



Equal Justice Initiative ([www.eji.org](http://www.eji.org))

## We think King doth protest too much

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EDITORIAL

Alabama Attorney General Troy King's reaction to a United Nations report on flaws in the way the state handles the death penalty was predictably inappropriate.

Instead of welcoming an opportunity to review the state's procedures in what is arguably its most solemn task, Mr. King chose to dismiss the report and attack the messenger.

The report, issued Monday by U.N. Human Rights Council special investigator Philip Alston, a law professor at New York University, claims Alabama judges convert life sentences to death sentences in order to increase their chances of re-election. It also notes that Alabama is the only state that does not guarantee condemned inmates legal counsel after the first round of appeals. The report says the state may have executed the innocent.

"The United Nations has grievous injustices in its own building that it ought to address before it begins worrying about the speck in the eye of a state like Alabama," Mr. King said.

In fact, the report itself predicted Mr. King's reaction when it said state officials "would rather deny than confront flaws in the criminal justice system."

There is no question the U.N. has its own problems.

But rather than attack the messenger, we would expect a responsible public official to turn the report over to a blue-ribbon panel to conduct its own investigation into the allegations. We think it would be better to disprove such allegations than to merely dismiss them.

Does Mr. King fear such an investigation?

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