
Presidential Documents

Title 3—

Proclamation 6964 of December 10, 1996

The President

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

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

When America's founders crafted the Constitution and Bill of Rights more than two centuries ago, they not only created a blueprint for the conduct of American government, but they also gave expression to a vision of human dignity that inspires people to this day the world over. Our Nation's commitment to the freedoms enumerated in the Bill of Rights—among them freedom of speech, religion, and assembly, and the right to due process and a fair trial—serves as a beacon of hope to oppressed peoples everywhere.

Americans continue to work to improve our application of equality under the law for all our own citizens, as we believe that freedom and justice are the birthright of humankind. We are also working daily to foster and promote the growth of these rights in other countries. Indeed, the championing of democracy and human rights serves as a cornerstone of my Administration's foreign policy.

As we observe Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, and Human Rights Week, we can take satisfaction in our progress in advancing human rights around the world in the past decade. In fact, more than half the people in the world now live under democratic political systems. Even in countries still struggling to establish basic human rights and freedoms, we are seeing some progress. And brave reformers such as Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma continue to press their rightful demand for freedom.

It is also encouraging that, with the growth and development of the human rights movement, there has been greater awareness and appreciation that women's rights are human rights.

Just over a year ago, representatives from 189 countries met in Beijing at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women. That historic gathering focused the attention of the world on women's rights and needs. Now, we are beginning to see some progress. In many countries, increasing numbers of women are contesting and attaining public office and playing a vital role in shaping the political agenda. In Romania, women gathered from around Central and Eastern Europe to promote the goals of the Beijing women's conference. Thailand has passed a new anti-prostitution law. Women in Namibia are now afforded equal rights with men in marriage. Chile has made a serious commitment to expanding educational opportunities for girls. And in the United States, the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, that I signed into law in September of 1994, reflects our profound national commitment to ending abuse against women. These are just a few hopeful signs of improvement in global respect for women's rights, and it is fitting that we celebrate them.

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, 1996, as Human Rights Day; December 15, 1996, as Bill of Rights Day; and the week beginning December 10, 1996, 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 Constitution and the promotion of human rights for all people.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William J. Clinton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "W".

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