



## Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, and Human Rights Week, 1987

*By the President of the United States of America*

### A Proclamation

The Constitution whose Bicentennial we celebrate this year begins, "We the People," and thus tells Americans and all the world that we hold the individual as sovereign, not the government or any other political entity. The Bill of Rights, added to the Constitution in 1791, specifies individual liberties and adds that powers "not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people."

The Founders of our country believed the rights of the individual are God-given, not originating from or granted by the state. Their timeless vision of individual liberties for all people is why we pause each December to express thanks for our heritage and to renew our commitment to the vital cause of human rights around the globe. We also celebrate the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which set human rights standards for all nations.

Tragically, governments in many lands deny this vision. Some make elaborate claims that citizens under their rule enjoy human rights and even offer illusory guarantees of those rights—but then reveal their absence through lack of due process, free elections, or freedom of religion, expression, and assembly. Their constitutions often declare openly that citizens' rights are subordinate to the interests of the state. Even if words look good on paper, the absence of structural safeguards against abuse of power means that freedoms may be taken away as easily as they are allowed. In countries where monopoly power rests with a single group or political entity, the scope for human liberty is narrow indeed.

These states pose the greatest threat to liberty, not only because under them people are denied the exercise of the most fundamental freedoms, but because they pose external as well as internal dangers. Unlimited power, exercised in the name of universalist ideologies, often tries to extend its control beyond borders, denying other peoples their human rights and self-determination.

Standing against these dangers are those people the world over who, undaunted by tremendous odds and great personal risk, continue to press for individual rights and freedoms. Their courageous struggle for human dignity is a triumph in itself, but the United States pledges continuing support to their efforts on behalf of human rights, fundamental freedoms, and democracy.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, 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, 1987, as Human Rights Day and December 15, 1987, as Bill of Rights Day, and I call upon all Americans to observe the week beginning December 10, 1987, as Human Rights Week.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 10th day of December, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twelfth.

*Ronald Reagan*