

# NEWS

from  
**Paul  
Tsongas**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
October 6, 1982  
Contact: Mary Helen Thompson 224-2742

## **U.S. SENATOR FROM MASSACHUSETTS**

### TSONGAS WILLING TO VISIT SHCHARANSKY AT SOVIET PRISON...WILL REQUEST VISA

Senator Paul Tsongas told Avital Shcharansky, wife of imprisoned Soviet dissident Anatoly Shcharansky, that he will attempt to go to the Soviet Union to visit her husband at Christopol prison to determine the state of his physical and mental condition. Tsongas made the announcement at a joint press conference with Mrs. Shcharansky this morning at a location directly opposite the Soviet Embassy on Sixteenth Street in Northwest, Washington, D.C.

Anatoly Shcharansky, who has suffered severe health problems since his imprisonment in 1978, has been on a hunger strike since last week because Soviet authorities have denied him any contact with his family for more than nine months.

Tsongas, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, will send a letter today to Soviet Ambassador Anatoly F. Dobrynin formally requesting a Soviet visa. In the letter, the Senator expresses deep concern over the state of Shcharansky's health and urges Soviet authorities to allow him contact with his family through the mail and personal visits. He also calls on the Soviets to ultimately release Shcharansky from prison and allow him to emigrate from the Soviet Union.

According to Mrs. Shcharansky, who currently resides in Jerusalem, she was "literally forced" to leave the Soviet Union in 1974 after both she and her husband requested visas. At the time of her departure, she was given assurances by Soviet authorities that her husband would follow her within a short period of time. Anatoly's visa was subsequently denied and thereafter, according to his family, he was continually harrassed by the KGB. He became an outspoken critic of the Soviet Union's human rights policies, was arrested in March of 1977 and brought to trial in July of 1978. Shcharansky was convicted on charges of "treason and anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda" for which he received thirteen years in prison and labor camps.