

**For Immediate Release  
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## **NATAN SHARANSKY TO RECEIVE RONALD REAGAN FREEDOM AWARD: September 17, 2008**

(SIMI VALLEY, Calif.) Former First Lady Nancy Reagan will present Natan Sharansky, a notable former Soviet dissident, political prisoner and Israeli politician, with the 2008 Ronald Reagan Freedom Award. The presentation will be made at a gala dinner at The Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center on Wednesday, September 17, 2008.

“Fewer and fewer people can remember the world of Communism and even fewer can appreciate that its demise could never have happened so quickly and so peacefully without the moral clarity, courage and vision, which President Reagan brought to the world agenda of international relations.” said Mr. Sharansky. “It was a brilliant moment,” continued Mr. Sharansky, “when we learned that Ronald Reagan had proclaimed the Soviet Union an Evil Empire before the entire world. President Reagan had from that moment made it impossible for anyone in the West to continue closing their eyes to the real nature of the Soviet Union.”

Mr. Sharansky becomes the tenth recipient of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation's highest recognition. He follows in a long line of world leaders who, like Ronald Reagan, have contributed greatly to the cause of freedom worldwide. Appropriately, our 40th President was privileged to bestow the first Ronald Reagan Freedom Award upon Mikhail Gorbachev at the Library on May 4, 1992. Other Freedom Award winners are: General Colin Powell, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, His Majesty King Hussein I, Lady Margaret Thatcher, Reverend Billy Graham, Bob Hope, Rudolph Giuliani and President George H.W. Bush.

“It is an honor to present the Freedom Award to Natan Sharansky,” said Mrs. Reagan. “My husband once said that Natan’s devotion to the cause of freedom was a symbol of man’s highest aspiration. His release from a Soviet gulag was one of the most rewarding events of Ronnie’s presidency.”

Mr. Sharansky, a leading activist in the human rights movement in the FSU, became known internationally as the spokesperson for Andrei Sakharov, the Helsinki movement and Jewish immigration. For these activities he served nine years in Soviet prison under excessively harsh conditions. During the years of his imprisonment, Sharansky became a symbol for human rights in general and Soviet Jewry in particular.

Freed in 1986 as part of an East-West prisoner exchange orchestrated by President Reagan, Mr. Sharansky moved to Israel. Upon his arrival, he formed the Zionist Forum, an umbrella organization dedicated to helping new Israeli immigrants from the former Soviet Union. He continued his human rights activities, both through his writings, as well as public activities.

Ten years after his arrival to Israel he formed his own political party to accelerate the integration of immigrants and served in all successive governments from 1996-2005 both as Minister as well as Deputy Prime Minister.

He received the Congressional Gold Medal in 1986 and the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2006. In 2005 he was listed as number 11 on Time magazine's "100 Most Influential People" in the "Scientists and Thinkers" category. Mr. Sharansky is Chairman of the Adelson Institute for Strategic Studies, a Jerusalem based think tank.

To make reservations or to receive more information on this event, please call (202) 742-4468. Proceeds for The Ronald Reagan Freedom Award Dinner benefit the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library Foundation.

***The Reagan Foundation is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that sustains the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, the Center for Public Affairs, the Presidential Learning Center and the Air Force One Pavilion. Located in Simi Valley, California, the Library houses over 55 million pages of Gubernatorial, Presidential and personal papers and over 100,000 gifts and artifacts chronicling the lives of Ronald and Nancy Reagan. It now also serves as the final resting place of America's 40th President.***

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