

Public Law 99-374  
99th Congress

Joint Resolution

Aug. 6, 1986

[S.J. Res. 371]

To designate August 1, 1986, as "Helsinki Human Rights Day".

- Whereas August 1, 1986, will be the eleventh 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 practise, 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" and that such States "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 cooperation 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 that such States "will endeavor jointly and separately, including in cooperation 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 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 also express the commitment of the participating States to “favorably consider applications for travel with the purpose of allowing persons to enter or leave their territory temporarily, and on a regular basis if desired, in order to visit members of their families”;

Whereas the Helsinki Accords also express the commitment of the participating States to “deal in a positive and humanitarian spirit with the applications of persons who wish to be reunited with members of their family” and “to deal with applications in this field as expeditiously as possible”;

Whereas the Helsinki Accords also express the commitment of the participating States to “examine favorably and on the basis of humanitarian considerations requests for exit or entry permits from persons who have decided to marry a citizen from another participating State”;

Whereas the Helsinki Accords also express the commitment of the participating States to “facilitate wider travel by their citizens for personal or professional reasons”;

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 violated their commitments to the Helsinki Accords by denying individuals their inherent rights to freedom of religion, thought, conscience, and belief;

Whereas the aforementioned Governments have violated their commitments to the Helsinki Accords by restricting the freer movement of people, ideas, and information;

Whereas the concluding document of the Madrid Review Conference of September 9, 1983, called for the Ottawa Human Rights Experts Meeting, the Budapest Cultural Forum, and the Bern Human Contacts Experts Meeting to discuss questions concerning respect for human rights and cooperation in humanitarian fields as embodied in the Helsinki Accords;

Whereas these meetings, which were attended by representatives from all the signatory States, presented important opportunities to address issues of compliance with the human rights and humanitarian provisions of the Helsinki Accords; and

Whereas in November 1986 representatives from the signatory States will be meeting in Vienna to review implementation of the Helsinki Accords, including the human rights and humanitarian provisions: Now, therefore, be it

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

(1) August 1, 1986, the eleventh anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Accords 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 August 6, 1986.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—S.J. Res. 371:

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 132 (1986):

July 23, considered and passed Senate.

July 31, considered and passed House.