
Presidential Documents

Title 3—**The President****Proclamation 7158 of December 10, 1998****Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, and Human Rights Week, 1998****By the President of the United States of America****A Proclamation**

Thanks to the foresight of our Founding Fathers and their commitment to human rights, we live in a Nation founded upon the principles of equality, justice, and freedom—principles guaranteed to us by our Constitution. With the memory of tyranny fresh in their minds, the members of the First Congress of the United States proposed constitutional amendments known as the Bill of Rights, making explicit and forever protecting our Nation's cherished freedoms of religion, speech, press, and assembly.

But human rights have never been solely a domestic concern. Americans have always sought to share these rights with oppressed people around the world. In his annual message to the Congress, on January 6, 1941, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt articulated this desire: "In the future days, which we seek to make secure, we look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms. The first is freedom of speech and expression—everywhere in the world. The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way—everywhere in the world. The third is freedom from want The fourth is freedom from fear . . . anywhere in the world The world order which we seek is the cooperation of free countries, working together in a friendly, civilized society."

Fifty years ago, on December 10, 1948, the world reached a major milestone toward FDR's vision when the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This Declaration—drafted by the U.N. Commission on Human Rights under the leadership of Eleanor Roosevelt—established an international standard that recognized the "inherent dignity" and the "equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family" It denounced past "disregard and contempt for human rights [that] have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind"

Today, a majority of the world's people live in democracies and exercise their right to freely choose their own governments. International war crimes tribunals seek justice for victims and their families by working to ensure that war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide do not go unpunished. And we are heartened by the progress toward peace made in Northern Ireland, the Middle East, and elsewhere, which advances the cause of human rights. But there are still many areas where human rights abuses are committed with impunity—unchecked and unpunished.

To reaffirm our Nation's unequivocal commitment to upholding human rights, today I am issuing an Executive order to create an interagency working group to help enforce the human rights treaties we have already ratified and to make recommendations on treaties we have yet to ratify. In addition, my Administration is working to establish a genocide early warning center and to fund nongovernmental organizations that respond rapidly in human rights emergencies. The Department of State is working to provide additional assistance for Afghan women and girls under the oppressive rule of the Taliban. We are also supporting the work of the International Labor Organization in its efforts to eliminate child labor. Finally, the Immigration and

Naturalization Service is issuing guidelines on how to handle cases where children seek asylum in the United States.

This year, as we come together to celebrate the Declaration's 50th anniversary, let us not forget the driving force behind its creation. We are grateful that Eleanor Roosevelt brought her prodigious energies and talents to this task. And it is fitting that we have established the Eleanor Roosevelt Award for Human Rights, honoring others for their important contributions to protecting human rights around the world.

Eleanor Roosevelt once said that "the future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." Her accomplishments serve as an inspiration to us all, and each of us can play a part in preserving and promoting her enduring legacy. Let us each embrace the Declaration's promise by striving to uphold its principles and defending the rights it embodies.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim December 10, 1998, as Human Rights Day; December 15, 1998, as Bill of Rights Day; and the week beginning December 10, 1998, as Human Rights Week. I call upon the people of the United States to celebrate these observances with appropriate activities, ceremonies, and programs that demonstrate our national commitment to the Bill of Rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the promotion and protection of human rights for all people.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this tenth day of December, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-third.

