

# **WorldWatch**

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## **Israel**

The United States and European Union have been pushing for a peaceful agreement in the Middle East at almost any cost. The pressure began on the eve of the U.S.-led military offensive against Afghanistan. European leaders, enthusiastic about a new order in the Middle East that would unite against terrorism and bring peace to the region, called their counterparts in Israel to urge them to offer gestures to the Palestinians. The strangest phone call came from German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, who told Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon that Syria is against terrorism and never supported attacks against civilians, also saying that Israel needed to make painful sacrifices to ensure this peace. Unable to speak to President George Bush, Sharon angrily warned the West that Israel will not be sacrificed at the altar of political expediency and will no longer stay passive. While outside intervention in the Middle East has been forestalled for the time being, Israeli diplomatic sources are still bracing for an American peace plan.

## **Syria**

Companies in Austria, France, Germany, and Holland are supplying technology for Syria's chemical and biological weapons programs, and in many cases, the same companies are also supplying Iraq. Syria recently won a seat on the U.N. Security Council and is tacitly supporting the current U.S. war on terrorism, despite the fact that it harbors four Palestinian groups that Washington classifies as terrorist organizations. Their presence, along with Damascus' support for the Lebanese guerrilla group Hezbollah, are key reasons why the U.S. has Syria on its list of states that sponsor terrorism.

## **Abortion**

For over a year, public schools have been using tax dollars to distribute the so-called "morning-after" pill to teens. The abortion industry calls it "emergency contraception," but bioethics analysts say "chemical abortion" is a more accurate term. Almost 200 schools nationwide now dispense this pill to teens, and parental notification is not part of the process. Some schools even hand out the drug without a prescription. Analysts say a danger of this pill is that it creates a false sense of security, and that teens need to be warned of the severe health risks from the drug, as well as the danger of catching sexually transmitted diseases.

## **China**

U.S. defense officials say the Pentagon will begin shifting the targets of a significant number of its strategic nuclear weapons from Russia to China as part of a major arms review. This new strategy is based on two factors: China's arms buildup and recent Pentagon studies that reveal Beijing will not be deterred from using its nuclear arms unless it faces a massive U.S. retaliation threat. Currently, China is trying to limit U.S. influence in Central Asia. While publicly supporting U.S. counter-terrorism strikes against Afghanistan, Chinese military officials, citing the establishment of a U.S. military base in Uzbekistan, contend the U.S.-led efforts are part of a covert plan to "contain" and encircle China. Recently, China has supported both Afghanistan and Iraq by supplying

communication stations and technology. Beijing signed a memorandum of understanding for greater economic and technical cooperation with the Taliban, ironically, on September 11, and since then, U. S. air strikes have killed a number of Chinese combatants in Afghanistan.

### **Germany**

In the wake of the September 11 attacks, Germany has given police authorities sweeping new powers in the battle against terrorism. German states are debating whether warrants are necessary for police searches and have reintroduced profiling as an investigative method. Police have drawn up a profile that includes men aged 20 to 30 of Arab origin with no criminal record and an interest in technical studies. Anyone who fits the profile could be taken into custody and questioned without any evidence they have done anything illegal. Critics of the plan worry about the erosion of civil liberties.

### **Persecution**

*Middle East Newsline* published the first confirmed report of mainstream Christians being arrested and even tortured in the "moderate" Saudi kingdom. "Christian sources in the kingdom said at least 15 Christians from Africa have been arrested in Jedda over the last few months for conducting non-Islamic services in private homes. Three of them are said to have been tortured in prison." The report states, "Saudi Arabia does not allow the worship of any other religion other than Islam. Jews are not allowed in the kingdom, and Christians are warned that they risk arrest if they participate in private prayer gatherings."