

Week Ending Friday, April 11, 2003

Proclamation 7659—National Crime Victims' Rights Week, 2003

April 4, 2003

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

Crime brings trauma, pain, and insecurity into the lives of too many Americans each year. As we work to reduce crime and protect the rights of the accused, we must take equal care to protect the rights of their victims. During National Crime Victims' Rights Week, we remember those who have suffered as a result of crime and honor those who have helped these victims.

Americans suffered over 24 million crimes in 2001, 5.7 million of which involved violence. While we have improved policies and our justice system has treated victims with greater respect in recent years, we must continue our work to ensure the full rights of all crime victims and better protect our citizens. My Administration believes that victims of violent crime have important rights that deserve protection in our Constitution, and to guarantee these rights, I strongly support the passage of the bipartisan Crime Victims' Rights Amendment. This amendment will provide victims of violent crime the right to reasonable and timely notice of any public proceedings involving the crime or release of the perpetrator, and the right to be heard at public proceedings regarding the criminal's sentence or potential release. It will also assure that such victims receive timely notice of any escape of their attacker. Under this amendment, decision makers will duly consider the victim's safety and payment of restitution from the offender to the victim. This important amendment will strike the right balance in protecting individual rights and ensuring fairness and equity in our criminal justice system.

Across our Nation, victims' rights groups work on behalf of victims every day. Through care and compassion, these groups and individuals are bringing hope and comfort to their neighbors in need. Domestic violence shelters, support groups for families of homicide victims, rape crisis centers, and other organizations in our cities and communities offer vital assistance to individuals who have been affected by crime. In times of such crises, counselors, hotline operators, clergy, doctors, nurses, law enforcement, and countless others also help their fellow Americans cope with their pain and suffering.

As a Nation, we must continue to seek justice on behalf of all people who have been victimized by crime. The heroes in these efforts are the individuals and organizations who work to provide valuable support and assistance to those who have suffered from crime. This week allows us to recognize these heroes and renew our commitment to fulfilling the promise of our Nation of justice for all.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, 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 April 6 through April 12, 2003, as National Crime Victims' Rights Week. I encourage every community to embrace the cause of victims' rights and to advance it in all sectors of our society.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fourth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-seventh.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., April 8, 2003]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on April 9. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address*April 5, 2003*

Good morning. American and coalition forces are steadily advancing against the regime of Saddam Hussein. With each new village they liberate, our forces are learning more about the atrocities of that regime and the deep fear the dictator has instilled in the Iraqi people. Yet no crime of this dying regime will divert us from our mission. We will not stop until Iraq is free.

This week, coalition forces have been clearing southern cities and towns of Saddam's death squads and enforcers. Our special forces and Army paratroopers, working with Kurdish militia, have opened a northern front against the enemy. In the town of An Najaf, members of our 101st Airborne Division have been welcomed as liberators. At An Nasiriyah, marines continue to eliminate the enemy while other Army and Marine units have closed in on Baghdad. From the skies above, coalition aircraft and cruise missiles are removing hundreds of military targets from the map.

As the vise tightens on the Iraqi regime, some of our enemies have chosen to fill their final days with acts of cowardice and murder. In combat, Saddam's thugs shield themselves with women and children. They have killed Iraqi citizens who welcome coalition troops, and they have forced other Iraqis into battle by threatening to torture or kill their families. They have executed prisoners of war, waged attacks under the white flag of truce, and concealed combat forces in civilian neighborhoods, schools, hospitals, and mosques. In this war, the Iraqi regime is terrorizing its own citizens, doing everything possible to maximize Iraqi civilian casualties and then to exploit the deaths they have caused for propaganda. These are war criminals, and they'll be treated as war criminals.

In stark contrast, the citizens of Iraq are coming to know what kind of people we have sent to liberate them. American forces and our allies are treating innocent civilians with kindness and showing proper respect to the soldiers who surrender. The people of the United States are proud of the honorable

conduct of our military. And I am proud to lead such brave and decent Americans.

In recent days, we have also brought food and water and medicine to the Iraqi people. We're delivering emergency rations to the hungry. Right now, cargo ships are bound for Iraq, carrying wheat from Oklahoma, Kansas, and Texas—enough to feed 4.5 million Iraqis for 1 month. Additional food, supplied by the World Food Program, is moving by truck convoy across the Turkish border into northern Iraq.

We are bringing aid to the long-suffering people of Iraq, and we are bringing something more. We are bringing hope. One Iraqi, when the coalition troops arrived, described the emotions of his village. "They were waiting for you," he said, "and all the people believe that America and Britain have come to liberate them, not to conquer."

Village by village, city by city, liberation is coming. The people of Iraq have my pledge: Our fighting forces will press on until their oppressors are gone and their whole country is free.

By our actions in this war, we serve a great and just cause. Free nations will not sit and wait, leaving enemies free to plot another September the 11th—this time perhaps with chemical, biological, or nuclear terror. We'll remove weapons of mass destruction from the hands of mass murderers. And by defending our own security, we are ridding the people of Iraq from one of the cruelest regimes on Earth. The United States and our allies pledged to act if the dictator did not disarm. The regime in Iraq is now learning that we keep our word.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 1 p.m. on April 4 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on April 5. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 4 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.