

## **TOPIC B.-**

### **“Ending Statelessness”**

*“I belong. No longer invisible. No longer stateless.”*

Stateless people are those who lack an officially recognized nationality. As of the end of 2020, 4.2 million people were known to be stateless based on a count in half of the world's countries. The actual number is much higher – possibly as high as 10 million – though difficult to determine as stateless people are often rendered “invisible” by their lack of documentation.

Having a recognized national identity is essential for people to realize their human rights. Stateless people often cannot access the most basic rights, such as education, employment, property ownership and healthcare.

Since they cannot access most of their basic rights, stateless people are at greater risk of gender-based violence, incarceration, exploitation, and mental health problems. At the same time, statelessness can be a root cause of poverty, social unrest, displacement, and conflict.

#### **Root causes of statelessness:**

- State succession
- Statelessness at birth
- Discrimination and denationalization
- Nationality and gender inequality
- Statelessness upon a change in civil status
- Statelessness in the context of displacement

This matter has led multiple governments and agencies towards the construction of solutions for stateless people. Specifically, UNHCR, the main agency working to find solutions to statelessness and protect stateless people. In 2014, UNHCR launched the "I Belong campaign", a 10-year global campaign to eradicate statelessness. As part of this campaign, UNHCR created the Global Action Plan to End Statelessness, a list of 10 actions to be undertaken by States and other stakeholders.

Additionally, there are international instruments in which the States have compromised to work jointly to safeguard the stateless people rights', such as the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. It is also worth mentioning the 2019 High-Level Segment on Statelessness, in which States delivered 252 pledges announcing a broad range of actions that they were going to take to address statelessness.

Furthermore, governments have been taking action within their national politics. For example:

- Tajikistan decided to grant legal status to 20,000 stateless people by putting in place an Amnesty Law to help former citizens of the Soviet Union.
- Thousands of people have been given nationality in Thailand, including people living in remote places.
- Uzbekistan decided to end statelessness for 50,00 people by giving citizenship to those granted permanent residence in the country before 1995 and their children.
- Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan decided to embrace universal birth registration.

- Sierra Leone and Iran decided to acknowledge the equal right of women to confer nationality to children.
- Kenya decided to resolve the statelessness of the Shona and persons of Rwandan descent.

Many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and other UN agencies such as The UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) and UNICEF are also active in the fight against statelessness. OHCHR focuses on ending gender discrimination in nationality laws. The Coalition on Every Child's Right to a Nationality is a co-led effort by UNHCR and UNICEF and includes 70 international NGOs. The coalition aims to "expand and strengthen international co-operation to raise awareness about and combat the hidden problem of childhood statelessness.

### **Questions to Guide the Debate Useful Resources**

- How can stateless people be better identified?
- How to fight discrimination in nationality laws?
- How can stateless people be better included in education, healthcare, and the economy?
- How can the public be better educated about the existence and consequences of statelessness?
- How can the States be encouraged to grant citizenship to stateless people in their country?
- How can stateless people be protected from gender-based violence and economic exploitation?
- How can statelessness be resolved in cases of state succession? How can refugees and displaced people be protected from statelessness?

- How can nationality-holders better support stateless people in their country?
- How to encourage States to enact laws that grant citizenship to children born within their borders?
- How to ensure that non-legal barriers to birth registration such as fees and distance (for stateless people living in remote areas) are removed?

### Useful Resources

#### UNHCR Press releases

- [UNHCR warns of vaccine gap risk for world's stateless](#)
- [Displaced and stateless women and girls at heightened risk of gender-based violence](#)
- [The 1961 Statelessness Convention: 60 years of protecting the right to a nationality](#)
- [Kyrgyzstan ends statelessness in historic first](#)

#### Videos

- [What does it mean to be stateless?](#)
- [\(UNHCR\) What Does It Mean to be Stateless? \(NowThisWorld\)](#)
- [Cate Blanchett: Statelessness Exists Everywhere](#)
- [Living as a Stateless Person](#)

#### Webpages, articles, and stories

- [OHCHR and the right to a nationality](#)
- [Birth Registration - UNICEF Data](#)
- [What is birth registration and why does it matter?](#)



## Documents and Reports

- [Global Action Plan to End Statelessness \(2014 - 2024\)](#)
- [Birth Registration for Every Child by 2030: Are we on track?](#)

*This Background guide is from the MUN REFUGEE CHALLENGE*