

Monument Of Liberty

Location: Turkey

The Monument of Liberty in the Şişli-Mecidiyeköy district of Istanbul, Turkey, is a memorial in honour of the soldiers killed defending the Ottoman Parliament against rebel forces during the 31 March Incident. It is situated on Eternal Liberty Hill, the highest point (130 m (430 ft) above sea level) in Şişli, Istanbul, and lies within a park flanked by three major highways between Şişli and Çağlayan. Pathways radiate out from the monument like a five-angled star surrounded by a circle symbolising the star and crescent of the Turkish flag. In the late 19th century conservatives in the Ottoman Empire were strongly opposed to the Tanzimat reforms (which had begun in 1839) and other liberalisation processes and hoped to re-affirm Sultan Abdulhamid II's powers as an absolute monarch. Abdülhamid had come to power apparently accepting a constitution and had opened the first Ottoman Parliament, the General Assembly of the Ottoman Empire, in 1876 during the First Constitutional Era. Using the pretext of the Russian War as an excuse, that Parliament was adjourned in 1878 and Abdulhamid II returned to reigning as an absolute monarch until 1908, when Parliament

resumed its work during the Second Constitutional Era as result of pressure from growing progressive forces. An uprising that began on April 13, 1909 caused the democratic process to be interrupted once again although the forces of the Hareket Ordusu (Turkish for `Army of Action`) that came from Rumelia, under the command of Mahmud Şevked Pasha, suppressed the counter coup on July 23, 1909. Abdulhamid II was deposed by the Committee of Union and Progress (`Young Turks`), the foremost constitutionalist party, and sent into exile in Salonica (modern Thessaloniki), which was at that time one of the largest cities of the Ottoman Empire. The uprising came to be known as the 31 March Incident. The Abide-i Hürriyet monument was inaugurated in 1911 on the second anniversary of the 31 March Incident. Later, the graves of four notable Ottoman officials, including Mahmud Şevked Pasha, were moved into the surrounding park. Seen today as a symbol of modernity, democracy, and secularism in Turkey, the monument now serves as a venue for some official ceremonies and public gatherings.