

## Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen



*Each of the articles of the Declaration was a response to some feature of Old Regime society or law that was now deemed unacceptable.*

*Preamble:* The representatives of the French people, organized as a National Assembly, believing that the ignorance, neglect, or contempt of the rights of man are the sole cause of public calamities and the corruption of governments, have determined to set forth in a solemn declaration the natural, inalienable, and sacred rights of man. . . .

(1) Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be founded only upon the general good.

(2) The aim of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.

(3) The principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation. No body or individual

may exercise any authority which does not proceed directly from the nation.

(6) Law is the expression of the general will. Every citizen has the right to participate personally, or through his representative, in its formation. It must be the same for all. . . . All citizens, being equal in the eyes of the law, are equally eligible to all dignities and to all public positions and occupations, according to their abilities, and without distinction except that of their virtues and talents.

(11) The free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious rights of man. . . .

(13) A common contribution is essential for the maintenance of the public forces and for the cost of administration. This should be equitably distributed among all the citizens in proportion to their means.

*Source:* James Harvey Robinson, *Readings in European History* (Boston: Ginn, 1906), pp. 409–411.