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# Presidential Documents

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Title 3—

Proclamation 7258 of December 6, 1999

The President

## Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, and Human Rights Week, 1999

By the President of the United States of America

### A Proclamation

President Carter once said, “America did not invent human rights. In a very real sense, it’s the other way around. Human rights invented America.” Human rights have been an integral part of America’s history since the birth of our Nation more than two centuries ago. Refusing to accept tyranny and oppression, our founders secured a better way of life with our Constitution and Bill of Rights. These revolutionary documents have continued to protect our cherished freedoms of religion, speech, press, and assembly and to preserve the principles of equality, liberty, and justice that lie at the heart of our national identity.

As Americans, we have always strived to advance these rights and values both at home and abroad, and just as our founders sought a brighter future for our Nation, we envision a better future for our world. One of our most powerful tools in realizing that vision has been the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which the United Nations General Assembly approved in December of 1948. It is not surprising that this document, which owed so much to the courage, imagination, and leadership of Eleanor Roosevelt, reaffirms in tone, thought, and language our own great charters of freedom. To honor Mrs. Roosevelt’s legacy, and to acknowledge those who follow her example of commitment to human rights around the world, last year we established the Eleanor Roosevelt Award for Human Rights.

In the 51 years since the adoption of the Universal Declaration, the United Nations has developed numerous legal instruments that specify the rights and obligations contained in the document, and the international community has made encouraging progress toward improving human rights for people of all nations. Today, more individuals than ever before are living in representative democracies where they can exercise their right to freely choose their own government. The international community responded vigorously to halt ethnic cleansing in Kosovo and is helping the people of East Timor not only to achieve legal recognition of their independence but also to develop the institutions they need to thrive as an independent and secure state. But despite this heartening progress, there are still many regions of the world where human rights are daily denied and aspirations to freedom routinely crushed. Our work is still far from complete.

Rising to these challenges, we in the United States have strengthened our commitment to improving international human rights. To enable the world community to react more quickly to genocidal conditions, we have established a genocide early warning system. We continue to fund nongovernmental organizations that respond rapidly to human rights emergencies. And we have created an interagency working group to help implement the human rights treaties we have already ratified and to make recommendations on treaties we have yet to ratify.

We also continue to be a world leader in the fight to eliminate exploitative and abusive child labor. Last week, I signed the instrument of ratification of the International Labor Organization’s Convention on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor, declaring on behalf of the American

people that we simply will not tolerate child slavery, the sale or trafficking of children, child prostitution or pornography, forced or compulsory child labor, and hazardous work that harms the health, safety, and morals of children. Through these and other initiatives, America continues to reaffirm both at home and across the globe our fundamental belief in human dignity and our unchanging reverence for human rights.

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, 1999, as Human Rights Day; December 15, 1999, as Bill of Rights Day; and the week beginning December 10, 1999, as Human Rights Week. I call upon the people of the United States to celebrate these observances with appropriate activities, ceremonies, and programs that demonstrate our national commitment to the Bill of Rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and promotion and protection of human rights for all people.

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

