

Public Law 98-58
98th Congress

Joint Resolution

July 25, 1983

[S.J. Res. 96]

To designate August 1, 1983, as "Helsinki Human Rights Day".

Whereas August 1, 1983, will be the eighth anniversary of the signing of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (hereafter in this preamble referred to as the "Helsinki accords");

Whereas the Helsinki accords express the desire of the participating states to "respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion";

Whereas the Helsinki accords also express the commitment of the participating states to "facilitate freer movement and contacts, individually and collectively, whether privately or officially, among persons, institutions, and organizations of the participating states, and to contribute to the solution of the humanitarian problems that arise in that connection";

Whereas the Helsinki accords specify that the participating states will "deal in a positive and humanitarian spirit with the applications of persons who wish to be reunited with members of their family" and will "deal with applications in this field as expeditiously as possible";

Whereas the Helsinki accords also state that the participating states will facilitate travel by citizens of such states for both personal and professional reasons and that for this purpose such states will simplify exit and entry procedures;

Whereas the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, in agreeing to the Helsinki accords, has acknowledged an adherence to the principles of freedom and to the basic human rights of citizens to emigrate, to be reunited with their families, and to enjoy at least minimal governmental respect for their individuality and human worth;

Whereas the Soviet Government has not fulfilled its commitment to the Helsinki accords by denying individuals inherent rights to freedom of religion, thought, conscience, and emigration;

Whereas the governments of the Soviet Union and its satellites have increased the difficulties faced by citizens who wish to reunite with family members in other countries, resulting in a drastic decline in recent emigration figures;

Whereas Jews, Ukrainians, Balts, Byelorussians, Armenians, Georgians, and members of other nationalities in the Soviet Union are persecuted and often imprisoned for attempts to celebrate their national heritage, to practice their religion, to express freely their opinions, to emigrate, or to monitor Soviet Government compliance with the provisions of the Helsinki accords;

Whereas the satellite nations of the Soviet Union have increased repression against labor union members, peace activists, religious and political dissenters, and others desiring to emigrate; and

Whereas the denial of fundamental rights by the Soviet Government is a threat to peace throughout the world: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That—

Helsinki Human
Rights Day.

(1) August 1, 1983, the eighth anniversary of the signing of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, is designated as "Helsinki Human Rights Day";

(2) the President is authorized and requested to issue a proclamation reasserting the American commitment to full implementation of the human rights and humanitarian provisions of the Helsinki accords, urging all signatory nations, particularly the Soviet Union and its satellites, to abide by their obligations under the Helsinki accords, and encouraging the people of the United States to join the President and Congress in observance of Helsinki Human Rights Day with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities; and

(3) the President is further requested to continue his efforts to achieve full implementation of the human rights and humanitarian provisions of the Helsinki accords by raising the issue of noncompliance with authorities of the Soviet Union and East European countries at every available opportunity.

SEC. 2. The Secretary of the Senate is directed to transmit copies of this joint resolution to the President, the Secretary of State, and the Ambassadors of the thirty-four Helsinki signatory nations.

Approved July 25, 1983.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—S.J. Res. 96:

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 129 (1983):

May 20, considered and passed Senate.

June 22, considered and passed House.