Agrarians, the red-green coalition have lost the majority shown by the January poll, Vaart Land writes.

" Hat tip: Tuan Jim

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### [Swiss Soldiers Face Loss of Right to Store Guns at Home](#)

Switzerlands part-time soldiers could lose their famous right to store their weapons at home.

A coalition led by the countrys Social Democrat party and the Greens has collected nearly 120,000 signatures to force a national referendum on whether the weapons should be stored at military bases.

The coalition of 74 groups says the weapons are involved in too many suicides and murders in the country and tighter controls are needed.

Switzerlands armed forces consist of just a few thousand permanent full-time staff, with the rest essentially a militia.

Service in the militia is compulsory for men aged between 19 and 31 and in between call-ups they store their weapons at home. There are currently around 220,000 conscripts.

However, a 2007 law change banned the storage of ammunition in homes. The coalition is looking to extend this, control the purchase of military weapons and set up a national gun register.

Green lawmaker Josef Lang said more than 1.5 million unused weapons were kept in Swiss homes.

Lang said their presence at the heart of the population could not be justified.

He said a national register had to be created to keep track of the weapons, something police had long been seeking.

Lang said the weapons had to be banished from homes.

Barbara Weil, of the Swiss Medical Association, said it had been scientifically proven that if the guns were less freely available the number of suicides would drop.

The studies had also shown that other methods of suicide did not increase in countries who had brought in stricter gun controls.

The coalition estimates that 300 deaths annually are connected to gun use.

" Hat tip: Tuan Jim

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### [Terrorism: 'New Al-Qaeda Video Targets Germany](#)

Dubai, 26 Feb. (Aki) " A new video purportedly from Al-Qaeda criticises the German government for squandering taxpayers money on troops stationed in Afghanistan. The video, which has been posted to jihadist websites, urges Germany to renounce capitalism and embrace Islam to escape economic recession.

The video shows a still image of a German citizen turned Al-Qaeda and Taliban fighter in Afghanistan, who calls himself Abu Talha. He delivers a 44-minute message in German with Arabic subtitles.

"Where are the German philosophers and economists, now that economic crisis besets us? Abu Talha asks in the message.

"And what has happened to all the taxpayers money? Much of it has been spent on keeping our soldiers here in Afghanistan, the message continues.

Abu Taba talks at length about Islamic finance and its prohibition of interest (riba in Arabic), a central concept of western capitalism.

"After the end of communism, everyone in Germany believed that capitalism was the answer. But what I am saying to you is that Islam is the only way to escape from the economic crisis, he says.

The video bears the logo of Al-Qaedas Al-Sahab media arm but has yet to be authenticated.

An individual calling himself Abu Taba last month appeared in a previous video with his face concealed and threatened Germany over its 3,460 troops currently deployed in northern Afghanistan.

" Hat tip: C. Cantoni

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### [UK: Fanatics Are on Rise and Labour Has Let it Happen](#)

BRITAIN recently disgraced itself by banning democratically elected Dutch MP Geert Wilders from entering the country.

His planned œcrime was to screen a short documentary at a private viewing in the House of Lords.

Its worth raising today after the £2,500 hand-out to sinister Jordanian Abu Qatada and the imminent arrival of Ethiopian terror suspect Binyam Mohamed.

Wilders film links horrific acts of terror with verses from the Koran recorded in taped rants by terrorists before their slaughter of the innocents.

I havent seen the film because it has been blocked on the internet.

But neither had Labour MP Keith Vaz when he went on TV to justify the veto.

Vaz said he didnt need to. Nor did he need any precedent for such draconian censorship. Every decision should be **considered** on its œmerits ” by people like himself, of course.

Our cringing surrender to this authoritarian, book-burning mentality was ordered by mealy-mouthed Home Secretary Jacqui Smith under pressure from Labour peer Lord Ahmed.

Lord Ahmed, who warned of mob demos, is the Pakistani-born Labour donor who once ignored protests and invited rabid anti-Semite Israel Shamir into the Lords.

Some extreme interpretations of the Koran teach that Jews and homosexuals are fit only for extermination ” which is why Hitler was so popular in parts of the Arab world.

Wilders visit would have gone unnoticed but for Jackboot Jacqui, whose Government has prostrated itself to accommodate Islams nastier fringes.

She famously tried to detoxify events like 7/7 by describing them as œanti-Islamic activities ” as if the killers were shooting THEMSELVES in the foot!

Labours refusal to act against extremism allowed such vile religious perverts as Abu œHookie Hamza to flourish.

It gave oxygen to rabble-rousing imams who brainwashed thousands of young British-born Muslims, not least the 7/7 murderers.

It turned a blind eye to migrants who refuse to assimilate and instead colonise whole suburbs and cities where welfare has become a way of life.

It encouraged multi-culturalism which, far from spreading tolerance, has entrenched primitive tribal customs, including forced marriages and honour killings.

As a result, our security services are at breaking point keeping tabs on an army of shadowy troublemakers who flit back and forth to Pakistan ” many to be trained in OUR mass murder.

Of course, Islam extremism is rife in all EU countries.

In Geert Wilders Holland, the penalty for criticising Islam is death ” as filmmaker Theo van Gogh shockingly learned.

France is constitutionally secular, but many schools cannot make educational visits to cathedrals, serve meals without a halal option or allow mixed swimming lessons. So, while acknowledging that most Muslims are decent, peaceful and law-abiding, it is impossible to disagree with what Wilders has to say about extremists. He told an American audience recently: œThe Europe you know is changing. You have seen the landmarks. The Eiffel Tower and Trafalgar Square and Rome's ancient buildings, the canals of Amsterdam.

œThey are still there. And they still look very much the same as they did a hundred years ago. But a few blocks away from your tourist destination, there is another world very few visitors see.

œThroughout Europe a new reality is rising, entire Muslim neighbourhoods where very few indigenous people reside or are even seen.

œIt's the world of headscarves, where women walk around in figureless tents, with baby strollers and a group of children.

œTheir husbands " or slaveholders, if you prefer " walk three steps ahead.

œWith mosques on many street corners, shops have signs you cannot read. You will be hard-pressed to find any economic activity.

œThese are Muslim ghettos controlled by religious fanatics. These are Muslim neighbourhoods, and they are mushrooming in every city across Europe.

œThese are the building blocks for territorial control of increasingly larger portions of Europe, street by street, neighbourhood by neighbourhood, city by city.

œThere are now thousands of mosques throughout Europe. With larger congregations than there are in churches.

œAnd in every European city there are plans to build super-mosques that will dwarf every church in the region. Clearly, the signal is: We rule.

Sounds about right to me.

" Hat tip: Tuan Jim

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### [UK: How Did Britain Get Into This Tortured Position?](#)

We allow extraordinary rendition only because we cannot reconcile human rights with the real threat of terrorism

I suppose it would have been too much to expect that Binyam Mohamed would have staggered off his flight from Guantánamo Bay and thanked the British Government for securing his freedom. Or that he might have thanked the British taxpayer for writing a blank cheque for his housing, medical treatment and legal fees, despite his being an Ethiopian with no home or family here. Instead, this latest, lucrative asset to the human rights industry spoke of his œbetrayal by his œhome country " and sued.

Why did we make this man our problem? Seemingly for both diplomatic and humanitarian reasons. David Miliband told me this week that he felt it would have been harsh to abandon a man whose temporary residency expired while he was in detention " even though he left Britain for Afghanistan eight years ago. It is generous to see this man as our responsibility. But it is disingenuous of the Government to suggest, simultaneously, that its conduct has been whiter than white.

Mr Mohamed is an Ethiopian whose asylum application was refused in 1994 but was later granted leave to remain (a routine ploy to cover up our sham removals policy). His various accounts of why he went to Pakistan and Afghanistan are laughable. Yet he was detained without trial for seven years, an outrage to justice. And there seems little doubt that he was tortured, possibly with tacit British agreement. His claims that Britain was complicit in his rendition by the US to Morocco and Afghanistan were given force by yesterdays astonishing admission by the Defence Secretary that Britain had handed two terror suspects to the US for interrogation in Afghanistan in 2004. The Government has previously denied any part in extraordinary rendition. What other guilty secrets is it hiding?

The truth is that both government and human rights groups have taken liberties with reality. The only people to have profited are evil-doers and scroungers.

The government finds itself boxed into a very uncomfortable corner by the Human Rights Act, the human rights lobby and its duty to protect us from terrorism. The Human Rights Act has forced ministers to protect foreigners who hate us, at taxpayers expense. So we cannot return anyone who might face torture, hostility or even substandard medicine. The human rights lobby has made a mockery of asylum law and the Geneva Convention, leaving us trapped in endless deportation battles. And as a consequence the Government has distorted fundamental principles of justice to protect national security.

Because those people might threaten our own citizens, we have suspended our 400-year-old rule of habeas corpus to incarcerate some without trial. One is Abu Qatada, who arrived here on a false passport in 1993 and whose deportation to Jordan was finally sanctioned by the law lords last week. Six countries have warned that he is dangerous. It would surely have been better to have sent him to Jordan for trial, than to have keep him interned. But he will continue to escape justice: he will fight for many more years on legal aid.

There have there been similar contortions over torture. For three years ministers have been busily winning assurances from countries such as Egypt, Jordan and Algeria that deportees will not be mistreated. Amnesty International regards these œmemoranda of understanding as worthless. The effective prohibition on deportation has driven ministers to a dishonest compromise.

This compromise does not bother some other countries that are signatories to the European Convention on Human Rights. France has been happily deporting terror suspects to Algeria for years. It does not regard the possibility of torture at one remove as seriously as it would regard torture carried out by its own operatives.

Some see that as pragmatic. Others believe that exposing someone to the risk of torture by others is as reprehensible as carrying it out. That is the official position of the British Government. But that implies four things. First, the memoranda of understanding cannot be used. Second, terror suspects cannot be removed, so should be freed from legal limbo and given UK citizenship. Third, even the faintest sniff of British complicity with American-sponsored torture is abhorrent and must be outed. Ministers cannot pretend to find torture wholly abhorrent while admitting to collusion in rendition.

These three things lead to a fourth. We must accept that we will henceforth rely on the Americans, the French and others to do the dirty work of saving some British lives. I say this because, although the argument is sometimes made that torture does not work, my conversations with security people over the years suggest otherwise. The House of Lords neatly pointed up this reality when it ruled that information that might have been provided under torture is inadmissible in court, but that governments can use that information if it could save lives.

The world is not as international law would like it to be. That is why President Obama said yesterday that he is keeping rendition as an option in the fight against terrorism. Wars are messy. Since 2001 there has been enormous confusion about whether to treat terror suspects as criminals, or as war combatants. Why cant ministers just admit that?

It is quite right that Binyam Mohamed should use the the law to challenge his abhorrent treatment. It is right that his allegations are being examined by the Attorney-General. It is wrong that we can never deport him if he turns out to pose a threat to national security.

I feel proud that Britain seeks to uphold freedom and fairness; I am also furious that, in pretending that all rights are equal, we risk obliterating some of our deepest values. When Britain is so vulnerable to terrorism, do we really want to undermine our national security?

" Hat tip: Tuan Jim

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### [UK: Some British Christians Feel Oppressed in the Public Square](#)

High-profile cases involving Bible-sharing and prayer have raised concerns. But many say that reining in certain expressions of faith is a necessary compromise in a multicultural society.

LONDON " For a nation shaped by an overtly Christian heritage, Britain has apparently become a difficult place to be overtly Christian.

The conservative press bewails a steady erosion of Christian values. A member of Parliament has called for debate on œsystematic and institutional discrimination toward Christians. Even former Prime Minister Tony Blair recently let slip how aides would brusquely suppress any instinct he had to bring his faith into public view.

Now, a succession of ordinary Christians are finding this rule applies to them, too.

" Hat tip: JD

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### [Whats in a Name: Crime Suspects and the Swedish Press](#)

The Locals David Landes attempts to shed some light on the Swedish medias sometimes peculiar practice of omitting the names of criminal suspects.

On Monday, a Swedish appeals court upheld the lifetime prison sentence of Christine Schürerrer, a 32-year-old German woman convicted of murdering two toddlers in Arboga early last year.

Astute observers of the Swedish media may have noticed that the following day marked the first time that Swedens newspaper of record, Dagens Nyheter (DN), published Schürrers name, despite the fact that she had been named previously in nearly every other publication in Sweden, including The Local.

Most Swedish papers waited to publish Schürrers name until the day after her guilty verdict was handed down, even though foreign news outlets had been publishing her name for weeks.

For months following her arrest, Schürerrer was referred to by the Swedish press simply as œthe German woman or œthe 32-year-old even though her name was readily available in court documents and some had gone to her Facebook profile to find more information.

In short, her name was easy to find, yet newspapers and other media outlets in Sweden continued to write stories as if Schürrers identity was some sort of state secret.

And while Schürriers guilty verdict, when she went from being a suspect to a convicted criminal, was generally seen as a green light for editors to publish her name and picture, DN nevertheless continued referring to her simply as the German right up until Mondays appeals court ruling.

To readers raised on a different set of journalistic norms, the Swedish practice of withholding pertinent facts about a story may first appear like some odd form of self-censorship.

In its most basic form, news reporting is about telling readers who did what. According to some schools of media ethics, leaving out basic information like the identity of the who amounts to uninformative reporting on the one hand, or deliberate deception on the other.

Moreover, omitting a persons name from a story can also leave readers wondering exactly what facts the reporter actually has in hand, and what may be conjecture.

While there are many 32-year-old German women in Sweden for example, there is only one Christine Schürrier.

But Britt Börjesson, a professor of media ethics at Gothenburg University, explains that the practice has more to do with Swedish culture than any attempt to alter the truth or muddy the facts.

Sweden is a small country with a small language and with a tradition of reaching consensus, she says.

Its something in our culture. When television stations or newspapers step over the line [in naming suspects], readers react and complain that its not ethical.

According to Börjesson, the practice of not publishing suspects names began as an effort to protect young people accused of less serious offences from long-term public ridicule.

The point was to give them a chance to come back and become good citizens again, she says, adding there is a sense in Sweden that keeping criminals personal details confidential not only helps against recidivism, but also aids in defendants receiving a fair trial.

While Sweden does have laws protecting individuals from defamation, suits by people claiming that newspapers have violated the law are rare.

Moreover, there are no provisions in Swedish law specifically prohibiting newspapers from publishing suspects names.

Its not illegal. We just think its an expression of proper journalistic ethics, says Börjesson.

The two main sections of Swedish legislation outlining press freedoms primarily address protecting free speech, and Swedens law on personal data protection has exceptions for details published for journalistic purposes.

But the slim chance of facing retribution in a court of law hasnt kept most Swedish dailies from erring on the side of caution when deciding whether or not to publish names, as instructed by the set of rules outlining accepted journalistic practice in Sweden.

The rules stem from an early attempt at self-regulation first developed by Swedens National Press Club (Publicistklubben "PK) back in 1923.

In 1965, the Swedish Union of Journalists (Svenska Journalistförbundet) formally adopted a code of professional conduct, with the Press Ombudsman (Allmänhetens Pressombudsman " PO) being added in 1969 to help adjudicate cases when newspapers were suspected of failing to live up to the ethics code.

The codes provisions on publishing names are quite clear, admonishing journalists to exercise extreme vigilance.

œGive careful consideration to the harmful consequences that might ensue for persons if their names are published. Refrain from publishing names if it might cause harm unless it is obviously in the public interest, reads one section of the code, known as œThe Rules of the Game (Spelregler).

Other clauses emphasize the importance of not œviolating the privacy of individuals and refraining from subjecting individuals to undue publicity œunless the public interest obviously demands public scrutiny.

Börjesson likens Swedens press ethics rules to a protocol, the interpretation of which fluctuates over time and which has evolved over decades of discussion in newsrooms and in society at large.

Responsibility for maintaining the code rests with a joint committee consisting of the union, the press club, the Newspapers Publishers Association (Tidningsutgivarna), and the Magazine Publishers Association (Sveriges Tidskrifter).

But while the interpretation of the rules may change, the wording of the rules is rarely altered.

œTheir meaning and how they are interpreted can change without changing the actual wording of the rules, says Börjesson.

She points to the mid-1980s as a time when the pendulum had perhaps swung the farthest away from publishing the names of criminal suspects.

So strong was the resistance among Swedish newspaper editors toward publishing names that they refused to name Christer Pettersson, the man suspected of committing one of the biggest crimes in the countrys history " the murder of then-Prime Minister Olof Palme.

œNo one published the name of Palmes suspected killer until the start of his trial, which was months after hed been arrested, explain Börjesson, adding that the decision by Swedish papers to finally publish Petterssons name was news in and of itself.

Since then, publishers have relaxed a bit in their interpretation of the press ethics rules.

œToday we print the names and identities of some criminals, usually particularly vicious criminals who are a danger to society. But still, we withhold the identities in most cases, says Börjesson.

Börjesson also questions how much value Swedes place on learning a suspects name.

œWhat would we do with that information anyway? Its not interesting, she explains.

œWhy should we care? As a reader, I dont need to know.

She admits, however, that there are cases where knowing the name of a suspect is relevant, such as a case involving a teacher at a local school or an offence committed in ones own neighbourhood.

œBut in those cases, there are other ways to get that information for anyone who is interested, explained Börjesson, pointing to Swedens strong tradition of openness with public documents.



Sweden is **considered** the first country in the world to have enacted modern freedom of information legislation with its Press Freedom Act of 1766.

The act served as the genesis of that what is commonly referred to today as *öffentlighetsprincipen* ("The Principle of Public Access") which stipulates that every Swedish citizen has the right to access public documents, according to the current constitution.

The constitution also guarantees that people who leak confidential documents to the media are protected from criminal charges.

What's more, it's the person who undertakes any effort to unmask the identity of a leaker that may instead be subject to prosecution.

Börjesson believes that Sweden's tradition of openness is part of the reason why publishers resist printing names, and part of the reason why Swedes are so willing to accept the omission.

Before the advent of the internet, publishers of Sweden's morning newspapers had a special role in the dissemination of information to the public. They were, according to Börjesson, *journalistic guides* for the whole industry and the country.

However, as it has become easier to get information from other sources on the internet, the status of newspaper editors had been somewhat diminished.

But that hasn't stopped some editors, like Thorbjörn Larsson at Dagens Nyheter, from sticking to traditional ethical principles, even if the practical effect is limited.

"The argument that 'it's on the internet, so we should print it' has been around for 15 years and has yet to gain any traction," explains Börjesson.

As a result, Swedish newspapers can exercise a great deal of discretion when it comes to deciding what to publish.

According to Daniel Westman, an expert on IT-law at Stockholm University, the new media landscape poses a number of challenges for Sweden's press freedom rules.

He believes it's time to **consider** a facelift for both the journalists' code of ethics and Swedish law.

"Suddenly we have a situation where publishers should also look at what sort of information other newspapers or individual websites have published with respect to personal information," he says.

"Currently, the degree to which a publisher is responsible for looking at what others are doing when making his or her own decisions about what to publish hasn't been dealt with satisfactorily.

He adds, however, that no matter what sort of new rules Sweden eventually puts in place, they may ultimately have little impact.

"If everyone can easily publish information on the internet via servers placed in other countries, then it may eventually not matter which of Sweden's rules apply because there will be limits to how they can be enforced," he said.

œAt some point, everything will end up on the internet if someone wants it there.

" Hat tip: Tuan Jim

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### [Why the CIA Has to Spy on Britain](#)

On the night of the Mumbai attacks I spoke to an old security source of mine, who has friends in SIS, MI5 and defence intelligence. There was only one thought on the minds of our security chiefs that night: "Are they British?"

In the bar of the Travellers Club and the pubs and tapas restaurants of Vauxhall Bridge Cross, drink was taken in double and treble measures amid grim assumption that the terrorists would turn out to have links to the UK. It was a fair assumption since, where international terrorism is concerned, Britain is no longer part of the solution; we are part of the problem. Where once we exported football hooligans, now we are among the worlds most prolific suppliers of Islamist extremists. Mercifully, the Mumbai terrorists had no discernible link to the UK. But as the industrial-scale intelligence arse-covering exercise groaned into action that day, no one would have been surprised to discover that another suicidal cell of British militants had slipped through the net.

Serving and former intelligence officers on both sides of the Atlantic say that the UKs status as a hotbed of militancy and an exporter of terror means that obtaining intelligence, once a by-product of good international relations, has become a goal as much as an instrument of foreign policy. Take one recent example, the case of Binyam Mohamed, the British resident recently returned from Guantanamo Bay. Trying to discern the truth from David Milibands public pronouncements on the affair has been a little like preparing an intelligence assessment " the publicly available facts are sketchy and the true motives of the participants are concealed behind layers of cant, hypocrisy and not a little squirming embarrassment. The foreign secretary allowed critics to assume he is lying when he claimed the US threatened to cut off intelligence-sharing if the full details of the torture meted out to Mr Mohamed in a CIA black prison were laid bare in the High Court. Mr Miliband was more content with the suggestion (accurate as it happens) that he was concealing evidence of British complicity in the interrogations rather than admit that British intelligence has become dependent to an unprecedented and embarrassing degree on the CIA, a relationship he could ill afford to threaten!

" Hat tip: Tuan Jim

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### [Croatia: Full Support for EU Adhesion From Paris](#)

(ANSAméd) " PARIS, FEBRUARY 19 " "Full support from France over Croatias adhesion to the European Union was expressed today by Prime Minister Francois Fillon during a meeting with his Croatian counterpart Ivo Sanader, with the hope that Zagreb would participate "as a full member in the NATO summit in April. Croatia is hoping to conclude its adhesion negotiations during 2009. However in December Slovenia, who joined the EU in 2004, used its veto over the opening of nine of the 35 chapters of Zagrebs adhesion dossier, because of a territorial dispute which dates back to 1991. Fillons spokesman said that he hoped that Croatia would officially participate in the NATO summit on April 3 and 4 in Strasbourg and Kehl as a member of NATO. Greece, Iceland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Portugal must still approve Croatias membership of NATO, which was decided during the Bucharest summit in April 2008. The two Prime Ministers also discussed "ever more intense bilateral relations and ways of responding to the economic crisis "in a coordinated way at the European and international level. (ANSAméd).

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" Hat tip: Insubria

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[EU: Commissioner Rehn, Croatia Risks 2010 Adhesion](#)

(ANSAmEd) " BRUSSELS, FEBRUARY 20 " Croatias adhesion, for which negotiations should be completed in 2009 with adhesion in 2010, is at risk if a solution is not found soon for the border controversy with Slovenia. This was the alarm launched today by the European Commissioner for EU Enlargement, Olli Rehn, in a press conference on the economic results of EU enlargement. Zagreb œcan still maintain its objectives for 2010 adhesion, but it is necessary that new chapters are opened in the Adhesion Treaty during the meeting scheduled for March, Rehn said. A possibility, he added, that will become reality œonly if there is a resolution to the border conflict with Slovenia. The Slovenian government has imposed a veto on negotiation for the project of Croatias adhesion, worried that Zagrebs possible entrance jeopardise the solution to the controversial border issue which has been an ongoing problem since 1991, when the two countries obtained independence. The Commissioner therefore invited the two countries to find a solution soon: œI am in favour of the meeting between the two Premiers next Tuesday, in an attempt to change the negative rhetoric that has dominated the recent period. (ANSAmEd).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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[Kosovo: ICC, Former Serbian President Acquitted of War Crimes](#)

(ANSAmEd) " BRUSSELS, FEBRUARY 26 " Former Serbian President Milan Milutinovic has today been acquitted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Hague of war crimes and crimes against humanity during the war in Kosovo from 1998 to 1999. Milutinovic was accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity for having tried to hound Albanians out of Kosovo with œa systematic campaign of terror and violence in the period 1998-1999. The objective " according to the accusation of Prosecutor Thomas Hannis " was to modify the ethnic composition of the region thereby ensuring Serbian control of the territory, forcing almost 800,000 Albanians to flee. For the council chamber, the role of the former Serbian president in this criminal enterprise was not proven, nor was it proved that he was in control of the actions of military and police forces of the former Yugoslavian state in Kosovo. According to judges, Milutinovic, œdid not have direct control over the former Yugoslavian federal army (VJ). œIn effect, it was (Slobodan) Milosevic, sometimes called the "Supreme commander, who exercised authority in commanding the VJ during the NATO campaign, the courts sentence read. Therefore, Milutinovic was acquitted on all counts. The former Serbian president will also have the right to compensation for time that he has already spent in prison. (ANSAmEd).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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[Kosovo: Serbian Population Repeats œNo to Independence](#)

(ANSAmEd) " PRISTINA, FEBRUARY 17 " The Assembly which unites Serbian municipalities in Kosovo, an organisation recognised neither by Pristina nor the international community, has once again rejected Kosovos declaration of independence which was unilaterally proclaimed one year ago, stressing that the province belongs to Serbia. In an extraordinary meeting today in Zvecan, in northern Kosovo, where Serbian presence is most strongly felt, a resolution was approved that stresses œthe autonomous province of Kosovo is an integral part of Serbian territory. The meeting, which many Serbian parliamentary politicians travelled from Belgrade to take part in, was deliberately held on the day that Kosovo celebrated the first anniversary of its independence. The Assembly addressed the Serbian government, inviting it to request an urgent meeting of the UN Security Council with the aim of boycotting the deployment of the European Civilian Mission EULEX in the region. The Serbian minister

responsible for Kosovo, Goran Bogdanovic, who was also present at the meeting in Zvecan, said that Kosovos declaration of independence has set a dangerous precedent, and has led to increased tension and instability in the region. (ANSAmEd).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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#### [Serbia: War Crimes; Arrest Orders for 19 Bosnians](#)

(ANSAmEd) " BELGRADE, FEBRUARY 26 " Serbias Public Prosecutors Office for war crimes has issued arrest warrants for 19 Bosnians who are suspected of committing serious crimes against the Yugoslavian Army during the Bosnian war (1992-1995). As reported by the agency Beta in Belgrade, Ejup Ganic and Stijepan Kljucic, both members of the Bosnian three-party presidency at the time of the conflict, are on the list. The 19 persons are suspected of having attacked a division of the Yugoslavian Army in May 1992 in Sarajevo, killing 42 and injuring 73 " according to Serbian sources -, and taking 215 prisoners. In a first reaction to the arrest orders, Ejup Ganic " quoted by Beta " called the accusations æridiculous, claiming that all names on the list of the Serbian Prosecutors Office are persons æwho defended Bosnia. (ANSAmEd).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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#### [Serbia: Talks on Customs-Free Export of Cars to Russia](#)

(ANSAmEd) " BELGRADE, FEBRUARY 17 " Talks between Serbia and Russia on abolishing customs duties on vehicles manufactured in Serbia should begin in April or May this year, BETA news agency was told by Mladjen Dinkic, the Serbian Ministry of Economy. As the ministry emphasized, during the talks it would be specified whether the export of cars would be completely liberalized or whether quotas would be established. The quotas would also include a certain number of vehicles manufactured in Russia being allowed customs-free import into Serbia. The Serbian Economy Ministry also said that the implementation of the expanded free trade agreement between Serbia and Russia could begin in March, which would liberalize the export of all medicines, meat products, confectionary products and wine. The agreement would abolish customs on refrigerators, freezers and other cooling devices, washing and drying machines, as well as a large number of other goods. The ministry said that the free trade agreement with Russia in 2000 liberalized around 95% of trade, but that the results to date have not been satisfactory because of which it was agreed in Sept. 2008 to expand the agreement.(ANSAmEd).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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#### [Algeria: 3 Mln Euro From France for Secondary School Reform](#)

(ANSAmEd) " ALGIERS, FEBRUARY 18 " Algeria and France have signed an agreement for 3 million euros in financing to reform Algerian secondary schools. According to APS, the agreement, which was signed by French Ambassador Xavier Driencourt and Algerian Foreign Minister Mouloud Hamai, will also provide for the creation of a secondary school of technology (ENTS). The objective of the 3-year project is to improve training and strengthen Algerian secondary schools. Improving the Algerian educational system is one of the central points of Algerian-French cooperation. (ANSAmEd).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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[Egypt " Ayman Nur: I Will No Longer Lead Party](#)

(ANSAmEd) " CAIRO, FEBRUARY 19 " Egyptian opposition leader, Ayman Nur, who was suddenly released yesterday after three years spent in prison, has stated that he will no longer lead the El Ghad party. The politician explained during a press conference that he will continue to work within the party, but that he will no longer be its head. The current El Ghad party Chair is Ihab El Khouli. Nur also reaffirmed his willingness to collaborate with all political forces, both internal and external, with the exclusion of Israel. One of the Egyptian governments most famous opposition figures, Nur stood against Mubarak as a presidential candidate in 2005. Mubarak was re-elected for his fifth term with 88% of the votes: Nur got 7.6%. (ANSAmEd).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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[Egypt: Islamic Lawyers Urge Death Sentence for Convert](#)

In case on whether he can legally change religion, Christian is accused of ~apostasy.

In the latest hearing of a Muslim-born Egyptians effort to officially convert to Christianity, opposing lawyers advocated he be convicted of œapostasy, or leaving Islam, and sentenced to death.

More than 20 Islamic lawyers attended the hearing on Sunday (Feb. 22) in Maher Ahmad El-Mootahssem Bellah El-Goharys case to obtain identification papers with Christianity designated as his religious affiliation. Two lawyers led the charge, Ahmed Dia El-Din and Abdel Al-Migid El-Anani.

œ[El-Din] started to talk about the Quran being in a higher position than the Bible, one of El-Goharys lawyers, Said Fayez, told Compass. œ[El-Din said] people can move to a higher religion but not down, so people cannot move away from Islam because it is highest in rank.

" Hat tip: JD

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[OECD: Morocco Becomes Member Development Centre](#)

(ANSAmEd) " RABAT, FEBRUARY 18 " Morocco has become part of the Development Centre of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) " a centre for developing countries only. High Commissioner Ahemd Lahlimi said that the Committee voted unanimously in favour of Moroccos acceptance thanks to the political, economic and social reforms carried out by the country. The Development Centre, explained Lahimi, œcomprises developing countries with particular ambition, capability and desire to make economic progress, like Morocco. The experiences of these countries, their approach to development and reforms, necessary to guarantee the liberalisation of their economies, must be examined on this basis. The president of the Development Centre, Javier Santiso, welcomed Moroccos acceptance saying that the exchange of experiences between the main OECD member States and developing countries has turned out to be fruitful. Santiso called the political, economic and social reforms that have been started in Morocco œvery interesting, particularly the new family law promoted by King Mohammed VI. The president sees these reforms as a model œmany countries should learn from. (ANSAmEd).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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[\*EUs Solana on First Visit to Gaza Since 2007\*](#)

European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana toured the war-shattered Gaza Strip on Friday, as the EU announced that it would donate \$553 million in aid to Gaza. Solanas trip is the first of its kind since the Islamist Hamas seized power in the Palestinian territory in June 2007.

øel came to Gaza to see by myself the situation and the destruction and to show the solidarity to the good people of Gaza who have suffered so much, he said at a news conference.

øel wanted to see with my eyes the level of destruction, he said of the devastation wrought by Israels 22-day military offensive that killed more than 1,330 Palestinians.

" Hat tip: TB

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[\*Gaza Truce: Shalit as Condition for Crossings\*](#)

(ANSAmèd) " JERUSALEM, FEBRUARY 18 " At the end of a defence council session of Ehud Olmerts government, minister Meir Shitrit said that the release of corporal Ghilad Shalit is the Israeli governments condition for the re-opening of the crossings into Gaza. The Interior minister said øit would be unthinkable to come to any kind of agreement (ed. " on Gaza), without Shalits release, adding that this position was unanimously approved. The øetop priority for Israel, he stressed, øeremains the release of Shalit by Hamas, who have held him since June 2006. (ANSAmèd).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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[\*Gaza Truce: Arab League Criticises Truce-Shalit Link\*](#)

(ANSAmèd) " CAIRO, FEBRUARY 18 " Regarding todays decision of Israels Defence Council to demand the release of corporal Gilad Shalit as a preliminary condition for a truce with Hamas, the secretary-general of the Arab League, Amr Mussa, said that the refusal of a truce by Israel øis part of the Israeli blackmail of not making concessions. Linking the truce to Shalit, according to Mussa øblocks the resolution of many questions. Regarding the inter-Palestinian reconciliation, Mussa said that øthe possibilities for reconciliation have improved after the most recent meeting with the head of the political office of Hamas in Damascus, Khaled Meshaal. (ANSAmèd).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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" Hat tip: Insubria

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[Gaza: EU Parliament, Extend Aid and Guarantee Supply](#)

(ANSAmEd) " BRUSSELS, FEBRUARY 18 " The humanitarian crisis in Gaza has reached inhuman levels and the UE Parliament has asked for an expansion of aid to the population, urging Israel to guarantee a constant and adequate supply. A resolution which had the support across political groups was approved by 448 votes in favour, 19 against, and 5 abstentions. Parliament said that the conflict in the Gaza Strip further aggravated the humanitarian crisis in the region, which has reached inhuman levels, and 88% of the population of Gaza is dependent on food aid. The Parliament then called for the removal of blocks and the reopening of crossing points, and the preventing of weapons smuggling. The resolution expressed hopes for financial, economic and social recovery in the Strip, and pointed out that reconstruction implies a lasting ceasefire, the resumption of peace talks and reconciliation between the Palestinians. (ANSAmEd).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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[Gaza: EU Funded Project on Deaf Children Launched](#)

(ANSAmEd) " BRUSSELS, FEBRUARY 19 " A three year programme that hopes to improve the lives of more than 6,000 deaf and hearing impaired children, their families and communities in Gaza, was launched. The project, entitled "Development of a Comprehensive Intervention Services Infrastructure and Active Advocacy Network for the Rights and Needs of Hearing Impaired and Deaf Children and their Families in the Gaza Strip, is co-funded by the European Union and Christoffel-Blindenmission and implemented by the Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children (ASDC). Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children is a non-profit society that was established in 1992 in the Gaza Strip. Atfaluna aims to improve the quality of life of deaf children and adults for them to reach their full potential by providing quality education, health care, social services, and work opportunities. The European Union has provided over EUR 380,000 for this programme, equivalent to 75% of the total budget.(ANSAmEd).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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[Gaza: Italy and Britain for Palestinian Marshall Plan](#)

(ANSAmEd) " ROME, FEBRUARY 19 " "We are continuing to work for the reconciliation of the Palestinian community to relaunch the "renegotiations for the peace process: the West must play its part through a Marshall plan for Palestine, said Italys Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi at the end of a meeting in Rome with his British counterpart Gordon Brown. The vision is shared by Great Britain, who "will do everything possible to support the initiative confirmed Brown. During coordination meetings for G8 and G20 Berlusconi said "we are into the details, including an economic relaunch project in the area, including "the creation of an airport, hotels, and agreements with low cost companies to bring Catholic tourists into the country once we have peace, to contribute towards economic growth in Palestine. The objective is "to create two equal States and not one Palestinian State "which would be too big compared to Israel. Berlusconi said that the theme will be central to G8, presided over by Italy, as well as G20 which will be hosted by Great Britain. (ANSAmEd).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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[Gaza: EU Project for Women Against Poverty NGO Underway](#)



(ANSAméd) " BRUSSELS, FEBRUARY 25 " The EU-funded "Bunian Association for training, evaluation and community studies (BATECS), has been launched. The association, which is based in Gaza, aims at training the staff of five womens organisations to help in the fight against poverty in the most marginalised areas of Rafah and Khan Younis in the Gaza Strip. The project, which received an initial grant of 236,000 euros from the EU (73% of the total budget), is to focus on improving the administrative, financial, and technical skills of the five partner organisations. Amongst the subjects to be studied are the basics of running not-for-profit organisation, human resources, work in the community, and strategic development planning. The selected organisations operate in various fields, from business (including artisan) and healthcare (including first aid and disease prevention), to support for women who are victims of violence, and also education and environmental matters. (ANSAméd).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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#### [Gaza: PNA to Ask Donor Conference for 2.8bln Dollars](#)

(ANSAméd) " RAMALLAH (WEST BANK), FEBRUARY 25 " The Prime Minister of the Palestinian National Authority, Salam Fayyad, has announced that he will ask the Gaza donors conference (set to take place on Monday in Egypt) for 2.8 billion dollars (just under 2.2 billion euros) for reconstruction in the Gaza Strip following Israels "Cast Lead military operation. "We have prepared a document, which donors will use to promise aid. It provides for a total of 2.8 billion dollars in all sectors, said Fayyad in Ramallah, adding that the document "was prepared by the Palestinian Authority, with the involvement of all parties concerned. It also involves, aside from aid estimates, mechanisms that will allow donors to begin the reconstruction of Gaza.(ANSAméd).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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#### [Gaza: Italy to Make Further 10 Million Euro Donation](#)

(ANSAméd) " ROME, FEBRUARY 25 " Italy is planning "a further 10-million-euro contribution for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip, according to an announcement made by Foreign Ministry spokesman Maurizio Massari during the usual weekly briefing with the press. Mr Massari said that Italys donation would be formalised on March 2 during the Gaza donors conference organised by Egypt in Sharm el Sheikh. Italy will be represented at the conference by Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and Foreign Minister Franco Frattini. In recent years Italy has put a total of 24-25 million euros towards aid for the Gaza Strip. In the period immediately after the outbreak of conflict in Gaza, Italy committed 12.3 million euros of aid to the cause. Representatives from more than 70 countries are expected at the Sharm el Sheikh conference, as well as numerous international organisations, in order to examine a plan for the use of the resources which are to be made available to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). (ANSAméd).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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#### [Israel: a Documentary Exposé of Christian Persecution](#)

?First Comes Saturday, Then Comes Sunday explains exodus from Mideast

Bethlehem, once a 90 percent Christian town in Israel, now claims a Christian population of only about 20,000 of the 60,000 Arab residents " about 35 percent. The number drops day by day, month by month, year by year.



They haven't left for no good reason. They have left for very good reasons. In fact, knowing the conditions these Christians face today, it's surprising there are still 20,000 there.

In the last 20 years, some two million Christians have fled the Mideast.

" Hat tip: JD

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### [Italy Sees West Bank Airport](#)

(ANSAmEd) " ROME, FEBRUARY 23 " The Palestinian economy can be boosted by building an international airport and hotels catering to religious tourists in the West Bank, Group of Eight (G8) president Italy believes. The Italian plan, to be unveiled at a G8 summit in Italy in July, also envisages the construction of major new industrial plants, Premier Silvio Berlusconi said in an interview that will appear in French daily Le Figaro Tuesday. "The plan foresees the construction of an international airport able to attract the many Catholic tourists interested in visiting the holy sites of Christianity starting with Bethlehem. It will also see the construction of hotel infrastructure by the main groups in the sector and a plan for major international groups to build plants, the Italian premier said. Berlusconi, who ruled out talking to the Islamist group Hamas which governs Gaza, said this would be the only way to give an effective incentive to the Palestinians to sit down at the negotiating table and ensure peaceful co-existence (with Israel). The West Bank is ruled by Hamas rival, the more moderate Fatah, which runs the Palestinian National Authority. Fatah was pushed out of Gaza after Hamas won elections there two years ago but there are ongoing efforts to reconcile the factions. Italy will present its plan to pull Palestinians out of their present state of poverty at the G8 summit on the island of La Maddalena off the northern coast of Sardinia in July, Berlusconi said. There are no civilian airports within the West Bank, and the nearest major airport is in Tel Aviv. As well as Bethlehem, the West Bank has other sites of religious and historical interest such as Jericho, Hebron, Qumran and the Dead Sea. (ANSAmEd).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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### [Kuwaiti Prof: 330, 000 Dead From 4 Pounds of Anthrax](#)

A professor from Kuwait, the country liberated from Saddam Hussein's attack squads by the United States in the first Gulf War, has outlined on Arab television a potential terror attack that would involve smuggling anthrax from Mexico into the U.S. and killing 330,000 people in 60 minutes.

" Hat tip: JD

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### [Turkey-Iran: Turkish President Gul in Tehran March 10](#)

(ANSAmEd) " ANKARA, FEBRUARY 26 " The President of Turkey Abdullah Gul is to make an official visit to Iran on March 10 to take part in the OEC summit (Organisation for Economic Cooperation) in Tehran, say presidential sources quoted by the Anadolu press agency. The purpose of the summit is to reinforce and strengthen economic and commercial relations between the member countries, which apart from Turkey and Iran, comprise of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. (ANSAmEd).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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### [\*UAE Bans Anti-Islam Israeli Cartoon on Youtube\*](#)

The United Arab Emirates has blocked an Israeli cartoon on the video sharing website YouTube due to content that mocks Muslims and insults the UAE, the countrys two internet service providers announced on Wednesday.

The controversial cartoon, called Ahmed and Salim, is a set of satirical skits that center on the title characters who are more interested in Western pop culture than their fathers aspirations of having them die as martyrs by carrying out terrorist attacks on œfilthy Jews or Americans, which the boys continue to fail at.

Ahmed and Salim decide to get an ice cream before performing an attack

The UAEs Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) said the decision to block the animated movie came after the organization received several complaints about the content that was deemed to be extremely insulting to Islam.

œWe informed the two UAE internet service providers Etisalat and Du of the decision and they blocked the movie, a TRA spokesman told AlArabiya.net. œNow users who try to see it will get an ~access denied message.

The skits are spoken in gibberish but are subtitled in Hebrew and English and a laughing audience can be heard in the background. One of the two young boys is dressed in traditional Gulf attire and the other wears a balaclava covering his face.

The UAE flag is shown in several scenes and in one of the scenes the boys are tasked with blowing up an Israeli bus but decide to get some ice-cream instead, when they return they mistakenly plant a bomb on a UAE-flagged bus.

" Hat tip: TB

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### [\*Army is Fighting British Jihadists in Afghanistan\*](#)

Top Army officers reveal surge in attacks by radicalised Britons

British soldiers are engaged in œa surreal mini civil war with growing numbers of home-grown jihadists who have travelled to Afghanistan to support the Taliban, senior Army officers have told The Independent.

Interceptions of Taliban communications have shown that British jihadists " some œspeaking with West Midlands accents " are active in Helmand and other parts of southern Afghanistan, according to briefing papers prepared by an official security agency.

The document states that the numbers of young British Muslims, œseemingly committed jihadists, travelling abroad to commit extremist violence has been rising, with Pakistan and Somalia the most frequent destinations.

" Hat tip: JD

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### [\*Bangladesh: Dhaka, Shoot Out in Border Guards Headquarters\*](#)

An argument between soldiers and officers over stalled back pay at the root of the episode. Hospital sources speak of one dead and eight injured. The government invites the mutinous guards to lay down their arms.

Dhaka (AsiaNews/Agencies) " A gun battle has broken out inside of the Bangladesh border guards or Bangladesh Rifle, headquarters in the capital, Dhaka. Hospital sources speak of one dead and eight wounded, most of whom are civilians caught up in the shoot out.

There are two unconfirmed reports on the cause of the episode: an argument between officers during a top level meeting, or, an argument between soldiers and officers over unpaid wages. The paramilitary mutiny resulted in army intervention in order to quell the rebellion.

Local sources report that a group of mutineers opened fire within the Headquarters of Bangladesh Rifle and then assaulted a nearby shopping centre. There were civilian victims among the people

The government of newly elected premier Sheikh Hasina issued a public statement inviting the mutineers to lay down their arms and return to their barracks; the executive says it is willing to open negotiations to address their claims.

" Hat tip: C. Cantoni

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### [Malaysia Allows Catholic Paper to Use œAllah](#)

A Catholic newspaper in Malaysia reported on Friday it had won the right to use the word œAllah after a long battle with the government which threatened to close it down.

The editor of the Herald newspaper, Father Lawrence Andrew, said the weekly was now allowed to use the word as a translation for œGod in its Malay-language edition, as long as it printed œFor Christians on the cover.

œ Now we can use the word Allah again and continue printing without hindrance. So with regards to the Herald we are happy œ

Father Lawrence AndrewNow we can use the word Allah again and continue printing without hindrance. So with regards to the Herald we are happy, he told AFP, saying the decision came in an official gazette dated earlier this month.

Home Minister Syed Hamid Albar had on Feb. 16 signed a gazette that prohibits œany document and publication relating to Christianity containing the words ~Allah, ~Kaabah, ~Baitullah, and ~Solat are prohibited, according press reports.

The ban was noted in the gazette (Order 2009) under the section: Prohibition On Use of Specific Words on Document and Publication.

The order allows Christian publications to use the word of œAllah only in print and with the condition that these publications clearly state their Christian orientation in the front cover, according to press reports

" Hat tip: TB

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### [Pakistan: Justice and Peace: Sharia in Swat Valley is a Defeat for Entire Country](#)

Peter Jacob, secretary of the bishops conference commission, criticizes the agreement between the government and the Taliban. It provides for peace in exchange for the introduction of Islamic law in the Swat valley. The human rights activist does not foresee a Taliban regime like the previous one in Afghanistan, but fears violations of the rights of women and religious minorities.

Islamabad (AsiaNews) "œFor us it is a setback and a strategy that will not work. The tough talk comes from Peter Jacob, national secretary of the National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP), speaking about the agreement between the local government and the Taliban. It allows the introduction of sharia " Islamic law " in exchange for a ceasefire in the district of Malakan, which includes the Swat valley, in the northwest part of the country on the border with Afghanistan. The agreement was signed yesterday by the government of the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and the Taliban militia group Tahrir-e-Nifaz Shariat Muhammadi (TNSM).

œWe think that the more space we will give to fundamentalism, the more they will try to gain from this strategy, Peter Jacob stresses to AsiaNews. He recently returned from a visit to the NWFP, and emphasizes that the agreement œis a tactical step of the provincial government to resolve Islamic militancy in Swat. The human rights activist met with various local political leaders, and explains that œsharia is an emergency medicine to resolve the situation of tension, but if this does not produce the desired results, œthere will be strict action against militants there.

Peter Jacob says, however, that he is sure that the areas where Islamic law is introduced will not see a Taliban regime like the previous one in Afghanistan, because the ruling liberal Awami National Party is confident about the agreement. œBut of course as the result of sharia law implementation, the first casualties would be women and religious minorities, because the freedom of women and other faiths would not be tolerated.

According to the latest information, the delegation of the TSNM, headed by the leader Sufi Muhammad, has come to the Swat valley to verify that the peace agreements are being respected. During his stay in the area, mullah Sufi Muhammad will try to convince the mullah Fazlullah " head of the Taliban militias in the Swat " to lay down his weapons in exchange for the introduction of Islamic law.

Pakistani president Asif Ali Zardari has not yet signed the document ratifying the peace agreement: he will sign it only after it has been ascertained that the ceasefire is being respected in the Swat, in the district of Malakand, and in the areas that have recently seen fighting between the military and the militias.

The North-West Frontier Province has for some time been the theater of a massive campaign by the Taliban, who want to introduce sharia and Islamic courts. The Swat valley fell into the hands of the Taliban in the autumn of 2007; the army immediately launched a vast offensive to regain control of the territory. An initial agreement, which provided for the introduction of sharia, never went into effect. Last summer, the military launched a second offensive that failed to uproot the Taliban militias from the area.

" Hat tip: C. Cantoni

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### [Pakistan: Discovering the Bible to Bring the Christian Message to Everyone](#)

In one of the oldest Catholic villages of Pakistan a congress is held to discuss the Holy Scriptures and the Church's mission. It is part of the Year of the Bible launched by Pakistani bishops. It can œrekindle peoples passion for the word of God [. . .] so that they can pass on to others what they have received, says the secretary of the Catholic Bible Commission of Pakistan.

Khushupur (AsiaNews) " œThis is a totally new concept for me, meeting the Holy Scriptures only for myself, discuss the verses among ourselves so as to understand how they can become part of my daily life, Aqeela Dilshad, a 19

years old college student from Faisalabad diocese, said as she talked about a four-day Bible congress that drew about 170 Catholic, many young, from her diocese as well as that of Islamabad.

The event took place in one of the Pakistans oldest Catholic village, Khushpur, in Punjab province on the theme of "The bible and the Church, fourth such meeting in a series that began in May 2008, when Pakistans bishops launched the Year of the Bible.

After the Eucharist celebrated by Mgr Joseph Coutts, bishop of Faisalabad, which inaugurated the congress, a series of sessions got underway in which delegates approached the Holy Scriptures in different ways.

Fr Aftab James Paul, diocesan director of the Faisalabad Bible Commission, told AsiaNews that the focus of the four-day event was the richness of the Bible and the many approaches that it offers the faithful, all from a dual perspective, that of personal conversion and of mission to the world to promote the Christian message to others.

Men and women religious, catechists, diocesan and Caritas operators were among the delegates. And for all of them the four days in Khushpur were an important moment to discover the Holy Scriptures anew.

I am very lucky to take part in this congress, said Sister Shazia Lal, from the congregation of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. For her it was an opportunity to know the history of the Bible and what role our people played in translating it.

For Caritas operator Shakeela Yasmen, 29, from Tob Tek Singh, the four-day event helped her understand the importance of bringing the word of God into my actual life.

Fr Emmanuel Asi, secretary of the Catholic Bible Commission of Pakistan, said that the purpose of the various Bible congresses held since May of last year has been to rekindle peoples passion for the word of God and push them to regularly recite and study the Bible so that they can pass on to others what they have received.

" Hat tip: C. Cantoni

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### [Pakistan: Swat Peace Deal Threatens Human Rights Says Amnesty](#)

Mingora/London, 17 Feb. (AKI) " Human rights, especially womens rights, would be further threatened once Islamic Sharia law is imposed troubled northwestern Swat district under a controversial peace accord signed this week, leading campaign group Amnesty International has said.

The Pakistani government must ensure it protects the human rights of nearly two million people in the Swat valley and neighbouring Malakand district, Amnesty said.

Once one of Pakistans most popular holiday destinations, the Swat valley is now mostly under Taliban control since an insurgency began there in 2007 following the siege of Islamabads Red Mosque in which over 100 people died.

Hundreds of thousands of people have fled Swat and hundreds of girls schools have been destroyed since the Taliban began a reign of terror including beheadings of officials and members of the Pakistani security forces sent to quell the insurgency.

The Taliban in Swat has also publicly whipped men for shaving their beards, destroyed music shops and forcibly prohibited women from leaving their homes, unless escorted by a male relative, Amnesty noted.

The controversial peace deal signed between Taliban insurgents in Swat and the government of surrounding North West Frontier Province could legitimise the human rights abuses that have been taking place in the region as the Taliban influence has increased, Amnesty warned.

œThe government is reneging on its duty to protect the human rights of people from Swat Valley by handing them over to Taliban insurgents, said Sam Zarifi, Amnestys Asia-Pacific director.

Amnesty also accused the Pakistani authorities of launching œindiscriminate and disproportionate attacks against the Taliban that have mostly harmed civilians.

Females in Swat have been systematically targeted by the Taliban for œgender based violence and discrimination, the group said.

Girls and womens rights to freedom of movement, work and education have been severely curtailed, it said.

œThe Pakistani government cannot just abandon these people and sign away their rights, said Zarifi.

NWFP chief minister, Ameer Hussain Hoti on Monday announced an accord had been signed that would implement a new œorder of justice in Malakand and Swat.

A new law will create a separate system of justice for the whole area, although the Taliban have reportedly already set up their own system of Islamic justice, as they understand it.

Between 250,000 " 500,000 people have been forced to flee their homes in the Swat valley since 2007.

The Taliban campaign against female education has led to tens of thousands of children being denied an education, according to local observers.

" Hat tip: C. Cantoni

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### [The Pakistani Time Bomb](#)

So far, the United States has given the government of Pakistan more than \$12.3 billion in military and economic aid. Vice President Joe Biden proposed last summer that we throw another \$7.5 billion in non-military aid Pakistans way over the next five years.

But that isnt enough to keep Pakistan from failing as a state, says the Atlantic Council. The Atlantic Council describes itself at its website as œpromot[ing] constructive U.S. leadership and engagement in international affairs based on the central role of the Atlantic community in meeting the international challenges of the 21st century.

" Hat tip: JD

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### [Japans Boffins: Global Warming Isnt Man-Made](#)

Climate science is ~ancient astrology, claims report

Exclusive Japanese scientists have made a dramatic break with the UN and Western-backed hypothesis of climate change in a new report from its Energy Commission.

Three of the five researchers disagree with the UNs IPCC view that recent warming is primarily the consequence of man-made industrial emissions of greenhouse gases. Remarkably, the subtle and nuanced language typical in such reports has been set aside.

One of the five contributors compares computer climate modelling to ancient astrology. Others castigate the paucity of the US ground temperature data set used to support the hypothesis, and declare that the unambiguous warming trend from the mid-part of the 20th Century has ceased.

" Hat tip: JD

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### [\*Boxer Seeks to Ratify U.N. Treaty That May Erode U.S. Rights\*](#)

Sen. Barbara Boxer is pushing the Obama administration to move forward with ratification of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, a controversial treaty that has never gained much support in the U.S.

Sen. Barbara Boxer is urging the U.S. to ratify a United Nations measure meant to expand the rights of children, a move critics are calling a gross assault on parental rights that could rob the U.S. of sovereignty.

The California Democrat is pushing the Obama administration to review the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, a nearly 20-year-old international agreement that has been foundering on American shores since it was signed by the Clinton administration in 1995 but never ratified.

Critics say the treaty, which creates æthe right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and outlaws the æarbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, intrudes on the family and strips parents of the power to raise their children without government interference.

Nearly every country in the world is party to it " only the U.S. and Somalia are not " but the convention has gained little support in the U.S. and never been sent to the Senate for ratification.

That could change soon.

" Hat tip: JD

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### [\*Demography: Italy, More Than 60 Mln Inhabitants in 2008\*](#)

(ANSAmèd) " ROME, FEBRUARY 26 " In 2008, for the first time and thanks mainly to foreigners, the Italian population has risen over 60 million according to a survey carried out by Italian National Statistics Office ISTAT. The Office points out however that the results are still æprovisional. The total population, writes ISTAT, æhas grown in 2008 as well, thanks to immigration. During 2008 æthe resident population in Italy is likely to grow by over 434 thousand, a growth rate of 7.3 per thousand inhabitants, causing the historic threshold of 60 million inhabitants to be surpassed on January 1 2009. ISTAT reports that æit has taken 50 years (from 1959) to grow from 50 to 60 million inhabitants. The growth from 40 to 50 million took 33 years: from 1926 to 1959 and 30 years from 30 to 40 million (1896-1926). (ANSAmèd).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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### [Denmark: Forced Integration at City Schools Possible](#)

Copenhagen may follow the same route as Aarhus and introduce a forced school-integration policy for children

Failure of the voluntary "Copenhagen Model" to successfully integrate children from **immigrant** families in schools may result in the city turning to a forced integration model, reports Berlingske Tidende newspaper.

Copenhagens youth committee has set up a workgroup that will assess whether integration is best served through forcing those children into predominantly white schools or returning to the Copenhagen model. The model was first used in 2005 and regarded as a success.

The ultimate goal is to prevent the proliferation of classrooms with an overabundance of students with **immigrant** backgrounds and achieve a better balance between **immigrant** and Danish students in classes.

But the city, which had been allowing children from the Nørrebro borough to attend schools in the Østerbro borough, abandoned the model in October, alleging a lack of places at schools.

Forced integration of children into schools has become known as the "Aarhus model" in Denmark because of that city's preference for it, one which has been successful, according to the numbers.

**Immigrant** children from Aarhus are placed in different schools according to their Danish language abilities. The municipality indicates that 80 percent of those children's Danish skills have improved as a result of the move.

Several parties in Copenhagen's city council are in favour of forced integration at schools. However, the city indicated the lack of available class places still poses an obstacle.

" Hat tip: Tuan Jim

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### [Denmark: Government Stands Its Ground Against EU Residency Changes](#)

The government is sticking to its promise to parliamentary ally The Danish People's Party, and opposing any EU changes to residency regulations

A stubborn Birthe Rønn Hornbech vowed to continue Denmark's uphill battle to preserve its strict residency rules in the face of stiff opposition from the European Union.

During talks at the EU Commission in Brussels yesterday over the Metock ruling " which allows non-EU spouses of EU member country citizens to obtain residence permits without having previously lived in an EU country " the integration minister reiterated the Liberal-Conservative government's wish to repeal the ruling's conditions.

Although Austria and Ireland have indicated their support of Denmark's position in the matter, most EU member states are against any change in the directive. But Hornbech is prepared to stand her ground.

"If you ram your head against a wall you may as well keep doing it until there's a hole," she said. "We have an agreement with the Danish People's Party and until that changes the goal is to alter the directive."



The Danish Peoples Party (DF) made fighting the Metock ruling a requirement for the government in return for the partys support of the most recent immigration package. But experts generally believe the chances of getting the EU to change the ruling is impossible, particularly when it would require unanimous approval from all the unions member states.

At Thursdays meeting, EU Justice Commissioner Jacques Barrot said the commissions guidelines for administering the Metock ruling were delayed but would be completed by June.

Hornbech said she was ~satisfied that the EU Commission had at least promised at the meeting to increase its focus on possible abuse of the ruling or on any unforeseen loopholes.

" Hat tip: Tuan Jim

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### [Denmark: Politicians Plot to Deport Weapons Violators](#)

The integration minister plans to propose a legal change that would allow foreign criminals convicted of weapons violations to be deported

Integration Minister Birthe Rønn Hornbech wants to table a proposal that would tighten weapons laws and allow for the deportation of foreign criminals who have been convicted of weapons crime.

~We must do everything to make it clear that we simply wont stand for this. Those [criminals who have broken weapons laws] who do not need be in the country, have to know that they are at risk of being deported, said Hornbech to DR News.

Both the Conservatives and the Danish Peoples Party (DF) have already backed the plan, which would signal a parliamentary majority backing for the change.

~If someone is not a Danish citizen and has committed a crime then they should be deported, no matter how long they have been in Denmark, said DF legal spokesman Peter Skaarup. ~We should not accept that Denmark is becoming a playground for criminal activities.

Khalid Alsubeihi has worked for many years with ***immigrant*** youths in the Nørrebro district of Copenhagen and warned against introducing legislation that would punish one group more than another.

~Its sending the wrong signal to young people. Criminality should be heavily punished, but it should be equally so for everyone, said Alsubeihi.

" Hat tip: Tuan Jim

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### [EU Immigrant Numbers Grow Steadily](#)

At the end of December last year, 1,026,495 European Union citizens were resident in Switzerland, an increase of 6.8 per cent on the previous year.

According to the latest figures released by the Federal Migration Office, 1.6 million foreigners had residence permits out of a total population of 7.6 million. These foreigners include people born in Switzerland of foreign parents.

While the number of EU citizens is growing steadily, new arrivals from other parts of the world increased by only 0.4 per cent and many nationality groups " such as Serbian, Croatian and Sri Lankan " are seeing declining numbers.

This is a reflection of the new law on foreigners, which allows only the recruitment of highly qualified workers from the rest of the world.

Germans remain the largest group of newcomers " 31,463 more people from the neighbouring country moved to Switzerland last year, bringing the total German population to 233,352. However, Italians remain the largest immigrant group with 290,000.

The Federal Migration Office statistics exclude asylum seekers.

Traffic is moving both way, with 20 per cent more Swiss people living abroad than a decade ago. In 2008, more than 8,000 Swiss moved abroad, taking the overall total of Swiss expatriates to 676,176.

" Hat tip: Insubria

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#### [EU Interior Ministers Mediterranean Proposal](#)

(ANSAméd) " BRUSSELS, FEBRUARY 26 " This morning EU ministers of the interior will be discussing the joint proposal by Italy, Greece and Malta for greater coordination in the handling of immigration flows in Mediterranean countries. In preparation for this morning's discussion, some sources say Interior Minister Roberto Maroni has met with delegations from the three countries which are part of the initiative. (ANSAméd).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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#### [Finland: Timo Kalli Tries to Explain Immigration Comment](#)

MP Timo Kalli, chairman of the Parliamentary group of the Centre Party, felt compelled on Thursday to clarify a statement in which he said that the minimum age for old age pensions should be increased, so that limits might be placed on immigration. On Wednesday, the TV network MTV3 sought out the opinions of all of the government party groups on the reasons why immigration has exploded. "The more Finns can be kept at work for a longer time, the easier immigration can be kept under control, Kalli said. He then continued, saying that raising the pension age will not eliminate the need for immigration, but that one basis for raising the age of retirement is that "the longer Finns working careers can be extended, the less we will need work-based immigration.

The chairman of the Swedish Peoples Party, Stefan Wallin, reacted to Kalli's comments on Thursday, saying that the statement was "as unfounded an interpretation of the purpose of the government's aims as it is a stupid one. Wallin added that no linkage was made in the government programme on pensions and a need to reduce immigration. He felt that it was "extremely regrettable, that Kalli, as the chairman of the largest political group in Parliament, will place himself in a position of "a lightning rod for powers who use immigration as a political weapon. Immigration is the responsibility of Astrid Thors (Swed. Peoples Party), the Minister of Migration and European Affairs.

Kalli told Helsingin Sanomat on Thursday that the linkage between immigration and retirement age was his own statement, and had not been part of the governments political discussions. He also said that his statement was not intended as a comment on policy toward foreigners. He denied that he had meant to suggest that immigration would be somehow undesirable, adding that there must be as many work-based immigrants as needed. Talk of immigration exploding is linked with the recent surge in the number of asylum applicants.

Kalli also said that MTV3 had made use of the tail end of his statement. In reality, on the MTV3 recording, Kalli mentions limiting immigration as the second most important reason to raise the pension age. Immigration policy was the cause of the second-longest discussion at Tuesdays government meeting. The government decided to decide to promote employment among immigrants, and to toughen asylum policy in order to reduce the number of unfounded asylum applications. Kallis statements have sparked furores before. The most famous one was when he said on television in the spring of 2008 that he refuses to abide by the law on election financing because no punishment has been assigned to violators. The statement was followed by a massive public outcry, which led to extensive debate on the issue, and that is why there are moves to toughen campaign financing legislation.

" Hat tip: Tuan Jim

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### [Immigrant Integration Better in Emilia Romagna](#)

(ANSAméd) " ROME, FEBRUARY 20 " Immigrants are integrating into Italian society better in the central Emilia Romagna region than elsewhere, the National Council on the Economy and Labour (CNEL) said Friday. The region around Bologna topped a ranking in CNELs sixth annual report. As for provinces, the area around the northeastern city of Trieste came top for social and employment integration. Annual per capita earnings for immigrants were about 7,000 euro less than for Italians. (ANSAméd).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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### [Immigration: ACLU Signs Add to Washington States Immigration Storm](#)

An immigration showdown is brewing on Washingtons Olympic Peninsula, where simmering tensions and borderline hostility have fueled a turf war between the local community and the Border Patrol agents assigned to protect it.

Now the American Civil Liberties Union has jumped into the ring and upped the ante, rolling out a campaign that will install signs inside buses informing riders of their rights " to ignore Border Patrol agents.

The signs, entitled, "YOUR RIGHTS with border patrol agents on this bus, makes three points:

• If youre a U.S. citizen, you dont have to prove it. • If youre not a U.S. citizen and are 18 or older, you must show your immigration papers to federal agents. • Everyone has the right to remain silent.

The campaign, which could start as early as next week, is the latest in a series of expanding grassroots efforts aimed at curbing the expansion of Border Patrol forces and the powers of its agents.

" Hat tip: JD

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### [Italy: Immigrant Population Close to Four Million](#)

Rome, 26 Feb. (AKI) " A wave of recent immigration has lifted the number of foreigners living in Italy to almost four million people. According to the latest figures released by the central statistics agency, ISTAT, there were 3.9 million foreigners living in Italy on 1 January 2009 " an increase of 462,000 over the previous year.

An increase in the number of new born babies " 12,000 more than in 2007 " helped to raise the countrys flagging birthrate and take the total population to more than 60 million people.

ISTAT said that there had been an increase in the number of Italian women having babies, as well as an increase in the number of foreign residents who had given birth.

In 2008, around 88,000 babies or 15.3 percent of the total were born to foreign mothers compared to only 29,000 or 5.4 percent in 1999. Of the babies born to foreign mothers, 3.4 percent were born to Italian fathers and 11.9 percent to foreign fathers.

ISTAT said that Romanians make up the greatest number of foreigners (772,000) followed by 438,000 Albanians and 401,000 Moroccans. Together these groups make up 40 percent of the total number.

The distribution of foreigners is much higher in the north of the country, where 62 percent of them live. As many as 23 percent live in the region of Lombardy that surrounds the northern city of Milan. There are only 12 percent of foreigners living in the south of the country.

" Hat tip: C. Cantoni

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### [Maroni: Joint Proposal on EU Agenda](#)

(ANSAméd) " BRUSSELS, FEBRUARY 26 " Italys Interior Minister, Roberto Maroni, announced at the end of a meeting with his colleagues in the European government that the main points of a joint proposal advanced by Italy together with Greece, Malta, and Cyprus, to oppose illegal immigration targeting the Mediterranean, will be inserted into the agenda of the upcoming Swedish EU presidency. The Stockholm agenda will dictate the priorities for internal issues and EU justice over the coming four years. During the meeting, Maroni explained that this commitment, requested by Italy, was assumed by the EU Commissioner of Justice, Security, and Liberty, Jacques Barrot, and by the representative from Sweden, the next holder of the EUs rotating presidency. æThis commitment is of crucial importance and to be appreciated. It means that in the strategy for the next five years, there will be points that we have chosen to combat illicit immigration specifically in the Mediterranean. This is the new aspect, commented Maroni, who said that he expects Stockholm to also recognise the need to increase financing for Frontex to æmake it more effective. (ANSAméd)

" Hat tip: Insubria

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### [Court: State Trashed Churchs 1st Amendment Rights](#)

Encouraging members to support traditional marriage protected speech

An appeals court ruled the state of Montana violated a churchs First Amendment rights to encourage its members to support traditional marriage.

The ruling from the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the states determination that the church was an incidental political committee because members promoted and signed petitions supporting traditional marriage, and the pastor also encouraged it.

The complaint against Ferry Road Baptist Church of East Helena was sparked by a complaint from a homosexual activist group, the court ruling noted. The Alliance Defense Fund took up the fight for the church by filing a lawsuit in 2004 after the state issued its ruling against the church.

" Hat tip: JD

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### [Energy: Khelil Says OPEC Likely to Cut Output Again](#)

(ANSAm) " ALGIERS, FEBRUARY 23 " Algerian Minister for Energy and Mines Chakib has been quoted by APS as saying that OPEC will probably be opting on March 15 for a new cut in output, to try to stabilize falling prices. If the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries had not decided in September, October and December to decrease its production (in total by 4.2 mln barrels/day, Ed.), said Khelil, today crude oil prices would not be at 40 but at 20 dollars per barrel. The next OPEC summit is scheduled for March 15 in Vienna. (ANSAm).

" Hat tip: Insubria

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Newstex ID: GATE-0001-32485583

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**Language:** ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Web Blog

**Subject:** CHRISTIANS & CHRISTIANITY (91%); MUSLIMS & ISLAM (89%); RELIGION (89%); WAR CRIMES (87%); EUROPEAN UNION (87%); TALKS & MEETINGS (75%); LEGISLATIVE BODIES (75%); TYPES OF GOVERNMENT (74%); RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION (74%); FUNDRAISING (72%); POLLS & SURVEYS (72%); US CONGRESS (72%); ECONOMIC CRISIS (70%); ARRESTS (70%); AL-QAEDA (69%); ARREST WARRANTS

(64%); CAPITAL PUNISHMENT (64%); SEX OFFENSES (64%); TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS (62%); CALL CENTERS (55%); POLLUTION & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS (52%); EDUCATION REFORM (50%); SECONDARY SCHOOLS (50%)

**Company:** INTEL CORP (56%)

**Ticker:** INTC (NASDAQ) (56%)

**Industry:** CALL CENTERS (55%); SECONDARY SCHOOLS (50%)

**Person:** ERIC HOLDER (57%); Chuck Grassley; Tom Harkin; Carl Levin; John McCain; Barack Obama; Debbie Stabenow; Sherrod Brown; William Jefferson Clinton; Ronald Wilson Reagan

**Geographic:** PARIS, FRANCE (75%); UNITED STATES (94%); SERBIA (92%); CROATIA (79%); ISRAEL (79%); BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA (79%); STATE OF PALESTINE (79%); EUROPE (79%); EUROPEAN UNION MEMBER STATES (79%); NORTHERN AFRICA (79%); FINLAND (75%); MOROCCO (71%); FRANCE (70%); GERMANY (70%); AFRICA (57%)

**Load-Date:** March 3, 2009

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