

Public Law 99-79
99th Congress

Joint Resolution

Aug. 2, 1985

[S.J. Res. 180]

Commemorating the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act.

Whereas, on August 1, 1975, the United States joined thirty-four other nations, including the Soviet Union and other Warsaw Pact states, as signatories to the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, known as the Helsinki Final Act, and

Whereas, the Final Act is a balanced document incorporating provisions concerning human rights and fundamental freedoms, military security, cooperation in the fields of economic, scientific, cultural and educational affairs, free flow of information, and humanitarian affairs, and

Whereas, the Helsinki process has evolved into the primary tool of East-West human rights diplomacy and continues to serve as a beacon of hope to victims of oppression in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and

Whereas, the United States, our NATO Allies and a number of neutral and nonaligned countries have documented and protested many serious violations of the human rights and human contacts provisions of the Final Act by the Soviet Union and other Warsaw Pact states, and

Whereas, the Soviet Union displays contempt for basic civil and political rights, such as freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief; confines in prisons, labor camps and psychiatric institutions or internally exiles hundreds of citizens who have sought to know and act upon their rights, among them thirty-seven imprisoned members of Helsinki monitoring groups, and

Whereas, the Soviet Union callously disregards its pledge to facilitate human contacts and has drastically reduced the numbers of Soviet citizens permitted to emigrate; has consistently denied exit permission to Soviet citizens married to United States citizens and to other individuals who have claims to United States citizenship; and deliberately impedes the East-West flow of information by jamming Western radio broadcasts, and

Whereas, disregard for human rights also is evident in the other Warsaw Pact states of Eastern Europe, and

Whereas, inter alia, Bulgaria maintains virtually total control over the life of its people and recently has engaged in a campaign of forcible assimilation aimed at the Turkish minority population; Czechoslovakia harshly represses independent social, political, religious, minority and cultural expression and persecutes members of Charter '77 and VONS (Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Persecuted); The German Democratic Republic enforces

a restrictive emigration policy; Hungary continually harasses citizens who publish or possess unofficial material; Poland outlaws the Solidarity Union, harasses and prosecutes Solidarity and human rights advocates and currently imprisons over two hundred persons for exercising their human and workers' rights; Romania maintains a repressive internal regime and seriously violates the freedoms of conscience, expression and association, as well as religious liberty and minority rights, and

Whereas, meetings of Helsinki signatory states present important opportunities for Western democracies to call the Soviet Union and its allies to account for these human rights violations, and

Whereas, at the recent Ottawa Human Rights Experts Meeting of Helsinki signatory states, East Bloc human rights violations were raised and deplored by United States Ambassador Richard Schifter and by other Western and Neutral envoys on behalf of their respective states, and

Whereas, United States Secretary of State George P. Shultz will lead the United States Delegation to the tenth anniversary commemoration of the signing of the Final Act: Now, therefore, be it

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

(1) the Congress strongly reaffirms the human rights principles and humanitarian provisions of the Helsinki Final Act and the Madrid Concluding Document;

(2) the Congress recognizes and condemns continued East Bloc violations of international obligations under the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the Helsinki Final Act, the Madrid Concluding Document, and other relevant international instruments;

(3) the Congress requests that the President of the United States direct the United States Department of State to convey to the Soviet Union and its allies the United States deep and abiding human rights concerns;

(4) the Congress urges the President to direct the United States Department of State to take full advantage of the opportunities provided by all upcoming meetings of Helsinki signatory states to call the Soviet Union and its allies to account for ongoing human rights violations and to work constructively

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with the governments of the other Western democracies to promote human rights progress in the Eastern signatory states; and

(5) the Congress calls upon the President to use every opportunity to stress the inherent link—explicitly stated in the Helsinki Final Act and the Madrid Concluding Document—between respect for human rights and the achievement of lasting peace.

Approved August 2, 1985.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—S.J. Res. 180:

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 131 (1985):
 July 29, considered and passed Senate.
 July 30, considered and passed House.