

Scrutinize Amnesty International

Gerald M. Steinberg

For many journalists, diplomats, and political activists, Amnesty International is considered to be a highly reliable and objective source of information and analysis on human rights around the world. But the halo that surrounds its reports and campaigns is beginning to fray, as the evidence of political bias and inaccuracy mounts.

Recently, the Economist, published in Britain, noted that "an organisation which devotes more pages in its annual report to human-rights abuses in Britain and America than those in Belarus and Saudi Arabia cannot expect to escape doubters' scrutiny." Other critics, including law professor at Harvard, Alan Dershowitz, and the U.S.-based Capital Research Center, have been more pointed, providing evidence of Amnesty's systematic bias and reports based largely on claims by carefully selected "eyewitnesses" in Colombia, Gaza, and Lebanon.

As Amnesty releases its annual report on human rights for 2006, amid highly choreographed public relations events, and repeating the familiar condemnations of Israel and America, NGO Monitor has also published a report on Amnesty's activities in the Middle East. The result is not a pretty picture for those clinging to the "halo effect."

Using a detailed and sophisticated qualitative model for comparing relative resources devoted to the different countries, this report clearly shows that in 2006, Amnesty singled out Israel for condemnation of human rights to a far greater extent than Iran, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Syria, Egypt, and other chronic abusers of human rights.