Public Law 99-29
99th Congress

Joint Resolution

Apr. 25, 1985
[S.J. Res. 15]

To designate May 7, 1985, as "Helsinki Human Rights Day".

Whereas this year will be the tenth 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 on August 1, 1975, the Helsinki Accords were agreed to by the Governments of Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, France, the German Democratic Republic, the Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, the Holy See, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and Yugoslavia;

Whereas the Helsinki Accords express the commitment 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 "promote and encourage the effective exercise of civil, political, economic, social, cultural and other rights and freedoms all of which derive from the inherent dignity of the human person and are essential for his free and full development";

Whereas the Helsinki Accords also express the commitment of the participating States to "recognize and respect the freedom of the individual to profess and practice, alone or in community with others, religion or belief acting in accordance with the dictates of his own conscience";

Whereas the Helsinki Accords also express the commitment of the participating States in whose territory national minorities exist to "respect the right of persons belonging to such minorities to equality before the law, will afford them the full opportunity for the actual enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms and will, in this manner, protect their legitimate interests in this sphere";

Whereas the Helsinki Accords also express the commitment of the participating States to "recognize the universal significance of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for which is an essential factor for the peace, justice and well-being necessary to ensure the development of friendly relations and co-operation among themselves as among all States";

Whereas the Helsinki Accords also express the commitment of the participating States to "constantly respect these rights and freedoms in their mutual relations and will endeavour jointly and

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separately, including in co-operation with the United Nations, to promote universal and effective respect for them";

Whereas the Helsinki Accords also express the commitment of the participating States to "confirm the right of the individual to know and act upon his rights and duties in this field";

Whereas the Helsinki Accords also express the commitment of the participating States in the field of human rights and fundamental freedoms to "act in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights" and to "fulfill their obligations as set forth in the international declarations and agreements in this field, including inter alia the International Covenants on Human Rights, by which they may be bound"; 59 Stat. 1031.

Whereas the Governments of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Romania, in agreeing to the Helsinki Accords, have acknowledged an adherence to the principles of human rights and fundamental freedoms as embodied in the Helsinki Accords;

Whereas the aforementioned Governments have not fulfilled their commitments to the Helsinki Accords by denying individuals their inherent rights to freedom of religion, thought, conscience, and belief;

Whereas on May 7, 1985, a meeting of experts on human rights and fundamental freedoms will be convened in Ottawa, Canada, to discuss questions concerning respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as embodied in the Helsinki Accords;

Whereas this meeting is called for in the concluding document of the Madrid Review Conference of September 9, 1983; and

Whereas this meeting will be attended by representatives of all Helsinki signatory nations: Now, therefore, be it

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

(1) May 7, 1985, the opening date of the Ottawa meeting of experts on human rights and fundamental freedoms, 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 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;

(3) the President is further requested to continue his efforts to achieve full implementation of the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Accords by raising the issue of noncompliance with the Governments of the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Romania at every available opportunity;

(4) the President is further requested to convey to all signatories of the Helsinki Accords that respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is a vital element of further progress in the ongoing Helsinki process; and

(5) the President is authorized to convey to allies and friends of the United States that unity on the question of respect for

human rights and fundamental freedoms is the most effective means to promote the full implementation of the human rights and humanitarian provisions of the Helsinki Accords.

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 April 25, 1985.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—S.J. Res. 15:

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 131 (1985):
Mar. 28, considered and passed Senate.
Apr. 16, considered and passed House.