

**Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman**  
**H.Res. 759, Recognizing the 40th Anniversary of the Mass Movement for Soviet Jewish Freedom and the 20th Anniversary of the Freedom Sunday Rally for Soviet Jewry on the Mall in Washington, D.C.**  
**October 30, 2007**

Mr. Speaker. Twenty years ago, on December 7, 1987, more than 250,000 people gathered in Washington, DC to rally for the plight of Soviet Jews.

I vividly remember participating in the rally, which took place on the eve of the Reagan-Gorbachev summit. It was a major turning point that helped compel the Soviet Union to open its doors for the millions of Soviet Jewish émigrés who had been held as virtual prisoners within their own country.

I think back to congressional delegations to the Soviet Union where I met with Jewish *refuseniks* who were suffering under communist repression. These brave dissidents were blacklisted from their jobs, socially ostracized and in some cases jailed, only because of their desire to practice their religion and live in freedom.

I remember meeting with young couples in and around Moscow who called us their lifeline. They were so desperate about their circumstances. They said our visits gave them hope that they were not forgotten, that they one day might be free. When the iron curtain fell many of these families came to the United States to live the American dream of religious liberty and personal freedom. Over a million more resettled in Israel.

The historic human rights campaign to free Soviet Jewry was built on decades of activism. Launched in the 1960s by groups like the American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry (AJCSJ) and the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry, it galvanized human rights leaders around the United States and the world. The movement helped build the momentum for the adoption of the Helsinki Accords and the passage of the Jackson-Vanik amendment, which for the first time linked trade policy and human rights.

Here in Congress, we founded the Congressional Coalition for Soviet Jews and my wife Janet helped organize the Congressional Wives for Soviet Jewry. Other organizations like the National Conference on Soviet Jewry (NCSJ) and the Union of Councils for Soviet Jewry (UCSJ) are still at work today fighting anti-Semitism and safeguard the religious freedom of Jews in Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union.

Today, we celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the freedom rally with pride in the history and accomplishments of the effort to free Soviet Jews. Let it serve as a lasting reminder that we have an obligation to sustain the fight against political and religious repression wherever it exists.