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## **From Alabama to Wyoming: 50 counts of double standards -- the missing entries in the US report on human rights**

On 25 February, the US State Department will publish its annual report on human rights, addressing the unjustified killing or ill-treatment of people by police and other security forces in some 190 countries -- similar incidents in New York, Illinois or California, however, will not be granted a mention

“One could very well say that this year, like every other, there will be 50 entries missing from the State Department report: from Alabama to Wyoming,” Amnesty International said, deploring the USA’s hypocritical stance at not recognizing the extent to which human rights abuses are going unchecked in its own territory.

“The US government has a selective approach to human rights -- using international human rights standards as a yardstick by which to judge other countries, but consistently failing to apply those same standards at home.”

“Furthermore, US government policies often lead to human rights being sacrificed for political, economic and military interests, both in US territory and abroad,” the organization continued. “By providing weapons, security equipment and training to other countries, the USA is responsible for the same abuses it denounces in its State Department report.”

According to Amnesty International, when it comes to human rights, the USA discriminates against countries and victims.

“The US government often criticizes countries it considers hostile, while ignoring abuses committed by its allies or failing to take action that would run counter to US interests. When it comes to victims, human rights violations committed in US territory are not even admitted as such.”

Human rights violations in the USA are serious and persistent. Just in the past year, Amnesty International recorded regular reports of torture and ill-treatment including:

- the death of a prisoner after being strapped for hours to a restraint board,
- allegations of immigration detainees being beaten and tortured with electro-shock shields while held in four-point restraint, and
- the use of the remote control electro-shock stun belt in trials and prisoner transportation in well over 100 jurisdictions -- including Louisiana, where stun belts have been used on low security HIV/AIDS inmates.

In US prisons and jails, physical and sexual abuse are endemic, and repressive control methods -- like electro-shock weapons or prolonged use of restraint chairs -- are increasingly being used.

Inquiries into police brutality in some jurisdictions in the last decade -- including Los Angeles, New York and Washington DC -- show a pattern of systematic abuses. The US Justice Department receives thousands of complaints every year, which many regard as just the tip of an iceberg. Those whose rights have been violated often receive financial compensation in out of court settlements -- which effectively means the tax payer paying for the authorities' right to abuse their power with impunity.

The USA is failing to meet even the minimum international standards regarding the use of the death penalty. Also, by executing ever increasing numbers of people, the country is out of step with the international trend towards abolition.

International human rights standards demand the highest legal safeguards for all capital trials, seek to restrict the scope of the death penalty, see it as unacceptable punishment for the mentally ill, and forbid its use against juvenile offenders. Not only does the USA fail on all these counts, but early this month, the execution of Sean Sellers for crimes committed when he was a 16-year-old boy confirmed the USA as the world's leading executioner of child offenders.

Use of the death penalty in the USA has consistently shown to be racist and, as the authorities attempt to speed up the time between sentence and execution, the risk of killing the innocent is constantly increasing.

In terms of the treatment of asylum seekers, people seeking refuge in the USA from persecution in their own countries are increasingly locked up in detention and effectively treated like criminals.

"While the US State Department report on human rights serves a good purpose in reminding the international community of the need to remain vigilant about human rights protection, the USA itself should not be immune from international scrutiny," Amnesty International said.

"Victims of human rights abuses in the USA have the right not to be discriminated against. By failing to take a close look at home, the USA is doing just that," Amnesty International said.

"In addition to looking at the state of human rights abroad, it is high time for the USA to recognize this situation and put an end to it." ENDS.../

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**Amnesty International's on-going campaign on human rights in the USA was launched in October 1998. As part of the campaign, Amnesty International has been calling for the US to adopt and rigorously enforce a binding code of conduct, based on human rights, covering all transfers of military, security and police equipment, services and expertise.**

**For further information on the campaign, to arrange an interview or to request a copy of the report *USA: Rights for All* -- launched to accompany the campaign -- please phone Soraya Bermejo, Press Officer, on +44 171 413 5562. ISDN available.**