

Ottoman Empire: Tanzimat Era Reforms

(Just a few...)

- guarantees to ensure the Ottoman subjects perfect security for their lives, honour, and property (1839, see *Rescript of the Rose Chamber* below for details);
- the introduction of the first Ottoman paper [banknotes](#) (1840);
- the opening of the first [post offices](#) of the empire (1840);
- the reorganization of the finance system according to the French model (1840);
- the reorganization of the Civil and Criminal Code according to the French model (1840);
- the establishment of the prototype (1841) of the [First Ottoman Parliament](#) (1876);
- the reorganization of the army and a regular method of recruiting, levying the army, and fixing the duration of military service (1843–44);
- the adoption of an [Ottoman national anthem](#) and [Ottoman national flag](#) (1844);
- the first nationwide Ottoman [census](#) in 1844 (only male citizens were counted);
- the first national identity cards (officially named the *Mecidiye* identity papers, or informally *kafa kağıdı* (*head paper*) documents, 1844);
- the institution of a Council of Public Instruction (1845) and the Ministry of Education 1847
- the abolition of slavery and slave trade (1847);
- the establishment of the first modern universities, academies, and teacher schools (1848)
- the establishment of the Ministry of Healthcare (1850);
- the Commerce and Trade Code (1850);
- the establishment of the Academy of Sciences (*Encümen-i Daniş*, 1851);
- the establishment of the *Şirket-i Hayriye* which operated the first steam-powered commuter ferries (1851);
- the first European style courts and supreme judiciary council (1853)
- the so-called "[Hatt-ı Hümayun](#) of 1856" (called *Islahat* meaning improvement) promising full legal equality for citizens of all religions (1856);
- the abolition of the capitulation (Jizya) tax on non-Muslims, with a regular method of establishing and collecting taxes (1856);
- non-Muslims were allowed to become soldiers (1856);
- the establishment of the first [telegraph](#) networks (1847–1855) and [railway](#) networks (1856);
- the replacement of guilds with factories;
- the establishment of the Ottoman Central Bank (1856) and the Ottoman Stock Exchange (1866)
- the permission for private sector publishers and printing firms with the *Serbستی-i Kürşad Nizamnamesi* (1857);
- the establishment of the School of Economical and Political Sciences (1859);
- the Press and Journalism Regulation Code (1864)
- the so-called "[Nationality Law](#) of 1869" creating a common Ottoman citizenship irrespective of religious or ethnic divisions (1869).

Source: Boğaziçi University, Atatürk Institute of Modern Turkish History
(<http://www.ata.boun.edu.tr>) (The translator is unknown)

Excerpts from: The Ottoman Constitution (23 December 1876)

(Underlined portions are primarily from the website above, but some have been changed or added for clarity)

Sultan, “Supreme Caliph”

Art. 3. The Ottoman sovereignty, which includes in the person of the Sovereign the Supreme Caliphate of Islam, belongs to the eldest Prince of the House of Osman, in accordance with the rules established ab antiquo.

Art. 4. His Majesty the Sultan, under the title of “Supreme Caliph,” is the protector of the Muslim religion. He is the sovereign and padişah (emperor) of all the Ottomans.

Sovereign Rights of the Sultan

Art. 7. Among the sovereign rights of His Majesty the Sultan are the following prerogatives: - He makes and cancels the appointments of ministers; he confers the grades, functions and insignia of his orders, and confers investiture on the chiefs of the privileged provinces, according to forms determined by the privileges granted them; he has the coining of money; his name is pronounced in the mosques during public prayer; he concludes treaties with the powers; he declares war and makes peace; he commands both land and sea forces; he directs military movements; he carries out the provisions of the Şeriat (the sacred law), and of the other laws; he sees to the administration of public measures; he respites or commutes sentences pronounced by the criminal courts; he summons and prorogues the General Assembly; he dissolves, if deems it necessary, the Chamber of Deputies, provided he directs the election of the new members.

Public Rights of the Ottomans

Personal Liberties

Art. 8. All subjects of the empire are called Ottomans, without distinction whatever faith they profess; the status of an Ottoman is acquired and lost according to conditions specified by law.

Art. 9. Every Ottoman enjoys personal liberty on condition of not interfering with the liberty of others.

Art. 10. Personal liberty is wholly inviolable. No one can suffer punishment, under any pretext whatsoever, except in cases determined by law, and according to the forms prescribed by it.

Religion

Art. 11. Islam is the state religion. But, while maintaining this principle, the state will protect the free exercise of faiths professed in the Empire, and uphold the religious privileges granted to various bodies, on condition of public order and morality not being interfered with.

The Press

Art. 12. The press is free, within limits imposed by law.

Economy

Art. 13. Ottomans have the power of forming commercial companies, industrial or agricultural, within limits imposed by law and statute.

Right of Petition

Art 14. One or more persons of ottoman nationality have the right of presenting petitions in the proper quarter relating to the breaking of law and regulation, done either to their own or public detriment, and may likewise present in protest signed petitions to the General Ottoman Assembly, complaining of the conduct of state servants and functionaries.

Education

Art. 15. Education is free. Every Ottoman can attend public or private instructions on condition of conforming to the law.

Art. 16. All schools are under state supervision. Proper means will be devised for harmonizing and regulating the instruction given to all the Ottomans, but without interfering with the religious education in the various districts.

Equality before the Law

Art. 17. All Ottomans are equal in the eyes of the law. They have the same rights, and owe the same duties towards their country, without prejudice to religion.

Taxes and Property

Art. 20. The assessment and distribution of the taxes are to be in proportion to the fortune of each taxpayer, in conformity with the laws and special regulations.

Art. 21. Property, real and personal, of lawful title, is guaranteed. There can be no dispossession, except on good public cause shown, and subject to the previous payment, according to law of the value of the property in question.

Art. 22. The domicile [home] is inviolable. The authorities cannot break into any dwelling except in cases prescribed by law.

Torture and Inquisition

Art. 26. Torture and inquisition, under any form, are wholly and absolutely forbidden.

The General Assembly

Art. 42. The General Assembly is composed of two chambers: the Chamber of Notables or Senate, and the Chamber of Deputies.

Art 46. All the members of the General Assembly shall take an oath of fidelity to His Majesty the Sultan and to the country, shall bind themselves to observe the Constitution, to perform the duties entrusted to them, and to abstain from all acts opposed to those duties.

Art. 47. Members of the General Assembly are free to express their opinions and to vote as they like.

They cannot be bound by conditions or promises, nor influenced by threats. They cannot be prosecuted for opinions or votes delivered in the course of debate, unless they have contravened the Standing Orders of the Chamber, when they are amenable to the provisions of the regulations in force.

The Law Courts

Art 81. The judges nominated in conformity with the special law on this subject and furnished with the patent of investiture are irremovable, but they can resign.

The promotion of Judges, their displacement, superannuation, and revocation, in case of judicial condemnation, are subject to the provisions of the same law.

That law fixes the conditions and qualities requisite for exercising the functions of judge or the other functions of a judicial order.

Art. 90. No judge can combine his functions with other functions paid by the State.