

Briefly noted

News in the [March 21, 2006](#) issue

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom says it is “deeply concerned” about a worsening situation for religious minorities in Iran. “A consistent stream of virulent and inflammatory statements by political and religious leaders and an increase of harassment, imprisonment and physical attacks against these groups is clear evidence of a disturbing, renewed pattern of oppression,” the watchdog panel said late last month. Created by Congress, the commission provides independent policy advice to Washington. Michael Cromartie, who chairs the commission, said the pattern of rhetoric resembles that of the early years of the Iranian revolution. Iran’s Baha’i communities typically suffer severe human rights violations, but Christians in the country “increasingly have been subject to harassment, arrests, close surveillance, and imprisonment,” says the commission, citing incidents in which authorities have been “raiding church services, detaining worshipers and church leaders, and harassing and threatening church members.”

The Uganda Joint Christian Council says that Uganda’s first multiparty election in 25 years was not fair and free, but it has urged the opposition to accept the outcome for the sake of peace in the central African nation. The 62-year-old president, Yoweri Museveni, was declared the winner February 26 with 59 percent, but the opposition claimed its own count showed that it was ahead in a ballot that independent observers said was flawed by government abuses. Museveni, a former guerrilla leader, took power in 1986 after a bush war. The Christian Council, a grouping of Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox churches, issued a joint statement on February 27 with the Action for Development and Uganda Journalists Safety Committee. The two bodies had observed the election under the name Democracy Monitoring Group.