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TUESDAY, APRIL 29, 2008

By John Vinocur  
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## Austrians stunned by macabre incest case

Father hid daughter for 24 years while she bore him 7 children

By Mark Landler

**LMSTETTEN, Austria:** With his Mercedes and the rings on his fingers, Josef Fritzl looked every inch a property owner; neighbors and shopkeepers in this idyllic Austrian town said Monday. Even when running errands, they said, he wore a natty jacket, crisp shirt and a tie. Fritzl's apartment house, its back garden obscured by a tall hedge, was a kingdom, one neighbor said, and spacers were not welcome. On Monday, investigators in white jumpsuits combed the house and garden for clues to how Fritzl, 73, was able to keep his daughter imprisoned in a basement dungeon for 24 years, during which she bore him seven children.

Fritzl's daughter, Elisabeth, now 42, is in psychiatric care, along with two of his children. Her eldest daughter, Kerstin, 19, whose illness unraveled Fritzl's secret after he decided to have her taken to a hospital, is in a medically induced coma, the authorities said.

The abduction, sexual abuse and incest to which Fritzl confessed Monday, affected this town of 22,000 in stunned disbelief. Neighbors milled around the apartment building, watching the investigation unfold and asking how such a heinous crime could have occurred under their noses.

"I cannot comprehend the dimensions of this," said Doris Bichler, 34, who lives nearby and was walking with her sister, "Natascha Kampusch" was held, is of a totally different scale."

Landler was referring to the notorious kidnapping of an Austrian schoolgirl who was hidden in a windowless room for eight years until she escaped in 2006. Until now, the Kampusch case had been a benchmark for the post-World War II history of this country.

As details of this latest case filter through, it seems even more difficult to believe than Kampusch's abduction. It is nearly a quarter-century of incest and sexual abuse, and the father of seven children, three of whom emerged from the cellar into daylight last week.

So raises a troubling question: How did two such horrifying crimes occur so quickly in succession in Austria, a peaceful, picture-book land that has given the world both Mozart and Hitler? There seems no easy answer, though some have insisted similar crimes had occurred in other countries. Officials said they were struggling to make sense of singular misdeeds.

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TO EUROPE | At all costs



Hundreds of Afghans, Kurds and Africans struggle in makeshift camps around Calais and other ports facing England.

## A port without shelter

Clandestine migrants stuck in 'jungle' by Calais

By Caroline Brothers

**It is midnight, and eight hooded figures slip around the side of a freight truck at a gas station on the outskirts of this northern French port. They wait in the orange half-light while one tries to unlock the truck door. It doesn't give, and seconds later the figures vanish among the dozens of semi-trailers at this, the last truck stop before England.**

Most weeknights, a smuggler leads clandestine migrants across the maze of motorways that encircle Calais to parking lots like this, where drivers sleep before catching a ferry to Dover, 33 kilometers, or 21 miles, away.

Truckers like Juan Antonio Santiago of Spain, sipping coffee at a gas station at 1 a.m., face hefty fines or even jail if stowaways are found hidden inside their vehicles, or clinging to the ledge behind the axle. "It's a fear we all have," he said. "But the greatest risk is taken by the migrants, because of the danger of falling off."

According to a gas station cashier working the night shift, the smugglers act very fast. "When the driver pulls in to fill up his tank and comes in to pay — that's when they cut the seals on the door very quickly and get inside, and one of them stays outside to put them back in place."

Such scrambles are the smugglers' livelihood: If the stowaways manage to slip

CALAIS, Continued on Page 2



From top: An Afghan's shelter at Loon Plage; a hotel burned by the police in Garennes; huts in "The Jungle."

Photographs by Susan Meiselas / Magnum Photos for the International Herald Tribune

## EU facing 'shock' of rising inflation

Top aide calls for regulatory overhaul to help consumers cope with price

By Carter Dougherty

**FRANKFURT:** Europe is facing a "very strong inflationary shock" as a result of rising energy and food costs, the top European Union official for economic affairs said Monday as the price of oil neared \$120 a barrel.

Joaquin Almunia, the EU commissioner for economic and monetary affairs, said that higher inflation was emerging as "a big punishment to the weakest sectors of society," because it eats away at the purchasing power of people who have seen their incomes stagnate in recent years.

His remarks came as the European Commission revised its forecast higher for inflation this year, to 3.2 percent from 2.1 percent in 2007, well above the target of just under 2 percent that the European Central Bank aims for.

In response, Almunia said that governments should revamp laws and regulations that keep prices high. In the past, European officials have said that these measures include fostering greater competition in the services sector and keeping down administrative price increases like fees and sales taxes.

"We need to be concerned not only because of economic reasons but also because of social reasons," Almunia said, "and we need to ask the governments to step up their efforts of adopting structural reforms that can counter these inflation risks."

Commodity price increases, driven by rising demand from fast-growing Asian economies, have turned into a curse for the global economy this year, contributing to higher inflation around the globe.

Almunia acknowledged that inflation was biting hard in Europe this year because incomes have not risen during the current economic upswing as they have in past expansions, amplifying the feeling of being squeezed in many households.

"The disposable income of households is not increasing as much as in previous recoveries," Almunia said, "and this means wage increases have not increased so far as much as in previous recoveries."

The ECB has inflation, which hit a 3.6 percent annual rate in March, firmly in its sights, as required by its legal mandate. Jean-Claude Trichet, the ECB president, said Monday in Vienna that the central bank would set interest rates based on "no other considerations than the delivery of price stability in the medium term."

In recent weeks, the tough stance of a number of senior ECB policy makers on inflation has contributed to a broad impression that at least some officials are itching to raise interest rates as soon as the current financial market tension eases. The muscular euro, which helps keep import prices down, has probably also helped curb any ECB rush to lift borrowing costs, economists believe.

"There is no doubt in my mind that without the financial crisis, and maybe the strong euro, they would have long since hiked rates," said Erik Nielsen, chief Europe economist at Goldman Sachs in London.

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INSIDE

## U.S. consumers tighten their belts

Stung by rising prices, consumers are finding creative ways to cut costs on routine items like groceries and clothing. Retailers, restaurants and manufacturers to decode the suddenly thrifty public.

COMING WEDNESDAY

## Struggling to...

Many families in Europe once enjoyed middle-class lifestyles find that soaring prices have pushed them to the tip...

## As price surges, product falls be...

By Jad Mouawad

**NEW YORK:** As oil prices record levels in recent months, economists suggested that the market would fall and suppliers would open...

But as prices flirt with many energy specialists worried that neither opening. Higher prices to attract new producers global demand mismatch has sent...

A central reason to meet demand is the side of the OPEC. Like Russia, Mexico has been showing trouble. Unlike the Petroleum Exporting explicit goal is to keep prices up, the free traders of market, with every flat-out at a time of...

That they are no bling sign. Countries have been the main growth in the as new fields in Alaska, the North. After the collapse new opportunities and the Caspian Sea...

OIL, Continued on Page 10

Gazprom offers prime minister

Iran startles West with atom specifics

Crucial ruling as Democrats look ahead

Meanwhile, the Democratic party

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