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A 'Rhetoric-Reality Gap' in Treating Detainees

Letter to the Editor
Washington Post
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Anne Applebaum ["Amnesty's Amnesia," op-ed, June 8] can rest assured that Amnesty International is as resolutely neutral and impartial as ever. History shows that those who stay silent in the face of wrongdoing allow more abuse to occur with impunity. Ms. Applebaum's assertion that there has been a "turning point" at Amnesty resulting in extra scrutiny of the United States -- which she labels "anti-Americanism" -- is false. Our findings may make for difficult reading, but we are not prepared to stay silent. We apply the same international standards to every country. Our 2005 report documented human rights abuses in 148 countries other than the United States.

The detention camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, is a disgrace to all that Americans value. The Bush administration should close Guantanamo, charge the detainees under U.S. law in U.S. courts or release them. President Bush should order full disclosure of U.S. policies and practices on detention and interrogation of prisoners in all detention camps, including Bagram and Abu Ghraib in Iraq. He should support a full and independent investigation of allegations of abuse.

Ms. Applebaum argued that the United States remains "the world's best hope for the promotion of human rights." For that to become true, the administration must close the rhetoric-reality gap and abide by the rule of law.

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