

**Proclamation 7332—Helsinki
Human Rights Day, 2000**

August 1, 2000

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

Twenty-five years ago today, in a world marked by brutal divisions and ideological conflict, the United States joined 33 European nations and Canada in signing the Helsinki Final Act. That watershed event established the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and affirmed an international commitment to respect “freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.”

During the Cold War, the Helsinki Principles were the rallying point for courageous men and women who confronted tyranny—often at great personal risk—to win the fundamental freedoms set forth by the Final Act. Today, citizens of our vast Euro-Atlantic community from Vancouver to Vladivostok live by, or aspire to live, by those fundamental freedoms. The Helsinki Final Act has been instrumental in the progress we have made together toward building a Europe that is whole and free; a Europe where our partnership for peace is overcoming the possibility of war. The Helsinki Final Act continues to shape our vision for the future of transatlantic cooperation, and the Helsinki accords remain the basic definition of common goals and standards for how all countries in the new Europe should treat their citizens and one another.

The evolution of the CSCE into the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) reflects the changing face of Europe. The OSCE’s integrated structure of commitments in the areas of human rights, economics, arms control, and conflict resolution provides a defining framework for a free and undivided Europe. The United States will continue to promote the OSCE’s efforts to build security within and cooperation among democratic societies; to defuse conflicts; to battle corruption and organized crime; and to champion human rights, fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law

throughout the Euro-Atlantic community. We remain committed to the OSCE’s essential work of bringing peace and civil society back to Bosnia and Kosovo, and we are grateful to the many dedicated men and women engaged in the OSCE’s field missions, who in many ways are our front line of conflict prevention in Europe.

Today, as we mark the 25th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, the United States takes pride in remembering our role as one of its original signatories—a ringing call for freedom and human dignity that played a decisive role in lifting the Iron Curtain and ending the tragic division of Europe.

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 August 1, 2000, as Helsinki Human Rights Day and reaffirm our Nation’s support for the full implementation of the Helsinki Final Act. I urge the American people to observe this anniversary with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities that reflect our dedication to the noble principles of human rights and democracy. I also call upon the governments and peoples of all other signatory states to renew their commitment to comply with the principles established and consecrated in the Helsinki Final Act.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this first day of August, in the year of our Lord two thousand, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fifth.

William J. Clinton

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NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on August 4.

**Statement on the Colorado Initiative
To Close the Gun Show Loophole**

August 2, 2000

I commend the citizens of Colorado who took an important step today toward reducing gun violence by submitting nearly twice the number of signatures needed to place an

initiative on the State ballot to close the gun show loophole. Colorado voters can now do what Congress has failed to do: close a deadly loophole that allows criminals, juveniles, and other restricted persons to buy guns at gun shows with no questions asked.

With our Nation losing 10 children to gun-fire every day, Congress should heed the voices of millions of Americans concerned about gun violence—not those of the gun lobby—and follow the lead of States like Colorado. While Colorado's progress is encouraging, we should not have to rely on a patchwork of State laws when it comes to protecting our children's safety. Only Congress can pass legislation that protects children all across America. National legislation to close the gun show loophole and keep guns out of the wrong hands should be passed without further delay.

Statement on Signing the Cross-Border Cooperation and Environmental Safety in Northern Europe Act of 2000

August 3, 2000

Yesterday, I signed H.R. 4249, the "Cross-Border Cooperation and Environmental Safety in Northern Europe Act of 2000." This law endorses the administration's Northern Europe Initiative (NEI) and highlights the need for continued international efforts to address the environmental dangers posed by nuclear waste in northwest Russia. I want to express my appreciation to Representative Sam Gejdenson for introducing and ensuring the passage of this important legislation.

We launched the Northern Europe Initiative because we recognized, as the Congress does in this law, the importance of strengthening regional cooperation among the Baltic States, Russia, and all countries bordering the Baltic Sea. Only in this way can we create the stability and prosperity that will lead to full integration of northern Europe, including northwest Russia, into the broader European and transatlantic mainstream. Our European friends, especially the Nordic countries and the European Union, are full partners in this effort.

The law also highlights the environmental dangers posed by military nuclear waste in northwest Russia. These dangers have been brought to light by the work of courageous independent environmentalists and non-governmental organizations in Russia and elsewhere. Aleksandr Nikitin, a retired Russian Navy colonel, has made important contributions to the international understanding and study of environmental problems in this region. Both environmentalists and non-government organizations face increased challenges today.

We have been deeply involved in helping Russia and its neighbors confront the serious environmental risks that face the Barents Sea, the Baltic Sea, and the people who live around them. We look forward to increased cooperation from Russia as we create a legal framework for our common efforts.

NOTE: H.R. 4249, approved August 2, was assigned Public Law No. 106-255.

Statement on the Death of Sister M. Isolina Ferre

August 3, 2000

Hillary and I were saddened to learn of the death of Sister Isolina Ferre. Her passionate fight, for more than 60 years, against poverty, violence, and despair earned her many awards and countless tributes from all around the world. Armed only with her faith, she taught gangs in New York City to solve their differences without violence. In Puerto Rico, her community service centers, the Centros Isolina Ferre, transformed ravaged neighborhoods by operating clinics and helping residents to empower themselves.

Almost a year ago today, I was honored to welcome Sister Isolina to the White House and present her with the Medal of Freedom. At that ceremony, I said, "Sister Isolina taught people to see the best in themselves and in their communities and made sure they had the tools to make the most of the gifts God has given them."

Her lifetime of selfless commitment to others will remain her greatest legacy. Our thoughts and prayers are with her family and many friends.