

The Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798

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The Alien and Sedition Acts (1798) An Act Concerning Aliens (excerpt)

SECTION 1. Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States of America, That it shall be lawful for the President of the United States at any time [this act is law], to order all such aliens as he shall judge dangerous to the peace and safety of the United States, or shall have reasonable grounds to suspect are [involved] in any treasonable or secret [actions] against the government, to depart out of the territory of the United States. And in case any alien, so ordered to depart, shall be found at large (meaning that they never left when ordered) within the United States after the time limited in such order for his departure, and not having obtained a license from the President to reside [here], every such alien shall, on conviction, be imprisoned for a term not exceeding three years, and shall never after be admitted to become a citizen of the United States.

SECTION 3. And be it further enacted, That every commander of any ship or vessel which shall come into any port of the United States, shall immediately on his arrival make report in writing to the chief officer of the port, of all aliens, if any, on board his vessel, specifying their names, age, the place of nativity, the country from which they shall have come, the nation to which they belong and owe allegiance, their occupation and a description of their persons, and on failure [to report this], every such master and commander shall forfeit and pay three hundred dollars, for the payment whereof on default of such master or commander, such vessel shall also be holden, and may by such collector or other officer of the customs be detained.

- 1) What authority does this act give the President?
- 2) What groups of people are being targeted by this act?