



National Day to Commemorate the Bicentennial of Bastille Day, the French Revolution, and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

On July 14, Americans will join the people of France in celebrating the 200th anniversary of the taking of the Bastille. As we commemorate the bicentennial of the French Revolution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, we celebrate the values that we share and our partnership in the quest for liberty and justice.

The United States achieved its Independence with considerable assistance from France and from individual French citizens like the Marquis de Lafayette. Lafayette and other French soldiers who came to this country to fight alongside Americans during our Revolution supported the cause of freedom and individual liberty. Bidding farewell to the Continental Congress in 1783, Lafayette exclaimed: "May this great monument, raised to Liberty, serve as a lesson to the oppressor, and an example to the oppressed!" A few years later, the significance of his words would be fully revealed.

On July 14, 1789, the people of France stormed the despised Bastille prison in Paris, marking the beginning of their own struggle against tyranny. Shortly thereafter, the National Assembly of France approved the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen. This historic document noted that "ignorance, neglect, or contempt of human rights, are the sole causes of public misfortunes" and affirmed the concept of individual liberty.

The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen was not only adopted within the same year as the Congress approved our Bill of Rights, but also contained some of the same themes, including freedom of religion, freedom of the press, security in one's property and person, and due process in courts of law. These documents proclaimed the inviolability of human rights on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean and guaranteed them for future generations.

As we celebrate the bicentennial of the French Revolution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, we note with pride that our two countries remain committed to the principles of individual liberty, equality, and representative government. Two centuries ago, the great American patriot Thomas Paine observed: "The Revolutions of America and France have thrown a beam of light over the world, which reaches into man." Today, we rejoice in the fact that the bright promise of freedom not only continues to shine on both sides of the Atlantic, but also continues to grow stronger around the world.

The Congress, by House Joint Resolution 298, has designated July 14, 1989, as "National Day to Commemorate the Bastille Day Bicentennial," and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this event.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE BUSH, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim July 14, 1989, as a National Day to Commemorate the Bicentennial of Bastille Day, the French Revolution, and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen. I call upon the people of the United States to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities, and I urge them to renew their support for the just aspirations of all peoples who seek freedom and self-determination.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this seventh day of July, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and fourteenth.

George Bush