
Presidential Documents

Title 3—**Proclamation 7059 of December 9, 1997****The President****Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, and Human Rights Week, 1997****By the President of the United States of America****A Proclamation**

Human rights are the cornerstone of American democracy. The founders of our democracy, in their wisdom, recognized the inherent dignity of every human being and enshrined in the Bill of Rights our profound commitment to freedom of speech, religion, and assembly and the right to due process and a fair trial. Through more than two centuries of challenge and change, these guiding principles have sustained us. They form the common ground on which our racial, religious, and ethnic diversity can flourish.

It is a measure of our greatness as a Nation that each new generation of Americans has sought to advance and extend the rights set forth by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence and by the framers of our Constitution. Promoting human rights and democracy around the world is a central pillar of our foreign policy. We seek to protect and advance human rights for all, not only because a world that respects such rights will be freer, safer, and more prosperous, but also so that we may keep faith with the vision of our founders, who knew that these rights are the deepest reflection of America's fundamental values.

This week marks the beginning of the world's celebration of the 50th anniversary year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The adoption of this set of principles by the United Nations on December 10, 1948, was a landmark event in the course of modern human history. The Declaration represented a collective condemnation by nearly 50 U.N. member states of the widespread and devastating human rights abuses committed prior to and during World War II, and it reflected a consensus on what the postwar world should seek to become. Among the Declaration's 30 articles are affirmations of the right to life, liberty, and personal security; the right to freedom of thought, religion, and expression; and the right to freedom from slavery, torture, and arbitrary arrest and detention.

It was fitting that a great American, Eleanor Roosevelt, played a pivotal role in the development of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which so closely reflected the tenets of our own Bill of Rights. As Chair of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, she led the efforts of its 18 members to define basic rights and freedoms and to draft the international affirmation of rights that was ultimately adopted by the General Assembly. Today, thanks to those efforts, scores of countries across the globe have incorporated these fundamental principles into their laws and practices, and millions of people are leading freer, happier, and more fulfilling lives.

Now our challenge is to reaffirm the universality of these precepts and to ensure that all the world's peoples share in their protections. While we have made great progress in this endeavor, we must recognize that intolerance, discrimination, and persecution continue to darken our vision of a better future. Each of us has a part to play in upholding human rights for men and women of all political, ethnic, religious, and racial backgrounds. The words of Eleanor Roosevelt are both an inspiration and a challenge, not only to Americans, but also to citizens throughout the

international community: "The destiny of human rights is in the hands of all of our citizens and all of our communities."

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, 1997, as Human Rights Day; December 15, 1997, as Bill of Rights Day; and the week beginning December 10, 1997, as Human Rights Week. I call upon the people of the United States to celebrate these observances with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities that demonstrate our national commitment to the Bill of Rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the promotion of human rights for all people.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "William J. Clinton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "W" and "C".

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