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Afghanistan Day, 1984

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

For much of the world spring is now beginning. It is a time of new life, renewal, freshness, and hope.

For the people of Afghanistan, March 21 is the traditional celebration of the New Year, the beginning of the cycle of life. It is a period of rejoicing and celebration for life's regeneration as a gift of God.

But today, for most of the people of Afghanistan, the March 21 New Year brings only the renewal of fighting, destruction, and death. For more than four years, the armed forces of the Soviet Union have occupied Afghanistan. More than 100,000 Soviet soldiers now occupy that beleaguered country. The overwhelming majority of the Afghan people are struggling against the Soviet occupation troops and the puppet regime headed by Babrak Karmal. It is a regime that is maintained only by Soviet force.

Afghan resistance to Marxist rule grew dramatically after the Soviet invasion, and it has now spread throughout the country. A solution to the Afghanistan problem must begin with the removal of the Soviet troops. A negotiated political settlement can be achieved if the Soviet Union agrees to withdraw its military forces of occupation.

The goal of United States policy remains clear and consistent. We seek the removal of Soviet military forces so that the Afghan people can live freely in their own country and are able to choose their own way of life and government.

Hope, it is said, springs eternal. We continue to hope that a negotiated settlement can be found, a settlement which fulfills the conditions spelled out five times in resolutions resoundingly endorsed by the General Assembly of the United Nations.

These resolutions, passed by the overwhelming majority of the world's nations, call for the immediate withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan; reaffirm the right of the Afghan people to determine their own form of government and to choose their economic, political, and social system; reiterate that the preservation of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence, and nonaligned character of Afghanistan is essential for a peaceful solution of the problem; and call for the creation of the conditions which would enable the Afghan refugees to return voluntarily to their homes in safety and honor.

We stand in admiration of the indomitable will and courage of the Afghan people who continue their resistance to tyranny. All freedom-loving people around the globe should be inspired by the Afghan people's struggle to be free and the heavy sacrifices they bear for liberty.

Afghanistan Day will serve to recall the fundamental principles involved when a people struggles for the freedom to determine its own future and the right to be free of foreign interference. Let us therefore resolve to pay tribute to the brave Afghan people by observing March 21, 1984 as Afghanistan Day. Let us pledge our continuing admiration for their cause and for their perseverance, and lend our support to the Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

Let us redouble our determination to help find a negotiated settlement that will enable the Afghan people to again welcome spring without the suffering brought by war, but with celebration and joy.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim March 21, 1984, as Afghanistan Day.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 20th day of March, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and eighth.

Ronald Reagan