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Andrei Sakharov Day

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

May 21, 1986, is the 65th birthday of Andrei Sakharov. At this time, let us recall and acclaim the courage and dedication of this giant of the twentieth century. Let us rededicate ourselves to the values of peace and justice and human dignity he has come to symbolize for all who love freedom throughout the world.

Since we last honored this brave man, we are pleased that Dr. Sakharov's wife, Yelena Bonner, has been allowed to travel here to see her family and to obtain needed medical care. We welcome the fact that several separated husbands and wives were at last given permission to join their spouses in the United States. We welcome the release of Anatoly Shcharansky.

Unfortunately, these positive developments only serve to underscore the overall grim human rights situation that continues to prevail in the Soviet Union. For his efforts on behalf of human rights and world peace, Dr. Sakharov himself remains isolated in Gorky, deprived of contact with friends and family, and barred from carrying out scientific research. The Soviet authorities have succeeded in eliminating the main vehicle for human rights activism, the Helsinki Monitors. Yury Orlov and many other monitors are now serving long terms of imprisonment or exile. Religious groups continue to be major targets of persecution: Orthodox believers, Baptists, Roman Catholics, Ukrainian rite Catholics, Uniates, Pentecostals, and other groups have been subjected to arrest and harassment. The crackdown on Hebrew teachers and cultural activists continues. Emigration remains at low levels. Many more families remain separated. The basic freedoms of speech, assembly, and press are systematically denied, yet, as Sakharov has recognized, these are the essential means by which people can ensure that their own governments act peacefully and in the people's interests.

In October 1977, in an appeal to the Parliaments of all Helsinki-signatory states, Dr. Sakharov wrote:

"We are living through a period of history in which decisive support of the principles of freedom of conscience, an open society and the rights of man is an absolute necessity. The alternative is surrender to totalitarianism, the loss of all precious freedom and political, economic and moral degradation. The West, its political and moral leaders, its free and decent peoples, must not allow this."

I believe we can best honor Dr. Sakharov on his 65th birthday by taking his message to heart and by continuing our own vigorous efforts in pursuit of a just peace, including respect for human rights. We must act on his behalf to ensure that his message of hope, freedom, justice, and the inviolability of the human conscience will not be silenced.

The Congress, by Senate Joint Resolution 323, has designated May 21, 1986, as "Andrei Sakharov Day" and authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this event.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 21, 1986, as Andrei Sakharov Day. I call upon the people of the United States and Federal, State, and local government officials to observe this day with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities designed to honor this hero of humanity.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 20th day of May, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and tenth.

Ronald Reagan