



## Helsinki Human Rights Day, 1989

*By the President of the United States of America*

### **A Proclamation**

Fourteen years ago, the United States and Canada joined 33 European countries in signing the Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. That action not only marked the culmination of the remarkable, 2-year meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), but also signaled a milestone in European post-war history.

The Helsinki accords recognized the inherent relationship between respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the attainment of genuine peace and security. Following years of diligent effort, the Western nations won in these accords the stated commitment of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe to one of the most far-reaching sets of human rights standards ever enunciated by governments. By signing the Helsinki Final Act, all participating States agreed to respect freedom of thought, freedom of conscience, as well as freedom of religion and belief. Signatories also agreed to facilitate the free movement of people, ideas, and information between nations. The work begun at Helsinki to eliminate the barriers that divide East and West and to advance our goals of freedom, openness, and security has continued throughout three follow-up meetings.

The ongoing CSCE process represents an invaluable avenue to work for change. As recent developments in some nations of Eastern Europe suggest, the Western countries' insistence upon full implementation of the human rights and humanitarian provisions of the Helsinki accords is contributing to fulfillment of my Administration's goal of "a Europe whole and free." The United States welcomes recent improvements in human rights practices in Poland, Hungary, and the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, we look for further reforms in these countries as well as institutionalization of the reforms already introduced.

Despite some positive signs of change in the U.S.S.R. and some countries in Eastern Europe, we are still far from achieving universal compliance with the Helsinki accords. The governments of Romania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany continue to systematically deny the fundamental rights of their citizens. Religious oppression, persecution of ethnic minorities, and restrictions on freedom of information and travel in these countries violate the letter and spirit of the Helsinki accords and impede the CSCE process. The United States will continue to condemn such human rights violations and call upon these countries to meet their commitments under the Helsinki Final Act.

Respect for individual liberty and fundamental human rights is not only the duty of legitimate government, but also the key to economic prosperity and lasting peace among nations. The United States thus remains firmly committed to securing full implementation of the human rights and humanitarian provisions of the Helsinki Final Act.

In recognition of the importance this Nation places on human rights and our continuing commitment to the CSCE process, the Congress, by Senate Joint Resolution 150, has designated August 1, 1989, as "Helsinki Human Rights Day" and has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in its observance.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE BUSH, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim August 1, 1989, as Helsinki Human Rights Day and reaffirm U.S. dedication to the principles of human dignity and freedom enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act. As we Americans observe this day with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities, let us call upon all signatories of the Final Act to fulfill their obligation to respect the fundamental rights and dignity of all their citizens.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this first day of August, 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.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "George Bush".