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# Presidential Documents

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Title 3—

Proclamation 7109 of July 20, 1998

The President

Captive Nations Week, 1998

By the President of the United States of America

## A Proclamation

Freedom, dignity, equality, and justice: these are words sacred to the American people. They define our lives as citizens of a democratic Nation, and they sum up our hopes for all the peoples of the world. More than 2 centuries ago, our founders articulated these fundamental human rights in the Declaration of Independence, proclaiming the truth of human dignity and the idea that governments derive their power and legitimacy from the consent of the people they serve. We reaffirmed these convictions with the ratification of our Constitution and the Bill of Rights. And 50 years ago, more than four dozen nations joined us in championing these rights and liberties across the globe by adopting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which the United Nations General Assembly passed unanimously in December of 1948.

Over the course of the last half-century, the Universal Declaration's call to "expand the circle of full human dignity to all people" has been a wellspring of inspiration. The Declaration has served as a framework for laws, constitutions, and other important efforts to safeguard basic liberties, as well as a yardstick for measuring progress. However, while democracy continues to grow and flourish around the world and millions enjoy fundamental human rights unencumbered by tyranny or restraint, the shadow of oppression still lingers.

The last decade has seen a remarkable transformation. The courage, strength, and determination of men and women struggling for liberty have changed the political landscape of the world. Democracy has blossomed and deepened its roots in many countries, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe and the nations of the former Soviet Union. But, the process of building democracy and strengthening civil society in these nations is far from complete. Moreover, there are countries in Europe and elsewhere where democracy is actively being undermined by authoritarian rule and disrespect for the rule of law. In these regions around the world, people are denied the right to worship freely, speak their thoughts openly, or live without fear of sudden arrest, arbitrary imprisonment, or brutal treatment. The rulers of these captive nations, in denying the tide of freedom rising across the globe, have positioned themselves on the wrong side of history.

This year marks the 40th observance of Captive Nations Week. For four decades these proclamations have served to express America's solidarity with people suffering under communist and other oppressive rule around the world. It is important that we continue to mark this annual observance as a reminder that building and nurturing democracy is an enduring struggle while there are still people in various parts of the world who are captives of tyranny.

The Congress, by Joint Resolution approved July 17, 1959 (73 Stat. 212), has authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation designating the third week in July of each year as "Captive Nations Week."

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NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim July 19 through July 25, 1998, as Captive Nations Week. I call upon the people of the United States to observe this week with appropriate ceremonies and activities and to rededicate ourselves to supporting the cause of freedom, human rights, and self-determination for all the peoples of the world.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twentieth day of July, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-third.

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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