

The decree abolishing the feudal system, august 11, 1789

[Law](#), [Justice](#)



The Decree Abolishing the Feudal System, August 11, 1789 The abolition of the feudal system, which took place during the famous night session of August 4-5, 1789, was caused by the reading of a report on the misery and disorder which prevailed in the provinces. The National Assembly, in a fervor of enthusiasm and excitement, straightaway abolished many of the ancient abuses. The document here given is the revised decree, completed a week later. ARTICLE I. The National Assembly hereby completely abolishes the feudal system.

It decrees that, among the existing rights and dues, both feudal and censuel, all those originating in or representing real or personal serfdom shall be abolished without indemnification. All other dues are declared redeemable, the terms and mode of redemption to be fixed by the National Assembly. Those of the said dues which are not extinguished by this decree shall continue to be collected until indemnification shall take place. II. The exclusive right to maintain pigeon houses and dovecotes is abolished.

The pigeons shall be confined during the seasons fixed by the community. During such periods they shall be looked upon as game, and every one shall have the right to kill them upon his own land. III. The exclusive right to hunt and to maintain uninclosed warrens is likewise abolished, and every landowner shall have the right to kill, or to have destroyed on his own land, all kinds of game, observing, however, such police regulations as may be established with a view to the safety of the public.

All hunting capitaineries, including the royal forests, and all hunting rights under whatever denomination, are likewise abolished. Provision shall be

made, however, in a manner compatible with the regard due to property and liberty, for maintaining the personal pleasures of the king. The president of the Assembly shall be commissioned to ask of the king the recall of those sent to the galleys or exiled, simply for violations of the unting regulations, as well as for the release of those at present imprisoned for offenses of this kind, and the dismissal of such cases as are now pending. IV. All manorial courts are hereby suppressed without indemnification. But the magistrates of these courts shall continue to perform their functions until such time as the National Assembly shall provide for the establishment of a new judicial system. V.

Tithes of every description, as well as the dues which have been substituted for them, under whatever denomination they are known or collected (even when compounded for), possessed by secular or regular congregations, by holders of benefices, members of corporations (including the Order of Malta and other religious and military orders), as well as those devoted to the maintenance of churches, those impropriated to lay persons, and those substituted for the portion congrue, are abolished, on condition, however, that some other method be devised to provide for the expenses of divine worship, the support of the officiating clergy, for the assistance of the poor, for repairs and rebuilding of churches and parsonages, and for the maintenance of all institutions, seminaries, schools, academies, asylums, and organizations to which the present funds are devoted.

Until such provision shall be made and the former possessors shall enter upon the enjoyment of an income on the new system, the National Assembly

decrees that the said tithes shall continue to be collected according to law and in the customary manner. Other tithes, of whatever nature they may be, shall be redeemable in such manner as the Assembly shall determine. Until this matter is adjusted, the National Assembly decrees that these, too, shall continue to be collected. VI. All perpetual ground rents, payable either in money or in kind, of whatever nature they may be, whatever their origin and to whomsoever they may be due, . . . shall be redeemable at a rate fixed by the Assembly. No due shall in the future be created which is not redeemable. VII. The sale of judicial and municipal offices shall be abolished forthwith. Justice shall be dispensed gratis.

Nevertheless the magistrates at present holding such offices shall continue to exercise their functions and to receive their emoluments until the Assembly shall have made provision for indemnifying them. VIII. The fees of the country priests are abolished, and shall be discontinued so soon as provision shall be made for increasing the minimum salary [portion congrue] of the parish priests and the payment to the curates. A regulation shall be drawn up to determine the status of the priests in the towns. IX. Pecuniary privileges, personal or real, in the payment of taxes are abolished forever. Taxes shall be collected from all the citizens, and from all property, in the same manner and in the same form. Plans shall be considered by which the taxes shall be paid proportionally by all, even for the last six months of the current year. X.

Inasmuch as a national constitution and public liberty are of more advantage to the provinces than the privileges which some of these enjoy, and

inasmuch as the surrender of such privileges is essential to the intimate union of all parts of the realm, it is decreed that all the peculiar privileges, pecuniary or otherwise, of the provinces, principalities, districts, cantons, cities, and communes, are once for all abolished and are absorbed into the law common to all Frenchmen. XI. All citizens, without distinction of birth, are eligible to any office or dignity, whether ecclesiastical, civil, or military; and no profession shall imply any derogation. XII. Hereafter no remittances shall be made for annates or for any other purpose to the court of Rome, the vice legation at Avignon, or to the nunciature at Lucerne.

The clergy of the diocese shall apply to their bishops in regard to the filling of benefices and dispensations, the which shall be granted gratis without regard to reservations, expectancies, and papal months, all the churches of France enjoying the same freedom. XIII. [This article abolishes various ecclesiastical dues.] XIV. Pluralities shall not be permitted hereafter in cases where the revenue from the benefice or benefices held shall exceed the sum of three thousand livres. Nor shall any individual be allowed to enjoy several pensions from benefices, or a pension and a benefice, if the revenue which he already enjoys from such sources exceeds the same sum of three thousand livres. XV.

The National Assembly shall consider, in conjunction with the king, the report which is to be submitted to it relating to pensions, favors, and salaries, with a view to suppressing all such as are not deserved, and reducing those which shall prove excessive; and the amount shall be fixed which the king may in the future disburse for this purpose. XVI. The National Assembly decrees that

a medal shall be struck in memory of the recent grave and important deliberations for the welfare of France, and that a Te Deum shall be chanted in gratitude in all the parishes and the churches of France. XVII. The National Assembly solemnly proclaims the king, Louis XVI, the Restorer of French Liberty. XVIII.

The National Assembly shall present itself in a body before the king, in order to submit to him the decrees which have just been passed, to tender to him the tokens of its most respectful gratitude, and to pray him to permit the Te Deum to be chanted in his chapel, and to be present himself at this service. XIX. The National Assembly shall consider, immediately after the constitution, the drawing up of the laws necessary for the development of the principles which it has laid down in the present decree. The latter shall be transmitted by the deputies without delay to all the provinces, together with the decree of the 10th of this month, in order that it may be printed, published, read from the parish pulpits, and posted up wherever it shall be deemed necessary.