

# The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen

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The History Guide: <http://www.historyguide.org/intellect/declaration.html>

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The Representatives of the French people, organized in National Assembly, considering that ignorance, forgetfulness, or contempt of the rights of man are the sole causes of public miseries and the corruption of governments, have resolved to set forth in a solemn declaration the natural, inalienable, and sacred rights of man, so that this declaration, being ever present to all the members of the social body, may unceasingly remind them of their rights and duties...

In consequence, the National Assembly recognizes and declares, in the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme Being, the following rights of man and citizen:

1. **Men are born free and remain free and equal in rights.** Social distinctions can be based only on public utility.
2. The aim of every political association is the preservation of the natural and inalienable rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.
3. **The sources of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation;** no body, no individual can exercise authority that does not proceed from it in plain terms.
4. **Liberty consists in the power to do anything that does not injure others;** accordingly, the exercise of the rights of each man has no limits except those that secure the enjoyment of these same rights to the other members of society. These limits can be determined only by law.
5. The law has only the rights to forbid such actions as are injurious to society...
6. **Law is the expression of the general will.** All citizens have the right to take part personally, or by their representatives, and its formation. It must be the same for all...
7. No man can be accused, arrested, or detained, except in the cases determined by the law and according to the forms it has prescribed...
10. No one should be disturbed on account of his opinions, even religious, provided their manifestation does not upset the public order established by law.
11. The free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of man; every citizen can then freely speak, write, and print, subject to responsibility for the abuse of this freedom in the cases is determined by law.
13. A general tax is indispensable for the maintenance of the public force and for the expenses of administration; it ought to be equally apportioned among all citizens according to their means.
15. Society has the right to call for an account of his administration by every public agent.
16. Any society in which the guarantee of the rights is not secured, or the separation of powers not determined, has no constitution at all.
17. Property being a sacred to and inviolable right, no one can be deprived of it, unless legally established public necessity evidently demands it, under the condition of a just and prior indemnity.

## Active Reading