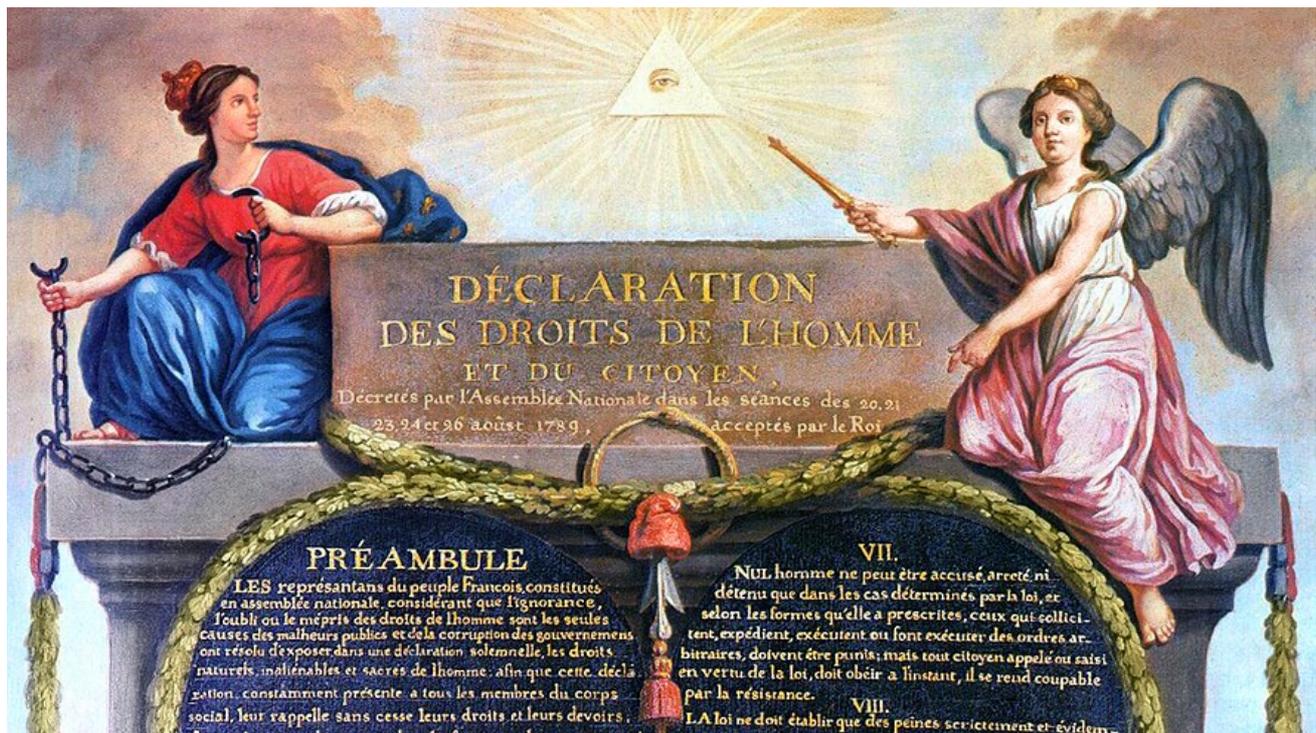


Primary Sources: Declaration of the Rights of Man

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This representation of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, painted in 1789, includes the "eye of providence" symbol (an eye in triangle). Jean-Jacques-François Le Barbier

Editor's Note: After fighting in two wars, the French government had run out of money. It tried to recover by passing unpopular taxes. At the same time, the French people did not have enough to eat. They grew frustrated with the country's rich leaders, who still enjoyed lives of luxury. People started to demand a new constitution and started a revolution to overthrow the king. The Declaration of the Rights of Man was written by French revolutionaries. It was the first step toward writing a constitution for France. It was passed by the National Constituent Assembly, a group leading the revolution, on August 26, 1789.

Injustice results whenever the rights of man are ignored. The National Assembly has therefore determined to set forth a declaration of the natural and sacred rights of man.

It is hoped that this declaration shall remind the people of their rights and duties. Now, if a citizen feels that his rights have been violated, he can base his complaint upon these simple principles. Furthermore, this declaration may be used to help judge whether the acts of lawmakers and government leaders are in line with the rights of man.

Therefore the National Assembly declares the following rights of man and of the citizen:

Articles:

1. Men are born free and equal in rights. They remain free and equal throughout their lives.
2. The aim of all politics is the preservation of the natural rights of man. These rights include liberty, property and safety.
3. Just rule comes only from the nation. The power to make and enforce the law belongs to the people's government.
4. Liberty is the freedom to do everything that does not injure someone else. Therefore, the natural rights of each man can only be limited in order to protect the rights of other citizens. These limits can only be determined by the law.
5. Law can only prohibit actions that are hurtful to society. Nothing may be prevented that is not forbidden by law, and no one may be forced to do anything not required by law.
6. The law shall be based on the desires of the people. Every citizen has a right to take part in the process of making the law, either through a representative or by being part of the government himself. The law must be the same for all, whether it protects or punishes.
7. No person shall be accused, arrested or imprisoned outside of the law. Anyone arrested according to the law, however, shall give in without delay.
8. The law shall only allow for punishments that are strictly necessary. No one shall be punished for breaking a law that had not already been passed at the time.
9. All persons are held innocent until they are declared guilty. If an arrest is necessary, it shall be carried out in a way that avoids any unnecessary harshness.
10. No one shall be mistreated because of his opinions, including his religious opinions. The only exception shall be in cases where such opinions disturb the public order.
11. The free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious of the rights of man. Every citizen may, therefore, speak, write and print with freedom, as long as he does not abuse this freedom.
12. To protect the rights of man and of the citizen, public military forces are required. These forces shall be established for the good of all and not for the personal advantage of those in charge.
13. Taxes are essential to pay for military forces and government. They should be fairly spread among all the citizens according to each person's ability to pay.
14. Taxes shall be determined by the people and their representatives. The people shall decide how taxes are collected and shall be allowed to know how their taxes are spent.

15. Society has the right to ask every government worker for records that show how he and his department are spending money.

16. A society in which the rule of the law is not assured, and the separation of powers is not defined, has no constitution at all.

17. Since property is a sacred right, the government shall not take anyone's property except where public necessity, legally determined, shall clearly demand it. In such cases, the owner must be fairly paid for the property in advance.

Approved by the National Assembly of France, August 26, 1789.

Quiz

- 1 Which paragraph from the introduction [paragraphs 1-4] BEST supports the idea that the declaration was written to help lawmakers create a better government?

- 2 Which Article below suggests that the previous French government collected too much money from citizens who were poor?
 - (A) 1. To protect the rights of man and of the citizen, public military forces are required. These forces shall be established for the good of all and not for the personal advantage of those in charge.
 - (B) 1. Taxes are essential to pay for military forces and government. They should be fairly spread among all the citizens according to each person's ability to pay.
 - (C) 1. Taxes shall be determined by the people and their representatives. The people shall decide how taxes are collected and shall be allowed to know how their taxes are spent.
 - (D) 1. Society has the right to ask every government worker for records that show how he and his department are spending money.

- 3 Which detail from the Articles BEST supports the central idea of the entire declaration?
 - (A) The aim of all politics is the preservation of the natural rights of man.
 - (B) The power to make and enforce the law belongs to the people's government.
 - (C) No person shall be accused, arrested or imprisoned outside of the law.
 - (D) To protect the rights of man and of the citizen, public military forces are required.

- 4 Which sentence BEST reflects the main idea of Articles 10 and 11?
 - (A) People can express any opinions in speech or in writing as long as their opinions do not oppose the government.
 - (B) People are guaranteed the right to share their ideas and opinions in speech and in writing with no limits.
 - (C) People are allowed to express themselves however they want as long as it does not hurt anyone else.
 - (D) People should not take advantage of their rights by spreading their opinions or religious beliefs to others.

Answer Key

- 1 Which paragraph from the introduction [paragraphs 1-4] BEST supports the idea that the declaration was written to help lawmakers create a better government?

Paragraph 2:

It is hoped that this declaration shall remind the people of their rights and duties. Now, if a citizen feels that his rights have been violated, he can base his complaint upon these simple principles. Furthermore, this declaration may be used to help judge whether the acts of lawmakers and government leaders are in line with the rights of man.

- 2 Which Article below suggests that the previous French government collected too much money from citizens who were poor?

(A) 1. To protect the rights of man and of the citizen, public military forces are required. These forces shall be established for the good of all and not for the personal advantage of those in charge.

(B) **1. Taxes are essential to pay for military forces and government. They should be fairly spread among all the citizens according to each person's ability to pay.**

(C) 1. Taxes shall be determined by the people and their representatives. The people shall decide how taxes are collected and shall be allowed to know how their taxes are spent.

(D) 1. Society has the right to ask every government worker for records that show how he and his department are spending money.

- 3 Which detail from the Articles BEST supports the central idea of the entire declaration?

(A) **The aim of all politics is the preservation of the natural rights of man.**

(B) The power to make and enforce the law belongs to the people's government.

(C) No person shall be accused, arrested or imprisoned outside of the law.

(D) To protect the rights of man and of the citizen, public military forces are required.

- 4 Which sentence BEST reflects the main idea of Articles 10 and 11?
- (A) People can express any opinions in speech or in writing as long as their opinions do not oppose the government.
 - (B) People are guaranteed the right to share their ideas and opinions in speech and in writing with no limits.
 - (C) **People are allowed to express themselves however they want as long as it does not hurt anyone else.**
 - (D) People should not take advantage of their rights by spreading their opinions or religious beliefs to others.