

The Emancipation Proclamation

The Emancipation Proclamation was a presidential **executive order** issued by President Abraham Lincoln as commander in chief on January 1, 1863. It changed the federal legal status of more than 3 million enslaved people in the designated areas of the South from slave to free.

As soon as a slave escaped the control of the Confederate government, by running away or through the advances of federal troops, the slave became legally free. It was issued as a war measure **directed to all areas in rebellion against the Union**.

The Proclamation **did not** compensate owners, **did not** outlaw slavery and **did not** grant citizenship to the ex-slaves.

It **did** make the eradication of slavery a **clear war goal**, in addition to the goal of reuniting the Union. The war now became in part a **moral crusade**.

Around 25,000 to 75,000 slaves in regions where the US army was active were immediately emancipated. It could not be enforced in areas still under rebellion which meant close to 3 million slaves did not immediately gain freedom.

The Proclamation applied only to slaves in Confederate-held lands; it **did not apply to those in the four slave states that were not in rebellion (Kentucky, Maryland, Delaware and Missouri)**, nor to Tennessee which was already occupied by Union troops. It also excluded those counties of Virginia that would later form the state of West Virginia.

The Proclamation also ordered that suitable persons among those freedmen could be enrolled into the paid service of the U.S. forces.