

Briefly noted

News in the [September 21, 2004](#) issue

The U.S. government has revoked the work visa of a Muslim scholar who planned to teach at the University of Notre Dame during the fall semester. The visa of Tariq Ramadan, a Swiss citizen, was pulled at the request of the Department of Homeland Security, according to news reports. Ramadan, who has been criticized for remarks labeled anti-Semitic and for alleged ties to Islamic militants, had been scheduled to start teaching last month. Department of Homeland Security spokesman Russ Knocke said the work visa was revoked because of a section in federal law regarding aliens who have used a “position of prominence within any country to endorse and espouse terrorist activity.” Notre Dame spokesman Matt Storin differed with the department’s assessment, saying Ramadan is a voice for moderation in the Muslim world and a distinguished scholar.

According to a group of liberal Catholic nuns, it is “politically and morally wrong” to deny gay couples the right to marry, and church teachings against homosexuality are “unjust.” The 500-member National Coalition of American Nuns approved the statement during its August 18-21 convention in Denver. The sisters also approved resolutions against war, nuclear weapons and sexual abuse by nuns. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has endorsed the proposed amendment banning gay marriage.

A prominent Lutheran leader has called for organizing a global gathering to offer international support to South Asia’s Dalit communities—formerly called untouchables—along the powerful lines of informed pressure that helped end South Africa’s racist policy of apartheid. “The exclusion suffered by members of the communities known today as ‘Dalit’ is probably one of the most extreme and violent expressions of exclusion,” Lutheran World Federation General Secretary Ishmael Noko told a seven-day executive meeting near the Swiss city of Geneva. Noko, a theologian from Zimbabwe and the first African general secretary of the Geneva-based federation, was elected September 1 to another seven-year term. The caste system is Hindu in origin, and in India has been officially outlawed. But many Indians and human rights groups note that it remains part of social life. It is also said to be followed by some Christians and people of other faiths, especially in rural areas.