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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

August 1, 1988

HELSINKI HUMAN RIGHTS DAY, 1988

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BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A PROCLAMATION

Thirteen years ago, 33 European states, the United States, and Canada signed the Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. In so doing, we and the other signatories undertook a sacred commitment to the principles of freedom, self-determination, and human dignity. The Helsinki Final Act acknowledged the fundamental interrelationship of human rights, economic relations, and security considerations in the overall conduct of affairs within and among states. The Final Act recognized that there can be no true international security without respect for basic political and civil rights; that economic ties can contribute to security, but only if based upon open relations among peoples; and that security and confidence can also be improved through the free exchange of information.

That historic meeting in Helsinki has spawned a dynamic process that we in the United States regard as one of the most important developments in East-West relations in the post-World War II period. The work begun at Helsinki to eliminate the barriers that divide East and West has been carried on in three follow-up meetings during the intervening years. At present we are working with the delegations from all the signatory states in Vienna to advance our cherished objectives of freedom, openness, and security.

While progress has occurred in reducing the tensions between East and West, the Soviet Union and other states of the East have not fully lived up to the commitments undertaken at Helsinki. Respect for human rights in these countries continues to fall far short of the standards set forth in the Final Act, as well as in the document issued at the conclusion of the Madrid review conference in 1983. Freedom of movement, conscience, and religion are still shackled by unreasonable and arbitrary government controls. Individuals such as Ukrainian Helsinki monitors Ivan Kandyba and Ivan Sokulsky and Lithuanian Catholic priest Sigitas Tamkevicius, whose only "crime" was to monitor the Soviet Government's compliance with the Helsinki Final Act and speak out in behalf of political and religious freedom, remain in Soviet labor camps. The free flow of ideas and information from abroad and within Eastern Europe is still impeded.

A few short weeks ago I stood in Finlandia Hall -- the historic building in which the Helsinki Final Act was signed. I reiterated the commitment of the American people to continue to work to bring down the barriers that have so cruelly divided the European continent for 4 decades. However, it bears reminding that those barriers were erected by the East,

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and so much of the demolition work will necessarily fall to those states. We are encouraged by recent hopeful pronouncements coming from the Soviet Union and its allies; we await further concrete progress in the treatment of all individuals in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and positive steps in the Vienna meeting to give those pronouncements substance.

It is appropriate that we mark this 13th anniversary of the signing of the Final Act by setting aside a special day to reflect upon and to renew our dedication to the values of human dignity and freedom embodied in that farsighted document. On this occasion, we call upon all signatories of the Final Act to honor in full its solemn principles. Let us pledge to spare no effort in striving toward this goal.

The Congress, by Senate Joint Resolution 338, has designated August 1, 1988, as "Helsinki Human Rights Day" and has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in its observance.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim August 1, 1988, as Helsinki Human Rights Day.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this first day of August, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirteenth.

RONALD REAGAN

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