

The World's Stateless



Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion

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The Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion is an independent, non-profit organisation dedicated to leading an integrated, inter-disciplinary response to the injustice of statelessness and exclusion. Established in August 2014, it is the first global centre of expertise and action committed to promoting the rights of stateless persons and reducing statelessness worldwide. We believe in the value of research, education, partnership and advocacy. We aim to develop and share our skills and expertise with partners in civil society, academia, the UN and governments, and to serve as a catalyst for change.

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THE PROBLEM OF STATELESSNESS

I. STATELESSNESS UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW

Under international law, a stateless persons is someone “who is not considered as a national by any state under the operation of its law”.⁵ Nationality, in this context, refers to a particular type of legal bond between an individual and a state.⁶ It is a type of formal membership that results in rights and duties on both sides. The individual, for instance, holds the right to reside in the territory and the state a corresponding duty of admission; the individual holds a duty of allegiance (which may include a duty to perform military and/or national service) and the state the right to exercise diplomatic protection on behalf of its nationals abroad. Where a person lacks any nationality, he or she does not enjoy the attached rights or duties, resulting in a lack of protection.⁷ A stateless person is seen and treated as a foreigner everywhere, as a national nowhere.

⁵ See above, note 4.

⁶ Citizenship is commonly used as a synonym for nationality, also referring to this specific type of legal bond between a person and a state. In some disciplines and various domestic or regional contexts, nationality and citizenship can also have distinct meanings, but within writing on statelessness – and in this report – the two terms are used interchangeably.

⁷ It is important to note however, that all persons – including those who are stateless – are protected by international human rights law. Thus, while the stateless may not necessarily benefit from rights attached to citizenship (such as the right to vote), they are entitled to the general protection of international human rights law.

Each state sets the conditions for acquisition and loss of its nationality – an act which is an expression of self-determination and a legitimate exercise of sovereignty – within the limits set by international law (including in relation to the avoidance of statelessness). Whether an individual is considered to be a national by a particular state will therefore depend on that state’s domestic nationality law, including how the rules are interpreted and applied in practice.⁸ A person is left stateless either where he or she has failed to acquire any nationality to begin with (i.e. at birth), or where he or she has lost or been deprived a nationality that was once held, without acquiring another. For the purposes of determining whether a person is stateless in accordance with international law, it is not relevant how or when he or she came to be without a nationality, only whether a nationality is held at the time the assessment is being made.

The two core international treaties on statelessness are the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.⁹ As their names imply, the former – very similar in content and structure to the 1951 Refugee Convention – sets out the protection framework for stateless persons (complementing the subsequent international human rights treaties), whereas the latter sets out the international standards related to the avoidance and reduction of statelessness. In addition to the two statelessness treaties, many human rights treaties also contain standards that are relevant both to the protection of stateless persons and the avoidance/reduction of statelessness. In terms of the latter, the right to a nationality is well established under international law, and the existence of statelessness can be viewed as the most extreme violation of this right. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, which enjoys almost universal ratification, contains a safeguard against statelessness,¹⁰ and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women protects against gender

⁸ In applying the definition of a stateless person, determining whether a person is “*considered as a national by a state under the operation of its law*”, requires a careful analysis of how a state applies its nationality laws in practice, in that individual’s case. UNHCR, *Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons*, 30 June 2014, paragraphs 23-24.

⁹ United Nations Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, U.N.T.S. 989, 1961.

¹⁰ See Articles 7 and 8, read in conjunction with Article 3, Convention on the Rights of the Child, G.A. Res. A/RES/44/25, 1989.

discriminatory nationality laws – one of the causes of statelessness.¹¹ Thus, the identification of stateless persons and the collation of statistical information on statelessness, is relevant not only to assess states' compliance with the statelessness treaties, but also with the more widely ratified human rights treaties.

It is important to point out that in finding a person to be stateless, it is not relevant where in the world that person is. A person can be stateless in the country in which he or she was born, has always lived and has all family ties. Equally, a person can be stateless in a migratory context – for instance, losing nationality prior to, as a consequence of or at some point after crossing an international border. Statelessness rests on the fact of lacking any nationality, nothing more. Most stateless persons have not moved from their homes and live in what can be described as their own country. Yet, due to the added vulnerability of stateless persons to discrimination, human rights abuse and even persecution, statelessness can also prompt forced displacement. Some stateless persons, then, become internally displaced persons (IDPs), asylum seekers and refugees. Where a person who “is not considered as a national by any state under the operation of its law” also falls within the scope of the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, he or she is a *stateless refugee*.¹² That someone can simultaneously be both stateless and a refugee, asylum seeker or IDP does not lessen their experience of statelessness, which should be taken into consideration when protecting and finding durable solutions for them.

With regard to the identification of stateless persons, for the purposes of statistical reporting or otherwise, it is also important to note the distinction between statelessness and the situation of being undocumented, of undetermined nationality and/or at risk of statelessness. As will be explored in the next section, universal birth registration and the provision of other life documents remains a significant challenge in many parts of the world. The lack of such documentation can mean that the person is stateless (e.g. where denied documentation because the state does not consider the person to be a national), but more often, such lack of documentation does not mean a lack of nationality, despite it being a significant barrier

¹¹ Article 9, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, G.A. Res. A/RES/34/180, 1979.

¹² See above, note 8, paragraph 15.

to proving nationality. Indeed, persons without documentation are at heightened risk of statelessness when compared with those who do have adequate documents, and some may become stateless in the future (e.g. where unable to establish or prove links to the state of nationality such that this state no longer considers the person as a national). Risk is always a question of degree, however, so the problem is a complex one, deserving of further dedicated study. In some countries, there is no commonly held definitive proof of nationality, so evidence of statelessness may be built up over multiple rejections for documentation by the state (refusal to register to vote, refusal of ID card, refusal of passport...). When dealing with such persons, it is pertinent to question if identifying them as stateless would serve any protection purpose. The starting point must be to push for them to be recognised as nationals by the country to which they have the strongest links. This would often require scrutiny and assessment of nationality laws and policies, their implementation and the documentation that confirms nationality. If persons of undetermined nationality and/or at risk of statelessness are ultimately recognised as nationals of a particular country, without ever being deemed to be stateless, this would be the ideal outcome. However, the question of how long their status is to remain undetermined, before concluding that they are actually stateless is a difficult one, to which international law does not seem to have a ready answer. This grey area between 'statelessness' and 'nationality' shows that they are two sides of the same coin, and that it can be harmful to address the one without sensitivity to the impact on the other.

II. CAUSES OF STATELESSNESS

There are a variety of circumstances that give rise to statelessness at birth or in later life, and this section highlights some of the most common causes. As this section will elaborate, there is often an element of discrimination and/or arbitrariness at play, when individuals or entire groups become stateless. Discrimination and arbitrariness can manifest itself in an obvious, aggressive and even persecutory manner, such as when large communities are deprived of their nationality based on ethnicity or religion; or it can be more subtle and latent, such as the failure of states to prioritise legal reform that would plug gaps in the law which could cause statelessness. Thus, it is worth reminding ourselves that while states do have significant freedom to set out their own membership criteria, they also have a responsibility to protect against discrimination and arbitrariness, and to uphold international standards. Statelessness most often occurs when states fail to do so.

Conflict of nationality laws

The classical example is where state A confers nationality by descent while state B confers nationality by place of birth, but the combination of a particular individual's birthplace and parentage is such that neither nationality is acquired. Neither state A nor state B necessarily have 'bad' laws or have picked out the person concerned as being undeserving of nationality, he or she simply fails to qualify under the regular operation of the rules of either state with which he or she has connections. Unless safeguards are in place in the law to prevent statelessness from arising,¹³ the regular operation of these states' nationality laws can leave people stateless. While this may seem like an unlikely and marginal occurrence, the scale of international migration today is such that conflicts of nationality laws are becoming more commonplace, increasing the need for safeguards to ensure the avoidance of statelessness. Brazil and Indonesia are among the countries which have introduced such safeguards in recent years in order to address significant problems of statelessness for their citizens and their descendants living abroad.¹⁴

¹³ Such as those laid out in the UN Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

¹⁴ Brazil reformed its constitution in 2007 to make it easier for children born abroad, to Brazilian parents, to acquire Brazilian nationality. Indonesia

State succession

A particular context in which the risk of a conflict of nationality laws is high, and where a large number of persons may simultaneously be affected, is that of state succession. When part of a state secedes and becomes independent, or when a state dissolves into multiple new states, the question emerges as to what happens to the nationality of the persons affected. The new nationality laws of successor states may conflict and leave people without any nationality, while the re-definition of who is a national of the original state (where it continues to exist) may also render people stateless. Most often in the context of state succession, it is vulnerable minorities who are associated with either the successor or parent state who are deprived of nationality, exposing the discriminatory motivations and arbitrary nature for such exclusion. Common types of state succession which have resulted in large-scale statelessness are the dissolution of federal states into independent republics (for instance, in the countries of the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia¹⁵) and the more recent cases of state secession (for instance, with the splitting off of Eritrea from Ethiopia and South Sudan from Sudan¹⁶). Situations of emerging or contested statehood complicate this picture further, leading to unique challenges around nationality and statelessness (for instance, for the Palestinians¹⁷ and the Sahrawi¹⁸). Today's world map looks very different from that of a few decades ago and political upheaval is likely to continue to bring changes to borders and sovereignty in the years to come. Solving existing cases of statelessness that have already been created by changes in political geography and forestalling new cases in the event of future situations of state succession is one of the major challenges that the international community faces in addressing statelessness.

The legacy of colonisation

While the de-colonisation process technically would be categorised as a form of state succession, the unique challenges presented require

amended its nationality law in 2006 to limit the loss of nationality due to long-term residence abroad to those cases in which the person concerned would not be rendered stateless.

¹⁵ See sections 3.IV and 3.V on statelessness statistics in Asia and Europe.

¹⁶ See section 3.II on statelessness statistics in Africa.

¹⁷ See section 3.VIII on stateless Palestinians.

¹⁸ See sections 3.VI and 3.VII on statelessness statistics in the Middle East and North Africa and on stateless refugees.

separate attention. Many of the most large scale and entrenched situations of statelessness in the world today were born out of the experiences of colonisation, de-colonisation and consequent nation-building. In such contexts, newly independent states (many of which never had a common pre-colonial national identity) have had to deal with borders arbitrarily drawn (often dividing ethnic groups) peoples forcibly migrated (for labour) and the consequences of decades, sometimes centuries of colonial rule which successfully pitted different ethnic and religious groups against each other, privileging some and marginalising others, as part of a wider divide and rule policy. It is not surprising that many newly independent states thus struggled with nation building, national identity and the treatment of minorities. While colonial history does not justify in any way discrimination, arbitrariness and disenfranchisement, this historical context must be understood and addressed in order to reduce statelessness.

Arbitrary deprivation of nationality

Large-scale statelessness can also be caused by the arbitrary deprivation of nationality outside the context of state succession. Arbitrary acts can involve the collective withdrawal or denial of nationality to a whole population group, commonly singled out in a discriminatory manner on the basis of characteristics such as ethnicity, language or religion, but it can also impact individuals who are deprived of their nationality on arbitrary and discriminatory grounds. In many cases, the group concerned forms a minority in the country in which they live. Sometimes they are perceived as having ties to another state, where they perhaps share common characteristics or even ancestral roots with a part of the state's population (such as in the case of the Rohingya in Myanmar¹⁹ and persons of Haitian descent in the Dominican Republic²⁰); in other instances, the state uses the manipulation of nationality policy as a means of asserting or constructing a particular national identity to the exclusion of those who do not fit the mould (such as in the case of the Kurds in Syria in the 1960s and the black population in Mauritania in the 1980s²¹). Nationality law may also be designed to restrict the access of certain groups to economic power, especially the right to own property (such as in Liberia or Sierra Leone, where only those who are 'negroes' or

¹⁹ See section 3.IV on statelessness statistics in Asia.

²⁰ See section 3.III on statelessness statistics in the Americas.

²¹ See section 3.VI on statelessness statistics in the Middle East and North Africa.

‘of negro-African descent’ may be citizens from birth). In some cases, individuals or groups are targeted for their political beliefs, since nationality is the gateway to political rights and its withdrawal can be a means of silencing political opponents. Deprivation of nationality on security grounds can also be arbitrary if certain criteria – including due process standards – are not met. Other forms of discrimination in nationality policy can also create, perpetuate or prolong problems of statelessness. For instance, where a woman does not enjoy the same right to transmit nationality to her child as a man, children are put at heightened risk of statelessness. A stateless, absent or unknown father, or one who cannot or does not want to take any steps that might be required to confer his nationality to the child, can spell statelessness because the mother is powerless to pass on her nationality. This form of gender discrimination is still present in more than 25 countries around the world and many more laws contain other elements of discrimination against women – or sometimes men – in the change, retention or transmission of nationality.²²

Administrative barriers and lack of documentation

The hand of discrimination can often be seen at play when it comes to obtaining documentation of nationality, with ethnic and religious minorities, nomadic communities and the rural poor more likely to face barriers than religious and ethnic majorities and urban populations. A surprising number of situations of statelessness actually stem from the poor administration or documentation of a country’s nationals during the period of state formation or when the first citizenship registration was carried out. In Thailand,²³ Lebanon and Kuwait,²⁴ for instance, statelessness became a feature of the landscape many decades – and several generations – ago, when the nationality laws were first being administered by the state. Elsewhere, individuals and groups who have had difficulties accessing birth or other forms of civil registration may find themselves unable to satisfy the state that they have connections with it. For example, without *proof* of place or date of birth, nor of parentage, states may dispute these facts and fail to consider a person as a national even if he or she would qualify under the law on the basis

²² See for more details on this issue UNHCR, *Background Note on Gender Equality, Nationality Laws and Statelessness 2014*, 8 March 2014. See also the Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights: www.equalnationalityrights.org.

²³ See section 3.IV on statelessness statistics in Asia.

²⁴ See section 3.VI on statelessness statistics in the Middle East and North Africa.

of these ties. The risk of statelessness is greatest where those who have been unable to access civil registration also belong to minority or nomadic groups, migrant or refugee populations, or are affected by state succession.²⁵ The Roma in countries of the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere in Europe are an evident example of where lack of documentation and civil registration can evolve into a problem of statelessness when several such factors converge.²⁶

The inheritance of statelessness

The single biggest cause of statelessness globally in any given year – in the absence of fresh, large-scale situations stemming from one of the above problems – is the inheritance of statelessness. Many contemporary situations of statelessness have their roots at a particular moment in history, such as state succession, the first registration of citizens or the adoption of a discriminatory nationality decree stripping a whole group of nationality, as outlined above. Yet these situations endure and even grow over time because the states concerned have not put any measures in place to stop statelessness being passed from parent to child – or do not implement existing measures to that effect. Furthermore, these situations migrate to new countries along with the (often forced) migration of stateless persons abroad, as in migratory contexts too, statelessness is allowed to continue into the next generations. This means that most new cases of statelessness affect children, from birth, such that they may never know the protection of nationality. It also means that stateless groups suffer from intergenerational marginalisation and exclusion, which affects the social fabric of entire communities.

²⁵ See also UNHCR Executive Committee, *Conclusion on civil registration*, 17 October 2013, No.111 (LXIV).

²⁶ See section 3.V on statelessness statistics in Europe.

III. IMPACT OF STATELESSNESS

This brings the discussion to the broader question of the impact of statelessness. What difference does it make to people's lives, in our modern world, to not have any nationality? The simple answer: a massive and often very harmful difference. Modern bureaucracies are crafted in a way that takes the possession of a nationality as the norm. Statelessness is the neglected, in fact largely forgotten state of exception. To exercise rights or access services, to be treated as belonging or even with respect – in practice commonly requires a nationality.

Human rights are those rights which are to be enjoyed by all of us, by virtue of our belonging to the human race and in accordance with human dignity. However, without any nationality, a number of rights are immediately out of reach even according to the mechanics of contemporary human rights law. Political rights in particular, such as the right to vote or stand for election and to perform certain public functions, may be restricted to a country's citizens,²⁷ such that stateless persons are not owed them by any state. Disenfranchisement therefore is an immediate and almost universal problem for stateless persons,²⁸ limiting their ability to influence laws and policies that affect them or to call for reforms that would bring an end to their statelessness. This undoubtedly also contributes to the invisibility of and lack of attention to the problem of statelessness in general, and its resultant manifestation and growth over generations. Developing countries may also limit the enjoyment of economic rights by non-nationals in certain circumstances,²⁹ which may be used to justify

²⁷ Article 25, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, G. A. Res 2200A (XXI), 1976.

²⁸ There may be some minor exceptions, where special arrangements with regard to voting for non-nationals in certain elections or the recruitment of long-term residents into public functions does create some political space for stateless individuals. For instance, in Estonia, the country's long-standing stateless population is eligible to vote in municipal elections. Such arrangements are far and away the exception, rather than the rule, and don't necessarily mean that the right of stateless persons to vote has been recognised, and can instead mean that they have merely been granted a privilege that can be revoked.

²⁹ Article 2(3), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, G.A. Res 2200A (XXI), 1976.

the economic disempowerment of stateless persons. With regards to other rights, states can treat nationals and non-nationals differently if that treatment can be justified by the pursuit of a legitimate aim and if the principle of proportionality can be satisfied – providing a margin of discretion that may be detrimental to the position of stateless persons.³⁰ All this means that the stateless experience a degree of deficit of rights under international human rights law. Yet, this should only be limited. As the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) has stated, any such restrictions must be seen as an exception to the principle of equality and consequently, “must be construed so as to avoid undermining the basic prohibition of discrimination”.³¹ Similarly, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) has asserted that “The ground of nationality should not bar access to Covenant rights (...) [which] apply to everyone including non-nationals, such as refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless persons, migrant workers and victims of international trafficking, regardless of legal status and documentation”.³² Furthermore, as the Human Rights Committee, has stated, “in general, the rights set forth [...] apply to everyone, irrespective of reciprocity, irrespective of his or her nationality or statelessness”.³³

In practice though, the situation of many stateless individuals and groups betrays a far greater problem: as a non-national generally and as a stateless person in particular, actually effectuating rights can be distinctly challenging.

The harsh reality for many stateless persons is a story of lack of opportunity, of lack of protection and of lack of participation. They face challenges in all areas of life, including: entering or completing schooling; accessing healthcare services for preventative medicine

³⁰ See further on the rights of non-citizens, Office of the High Commissioner For Human Rights, *The Rights of non-Citizens*, 2006.

³¹ Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, *General Recommendation No. 30: Discrimination Against Non Citizens*, UN Doc. CERD/C/64/Misc.11/rev.3, 2004, Para 2.

³² Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *General Comment No. 20: Non-Discrimination in Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 2, Para 2 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights)*, UN Doc. E/C.12/GC/20, 25 May 2009, Para 30.

³³ Human Rights Committee, *General Comment No. 15: The position of aliens under the Covenant*, UN Doc. HRI/GEN/1/Rev.6, 1986.

"In Kenya, if you do not have an ID card, you don't exist. Technically you cannot even leave your house, because if you leave your house and you are challenged 'Where is your ID?' That is considered a crime. Now, if you cannot leave your house, how do you live? How do you look for a job? You can't even open a bank account, you can't transact business, you cannot own anything, because you don't exist"

Issa Abdul Faraj, Nubian elder,
formerly stateless, Kenya

Transcribed from UNHCR, *Kenya: Nubians in Kibera* (<http://unhcr.org/v-4e5ca05e6>)

or to treat an injury or illness; finding gainful employment or signing a labour contract; buying or inheriting a house; registering a car or a business; obtaining a birth certificate, driving license, marriage certificate or even death certificate; opening a bank account or getting a loan; falling back on social security; and enjoying a pension. Obtaining a passport or indeed being issued any form of identity documentation is extremely difficult if you are not the national of any country, such that many stateless persons have no proof that they exist and no means by which to identify themselves in their day-to-day interactions with the state or with private entities. International

travel is almost inconceivable, unless by illicit – and dangerous – means. Free movement within the state of residence, even if it is where the person was born and has all of his or her ties, can also be difficult due to the inability to provide proof of identity if stopped at a security checkpoint or in a random check by the police. Arbitrary arrest and detention, including in the person's home country, is not uncommon. In some cases, detention becomes prolonged or even indefinite, if the state is intent on expulsion, but no other country can be found which would allow the person to enter. Where a stateless person wants to assert their rights, or where they have become a victim of crime or exploitation, their statelessness can also stand in the way of getting help from the authorities or finding their way to a court. Their complaint may be readily dismissed or ignored, and they are powerless to take a stand against this due to their status of disenfranchisement.

In some situations, statelessness actually becomes a conduit or catalyst for human rights violations, be they perpetrated by the state or because of a vacuum of state protection. Stateless persons may be subjected to specific regulations or practices that do not apply to other residents in a state. For instance, there may be restrictions on their movement within the territory or they may be denied land rights. In extreme cases, further debilitating and dehumanising restrictions may also be imposed, such as on marriage or reproductive rights.

Being slated as outsiders, not just by *their* country but by *all* countries, may indeed make the stateless easy targets for victimisation within society as they may be seen as less deserving of compassion, protection and support. They may be a target for exploitative practices, such as forced labour or extortion. Indeed, the treatment of stateless persons can, in certain instances, amount to persecution.³⁴ Moreover, the constraints that stateless persons experience, coupled with the fact of not being formally recognised as a member of their – or indeed any – country, has an evident impact on their well-being. A diminished sense of self-worth and in some instances a confused sense of identity and belonging can prompt sentiments of hopelessness, anxiety and depression.

"The price to pay for the perpetuation of statelessness is high not only for the persons affected, but also for the countries in which stateless persons live. Statelessness prevents participation in socio-economic, but also in public affairs, and results in the alienation of entire groups from society, which is passed on from generation to generation".

Nils Muižnieks, Council of Europe
Commissioner for Human Rights

The foregoing consequences of statelessness can also create a ripple such that they are felt not just by those individuals who are directly impacted because they lack nationality, but also by their family members, wider society and the international community of states. Statelessness of a single family member can create problems for all due to the difficulties it causes and the tension and stress that can ensue. A mother who holds nationality, but whose son is stateless because she was not able to confer her nationality to him under the law, worries that he will never have a family of his own because he is condemned to a life without nationality and to pass this on to his own children, were he to have any. A country in which a whole community has been excluded, disenfranchised, stigmatised and perhaps even vilified through the denial of nationality may face social tensions that affect both the stateless and citizens alike. Mounting tensions between the 'in' group and those portrayed as outsiders can also fuel conflict. Where conflict arises or where the stateless face such severe restrictions or violations of their fundamental rights that they are forced to seek sanctuary elsewhere, their displacement becomes a concern for the receiving country and the international community as a whole.

³⁴ Consider the example of the Rohingya of Myanmar – see sections 3.IV on statelessness statistics in Asia and 3.VII on stateless refugees.

IV. LINKS BETWEEN STATELESSNESS AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL CONCERNS

In describing the causes and impact of statelessness, the intersection between statelessness and a range of other international concerns has already started to emerge. Given that statelessness, as a stand-alone issue, has not received the same kind of attention as many other international challenges to date, it is helpful to identify these links as a way to demonstrate how addressing statelessness can contribute to solving other problems – and vice versa. The following paragraphs therefore offer some brief reflections on the links between statelessness and other international concerns.³⁵

If people matter

Stateless persons are among the world’s most vulnerable. Stateless persons are deemed and treated as foreigners – mostly unwanted - by every country in the world, including the country in which they were born, the country of their ancestors, the country of their residence, the country they happen to find themselves in today and the country they find themselves expelled to tomorrow. Stateless persons face an extreme form of exclusion that impacts both their sense of dignity and identity, and their ability to exercise even the most basic human rights, like the right to education, the right to work, the right to health and the right to marry. The marginalisation and discrimination that groups such as ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, migrants or displaced people all face becomes that much greater and more entrenched when it is compounded by statelessness. *So, if people matter, statelessness matters.*

If human rights matter

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” – so opens the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The contemporary human rights framework is premised on notions

³⁵ Note that a version of this section was published as a letter outlining why statelessness matters, in support of the launch of UNHCR’s #ibelong campaign on 4 November 2014, and can be found online here: <http://www.institutesi.org/whystatelessnessmatters.pdf>.

of equality, liberty and dignity, on the idea that we hold basic rights because we are human beings. Yet the universality of human rights also rests on the premise that everyone enjoys a nationality (as laid down, as a right in the UDHR and recognised under every other major human rights instrument). The human rights system recognises that states may reserve some rights for their citizens – such as the right to participate in government – placing these out of reach for stateless people. So until statelessness is eradicated, the fundamental aspiration of universal human rights remains just that, an aspiration. Moreover, in practice, statelessness is a proven barrier to the ability to exercise a wide range of other rights. Far greater effort is needed to ensure that these barriers are overcome and stateless people have access to the protection of national and international human rights law. ***So, if human rights matter, statelessness matters.***

"Everyone has the right to a nationality"

Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
Article 15

If children matter

Many of the world's stateless persons are actually children. In fact, in every region of the world, children are born into statelessness every day. Some children inherit this status from their stateless parents, creating an intergenerational problem. Others simply aren't able to acquire their parents' or any other nationality due to discriminatory laws and policies (such as laws which do not allow women to confer nationality to their children) or the failure to of governments to include or properly implement the few simple safeguards that should be found in every nationality law to prevent childhood statelessness. Without a nationality, can have difficulty exercising their rights, become outcasts in their own country, struggle to feel like they belong and grow up to be disenfranchised and excluded adults. ***So, if children matter, statelessness matters.***

If democracy matters

Nationality is the gateway to political participation. Stateless persons cannot vote, stand for election or effectuate change through regular political channels. Their statelessness suppresses their voices and renders their opinions obsolete. In countries with large stateless populations, whole sectors of the constituency are disenfranchised. Elsewhere, statelessness is a tool in the arsenal of those who would seek

to manipulate the democratic process, with deprivation of nationality a means of silencing the opposition. To ensure a level and inclusive democratic playing field, stateless persons must also be heard. ***So, if democracy matters, statelessness matters.***

If development matters

Difficulties accessing education and employment; restricted property rights; lack of opportunities to own or register a business; limited access to a bank account or a loan; and, in some cases, the threat of extortion, detention or expulsion; these factors can trap stateless persons in poverty and make it extremely challenging for them to improve their circumstances. Where statelessness affects whole communities over several successive generations – as it often sadly does, such communities can be neglected by development actors and processes. This can result in a significant lag behind others in the country or region in terms of development. Statelessness means a waste, of individual potential, of human capital and of development opportunities. ***So, if development matters, statelessness matters.***

If preventing displacement matters

Statelessness is a recognised root cause of forced displacement, with stateless people fleeing their homes and countries in order to find protection as IDPs or refugees elsewhere. In 1993, UNHCR's Note on International Protection acknowledged that preventing and reducing cases of statelessness is "vital for the prevention of refugee flows".³⁶ This link has been a key motivation for the agency to further operationalise its statelessness mandate. At the same time, addressing nationality disputes and tackling statelessness where it arises can be a key tool in resolving refugee situations because it can pave the way for successful voluntary repatriation and reintegration. ***So, if preventing and resolving situations of displacement matters, statelessness matters.***

³⁶ UNHCR, *Note on International Protection*, A/AC.96/815, 31 August 1993; see also UN General Assembly, *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: resolution adopted by the General Assembly*, A/RES/50/152, 9 February 1996.

If peace and security matter

The vulnerability, exclusion, despair, frustration and sometimes persecution experienced by stateless persons can spark other problems. Casting a group as 'others' or 'outsiders' by denying them access to nationality – in spite of clear and lasting ties to the country – can contribute to attitudes of suspicion and discrimination. This may cause a dangerous build-up of tension within and between communities that may lead to conflict. Disenfranchised, discriminated against and excluded, some stateless persons can also be more susceptible to the negative influence of extremists who prey on desperation. On the other hand, disputes surrounding nationality, membership, belonging and entitlement can also hamper peace-building efforts. ***So, if peace and security matter, statelessness matters.***

If size matters

Many millions of people are affected by statelessness around the world today. UNHCR estimates that there are at least 10 million stateless persons, while further desk research conducted for this report suggests that the true number likely surpasses 15 million (see further section 4 below). That number does not include the many more who feel the impact of statelessness, for instance because a close family member lacks any nationality. There are enough stateless people to create a medium-sized country: at 15 million stateless persons, such a country would have the 70th largest population in the world – although this is not suggested as a solution.³⁷ ***So, if size matters, statelessness matters.***

³⁷ According to July 2014 estimates of country population sizes offered in the CIA World Factbook, available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2119rank.html>

4

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Statelessness is a problem of global proportions. It affects people all over the world and can have a harmful impact on them, their families and the wider community. As set out in the introduction to this report, there are many lenses through which the phenomenon of statelessness can be studied, and indeed many links between statelessness and other issues of international concern. This report looked in particular at the question of scope and reach of statelessness, which is also the main focus of these conclusions and recommendations.

The report addressed questions such as how is statelessness quantified, what are the challenges in measuring statelessness, what do the statistics show and what remains hidden? While acknowledging that the primary responsibility to identify stateless persons and measure the scale of the problem of statelessness within their borders lies with states, it was seen that UNHCR plays an important role in tracking and reporting available data on statelessness. This report explored the UNHCR-reported data and also asked the question: what more can we learn about the situation of statelessness globally if we cast the net wider and look to other sources to complement UNHCR's statistical reporting? In doing so, the report looked at each region in turn (exploring the data on selected countries of interest), then also at what is known about two groups which do not currently feature in UNHCR's collated statistics – stateless refugees and the majority of stateless Palestinians.

On the one hand, the outcome of this exercise was enlightening because it confirmed what UNHCR itself has repeatedly stated: although 3.5 million stateless persons have been 'counted' by UNHCR, the real scale of the problem is far greater. In Asia and Africa, for instance, it is clear that the number of stateless persons is – estimated *conservatively* –

more than double the number UNHCR is currently able to report on. In both regions, there are more countries marked with an asterisk as having a significant but unquantified stateless population than there are countries for which UNHCR is able to provide a figure. In Africa there are three countries marked with an asterisk for every one which UNHCR has reported a figure on. Several other countries with significant populations at risk of statelessness are not even marked with an asterisk. In the Americas, Europe and the Middle East and North Africa, statelessness is evidently also significantly under-reported. Even though in Europe there are no ‘asterisk countries’, a closer look at what numbers are reported for certain countries and how they are comprised suggests that what data there is will have significant gaps in many cases. This is in part due to inherent difficulties in collecting accurate information on statelessness, but it also reflects the insufficient level of priority to, attention for and knowledge on statelessness in many countries and the dearth of good systems for effectively identifying individuals affected.

On the other hand then, this deeper and broader exploration of statelessness statistics was unsatisfying because there are so many gaps in the data. We are forced to admit that there are large and troubling holes in our collective knowledge of the global statelessness phenomenon. Where estimates for the number of stateless persons in a given country range from just a few thousand to a hundred thousand (as in Madagascar), or from a few tens of thousands to over half a million (as in Zimbabwe), accurately quantifying statelessness feels a long way off. For most of these estimates, there is little to no explanation of how the data was compiled and it is therefore impossible to ascertain the reliability of the numbers. Some may, in fact, be based on incomplete mapping or indeed simply amount to an educated guess. In Africa in particular – but also in other regions - there is also a major challenge in distinguishing those who are undocumented and thus face a difficulty in asserting their nationality – and those who are stateless. Add to that some countries with massive populations and where there is every indication that large numbers could be affected by statelessness (India and Pakistan, possibly China) and it becomes difficult to draw any conclusions with confidence until there is at least a basic insight into the scale of the problem there. Moreover, it became clear that the lack of data can, itself, be a protracted and political problem in relation to statelessness. Many of the countries where statelessness is known to be an issue but where reliable statistics are unavailable were already

identified as sites of concern a decade ago. It is perhaps time for a fresh look at these *protracted data gaps* and for new, concerted and creative ways to be found to get a better – even if imperfect – picture of the magnitude of the statelessness situation in these countries. But it is also critical to recognise that filling in these gaps and constructing a comprehensive and accurate picture of statelessness in all countries is an ambition that may never come to fruition and we should not put activities aimed at protecting stateless persons and preventing and reducing statelessness on hold while identification remains outstanding.

As this report also briefly explores, determining statelessness is not always a straightforward exercise. Undocumented persons and those who are of undetermined nationality may be at risk of statelessness and indeed, some of them are likely to already be stateless. In a migratory context, a presumption that such persons could be stateless and giving them the opportunity to be identified as such in line with UNHCR guidance, is likely to enhance protection.³⁵⁶ When such persons are in their own countries though, they are likely to receive greater protection if identified as nationals. Consequently, for persons in their own countries it is better to begin with a process that scrutinises nationality law and policy and its implementation against international standards, and determines nationality. However, even in such situations, where the lack of documentation is clearly the result of discrimination and its impact is long-lasting (often inter-generational), there would come a point when it is better to acknowledge that the person is stateless, rather than leaving him or her in the limbo of having no legal status. Such complexities mean that identifying and counting the stateless can be a very complex exercise, and that ultimately – protection – must be at the heart of all such actions.

³⁵⁶ Note that the process of statelessness status determination in the migration context may also lead to the establishment of nationality – i.e. the person concerned may be found to be a national of country x, resulting in the prevention of statelessness and enjoyment of national protection.

Recommendations

Recommendations to states

States have the responsibility to identify and count the stateless within their territories and subject to their jurisdictions. They are the duty bearers under international law, holding obligations (both under the international statelessness treaties and under international human rights law) with respect to the treatment of stateless persons and the avoidance of statelessness. The identification of statelessness is a fundamental tool in helping states to ensure that they meet these obligations.³⁵⁷ Indeed, it is also in a state's interests to know who is on its territory and what the composition of this population is, so that it can plan and develop policy accordingly – including whether there are stateless persons who may have specific needs or require a specific policy response. Thus, while UNHCR collates data on statelessness from different countries into a global overview, arguably the most important primary data source is government statistics and gaps in such data sets are contributing significantly to the lack of a complete picture on statelessness worldwide. At the same time, states hold the key to better data coverage on statelessness since they already regularly collect information about their populations in different ways and existing data collection sets and exercises such as population registries and national censuses can hold or capture information that enables the identification of statelessness. With these considerations in mind, states are urged to consider the following concrete recommendations:

1. States should adopt and/or strengthen measures to count stateless persons on their territory, including by incorporating census questions or answer categories to enable the identification of stateless persons during national population census exercises and by reviewing how data on nationality or statelessness is collected within administrative databases such as population registries and immigration databases to improve the coverage and accuracy of information on statelessness. Where current data on statelessness is unreliable or incomplete, states should consider conducting or cooperating with dedicated statelessness mapping exercises.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁷ See above, note 39, paragraphs (b) – (g), for the Executive Committee's recommendations to UNHCR and to States with regard to the identification of stateless persons.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.* Paragraph (d).

2. States should include a definition of a stateless person in their domestic law and ensure that this definition is formulated, interpreted and applied consistently with international law and relevant doctrinal guidance on statelessness.
3. States with significant statelessness problems on their territory must revisit the legal and policy framework which created statelessness with a view to preventing and reducing statelessness. States with significant populations which are of undetermined nationality or at risk of statelessness should adopt appropriate measures to address the situation of these groups, including, in particular, by conducting nationality determination which allow individuals to confirm their nationality and receive related documentation (or, where this is not possible, to be recognised as stateless).
4. States with stateless migrant populations should establish statelessness determination procedures to identify the stateless, with a view to providing protection in accordance with international law.³⁵⁹
5. States which host refugee populations that are also stateless (or at risk of statelessness), must take their statelessness into account when providing durable solutions. Ideally, databases should allow authorities to separately record if someone is a refugee and stateless. States to which stateless refugees have been resettled should track their situation until such time as their statelessness has been resolved (including by collecting and reporting data on naturalisations).
6. States must fully cooperate with UNHCR to enable it to fulfil its mandate towards the stateless, including by giving due consideration to technical advice on how to adopt more robust methodologies for counting the stateless and by sharing data relating to stateless populations on their territory, as well as information about persons of undetermined nationality and individuals or groups at risk of

³⁵⁹ While statelessness status determination also enhances statistical data, it would be a mistake to consequently only include within national statelessness statistics those who have been recognised under such procedures. Statelessness status determination is, by definition, a protection tool and in terms of the compilation of statistical data should be complemented by other data collection tools and exercises – such as specialised research and mapping.

statelessness. States should also cooperate and share data with civil society, including academia, in an effort to further the collective understanding of the scale and reach of statelessness.

7. States are encouraged to increase financial support towards enhancing knowledge – both quantitative and qualitative – on statelessness. Such added funding would be essential to strengthening efforts to count the stateless and ultimately protect the stateless, reduce and end statelessness.

Recommendations to UNHCR

It is encouraging that UNHCR has prioritised improving quantitative and qualitative data on stateless populations, as part of ‘Action 10’ of its Global Action Plan to end statelessness by 2024. In particular, under this action point, the Agency has established the target of achieving quantitative data coverage on statelessness in 150 states by 2024.³⁶⁰ It is hoped that the findings of this report can contribute to the implementation of the UNHCR Action Plan. What has undoubtedly been gained from the analysis of UNHCR and others’ data is far greater clarity of how UNHCR’s statistical reporting works – who it includes and who it does not. This is to a certain extent obscured by the present format in which the data is offered, i.e. a very neat and easy to read statistical table with either a number or an asterisk beside each country listed and a few short notes, provides little space for more detailed explanation. By getting to grips with what the data shows – and what it does not bring to light – it can be better interpreted and contextualised. It then becomes possible to also make some recommendations for how the reporting of UNHCR’s statelessness numbers could be improved. Moreover, the exploration of what additional data on statelessness is currently available in the public domain – and what gaps persist – provides an insight into areas in which UNHCR could help to strengthen the global statistical picture of statelessness. On the basis of this analysis, UNHCR is urged to consider the following concrete recommendations:

1. UNHCR is encouraged to increase its engagement with states and civil society actors in respect to the identification of statelessness, in particular by continuing efforts to promote a unified approach to the definition of a stateless person in accordance with international law and by providing further guidance and technical advice

³⁶⁰ See above, note 52.

on appropriate and effective methodologies for counting the stateless.³⁶¹ In particular, UNHCR is invited to consider convening expert meetings at the international and/or regional level for the discussion of challenges and sharing of good practices in identifying and mapping statelessness; and issuing more detailed guidance in relation to specific identification and mapping contexts.

2. UNHCR should continue to pursue and strengthen dedicated mapping initiatives on statelessness, in collaboration with relevant government and civil society partners. While acknowledging a recent increase in UNHCR publications of statelessness mapping exercises, wherever possible and with due regard for any protection concerns, UNHCR is encouraged to make every effort to publicly disseminate the findings of any studies undertaken and share other data available to the office that is relevant to researching or mapping statelessness.³⁶²
3. UNHCR should develop a way to reflect the true reach of statelessness globally by also reporting on, at least, the number of stateless refugees and asylum seekers – while indicating, as appropriate, that these persons fall under UNHCR’s refugee protection mandate as well as its mandate for the identification, reduction and prevention of statelessness.
4. In its periodic statistical reporting, UNHCR is urged to find a way to make visible in the main (i.e. compilation) table of persons of concern to UNHCR any asterisks delineating significant but unquantified statelessness situations which are found in the table dedicated specifically to reporting on persons under UNHCR’s statelessness mandate. While it happens in most instances, UNHCR should also always include explanatory footnotes for those country statistics which are known to only reflect a part of the stateless population, clearly indicating that the figure reflects partial data. It is acknowledged that the very nature of statistical reporting on fluid and often hidden human issues such as statelessness means that the statistical picture will always be incomplete. This suggestion therefore only relates to countries for which there are some figures, but also a known significant statistical gap.

³⁶¹ See above, note 39, paragraph (f).

³⁶² *Ibid.* Paragraph (c).

5. In carrying out refugee status determination and with due regard for any protection concerns, UNHCR staff should also identify those who are stateless or at risk of statelessness.
6. UNHCR should seek every opportunity to strengthen collaboration with other UN agencies engaged in activities relevant to data collection on statelessness (e.g. when undertaking population surveys or advising on national census exercises), including by conducting joint activities or advocacy and by providing technical support as appropriate. In this respect, all parts of the UN system are reminded of the shared responsibility towards stateless persons and the need to take appropriate action to ensure that the issue of statelessness receives due attention, as relevant, under their respective mandates.³⁶³ The UN Statistics Division is urged to review their instruments, in consultation with UNHCR, to request the reporting of statelessness data by states as part of its regular compilation of population data. Other UN entities engaged in or supporting the collection of population data, including the UN Regional Commissions, are similarly urged to give due attention to opportunities to strengthen statelessness data through their work.

Recommendations to civil society, including academia

It is evident that there is a long way to go before the global picture of statelessness that is starting to emerge becomes complete. More and improved data collection is an important ingredient in better understanding the phenomenon. So too, however, is a more comprehensive and thorough analysis of what the data shows and of how the data might inform more effective measures to tackle the issue. Civil society actors, including academic scholars, can work alongside or in partnership with states, UNHCR and other UN bodies to better map statelessness but also to conduct this much-needed critical analysis of the data and exploration of its uses. The following recommendations, formulated in broad terms so as to speak to civil society engagement at local, national, regional and international levels, are suggested:

1. Civil society should more actively pursue the consolidation and analysis of data on statelessness, including by asking critical questions about what it shows and what the significance of this is,

³⁶³ *Ibid.* Paragraph (b). Recall also, the UN Secretary General, *Guidance Note of the Secretary General: The United Nations and Statelessness*, June 2011.

as well as what it does not show and what improvements can be made to the methodologies for counting the stateless.

2. Civil society should work to identify pressing gaps in statelessness data and conduct research to fill these gaps, where appropriate in partnership or consultation with states and/or UNHCR, using methodologies that are suitable to the identification of statelessness as understood within international law. Wherever possible and with due regard for any protection concerns, civil society is encouraged to make every effort to publicly disseminate the findings of any studies undertaken.
3. Through the collection, compilation and analysis of data, civil society should contribute to the wider dissemination of information on statelessness globally, including statelessness statistics. Civil society should seek to make such data and analysis available in different formats in order to engage different audiences with the issue. Civil society organisations and academic scholars who have engaged in direct data collection should consider making raw data available, where possible and with due regard to any protection concerns, to other actors seeking to use the data to inform further research, analysis or policy development.
4. Civil society should contribute to the strengthening of methodologies for counting the stateless by sharing not only statelessness data and analysis, but also methodological approaches and openly discussing challenges and good practices.
5. Civil society should continue to work to raise awareness of the phenomenon of statelessness among relevant actors and the general public to help to pave the way for further and more effective data collection and mapping of statelessness. Wherever possible, civil society should also support UNHCR in its identification work and in advocacy towards states and other UN agencies on the importance of better mapping statelessness.

Final reflections

The question of how many stateless persons there are in the world is not an easy one to answer. UNHCR reports at least 10 million persons under its statelessness mandate, of which it has been able

to collate country-level statistics from different sources that account for 3.5 million persons. Our research confirms that the 3.5 million figure significantly underrepresents the scale of the problem. We found estimates in other sources that would account for an additional approximately 2.5 million stateless persons. This number is based on the lowest-end estimates and does not encompass any populations for which no estimates are available whatsoever (of which there are still many), and includes, among others, an estimated 81,000 stateless persons in Bhutan, at least 60,000 in India, 80,000 – 200,000 in Lebanon, over 500,000 not included in the present statistics on Myanmar, 10,000 – 100,000 in the United Arab Emirates, upwards of 86,000 in Uzbekistan and 80,000 – 600,000 in Zimbabwe. There are also approximately 2.1 million persons of Palestinian origin, who are not refugees (never having been displaced from the West Bank or Gaza Strip) and whose nationality status remains ambiguous in the absence of Palestinian nationality regulations. This brings the tally of stateless persons who are currently in some way statistically accounted for, or ‘visible’, to over eight million. The true number of stateless persons is likely to be significantly higher, due to the data gaps which were identified and could not be filled. There are several large-scale situations of statelessness that still entirely elude statistical coverage – such as Pakistan and DRC – and it is likely that some of the low-end estimates are too conservative and do not represent the true scale of the problem, it is clear that UNHCR’s estimate of ‘at least 10 million’ persons exclusively under its statelessness protection mandate is well founded. Furthermore, there are also at least 1.5 million stateless refugees and in the region of 3.5 million stateless refugees from Palestine (the majority falling under UNRWA’s mandate but some under UNHCR’s refugee mandate). When this is all tallied up, there are therefore likely to be **more than 15 million stateless persons worldwide today**. While the majority of these persons fall under UNHCR’s statelessness protection mandate, they all must be taken into account when implementing the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and other obligations towards stateless persons under international human rights law.

The above calculations lead us to conclude that almost 0.2% of the population of the globe is currently living without a nationality, or one in every 500 people. This is a powerful message about how pervasive the problem of statelessness is. Moreover, these figures, even as they remain incomplete, also confirm the stark connection between

statelessness and forced displacement. As a factor of the general population of the world, approximately one in every 400 people have been forcibly displaced across an international border as an asylum seeker or refugee. As a factor of the total stateless population, the number comes to one in three, i.e. of every three stateless persons in the world, one has been forcibly displaced.³⁶⁴

While the quest for clarity on the magnitude of statelessness is a fascinating, compelling and useful one, it is important to acknowledge that it should not be all-consuming. Having comprehensive and accurate information about who is affected by statelessness and where, is a means to an end, not an end in itself. **Better data will undoubtedly help in the campaign to end statelessness by 2024, but the priority needs to rest firmly with addressing – not (just) mapping – the issue.** There are excellent examples of identification and prevention or reduction of statelessness being pursued in parallel, for instance through combined registration and legal assistance programmes which lead to the identification of statelessness cases but also put people on the path to a nationality. Where a population is currently of undetermined nationality or believed to be at risk of statelessness, it is much more important for efforts or procedures to be geared as much as possible towards the determination of *nationality* rather than of *statelessness*. Such good practices should be shared and promoted. In the meantime, we must not lose sight of how much can be achieved to improve people's lives even in the absence of data about how many people are affected. For instance, reforming law or policy to introduce safeguards against statelessness for children, to grant women equal rights with men to confer their nationality, to strengthen administrative documentation procedures and make them accessible to all, to prevent or reduce statelessness in the context of state succession or to reverse the effects of a previous act of arbitrary deprivation of nationality – all will help to realise the right to a nationality and none relies on the availability of statistical data to be introduced. We must strive to strike a balance between our drive to better understand the issue and its scale and the need to remain focused on solutions.

³⁶⁴ This calculation is based on the understanding that at a minimum, a total of five million of the world's estimated more than 15 million stateless persons have been forcibly displaced as a result of persecution. This figure +includes stateless refugees of Palestinian origin.

The message that not ‘just’ 10 million, but more than 15 million people are affected by statelessness globally certainly helps to add weight to the argument that this is a widespread international phenomenon which demands our attention. As already mentioned earlier in this report, in terms of international issues: if size matters, statelessness matters. Indeed, if all stateless persons were to be counted together as a single ‘country’ group, it would come in as the 70th largest. But size is not the only reason that statelessness matters. There are other, perhaps even more pressing reasons, such as the undeniable reality that statelessness is an entirely man-made problem, making it both our collective responsibility but also within our collective power to resolve. Ultimately though, the most important motivation for understanding, responding to and ending statelessness continues to be the devastating impact of statelessness on individuals’ lives and its destructive effect with respect to other major issues of international concern such as securing the well-being of children, maintaining peace and stability, realising equitable development for all and promoting peace, democracy and the rule of law.

ANNEX:

UNHCR Statelessness Statistics (2013 Global Trends Report)

Table 7. Persons under UNHCR's statelessness mandate, 2013

N.B. Stateless refugees are included in Table 3 and stateless asylum-seekers in Table 12.

Data is not complete and includes estimates. Countries for which UNHCR has information about stateless persons but no reliable data have been included in the table and marked with an asterisk (*).

These statistics cover stateless persons and persons of undetermined nationality.

All data are provisional and subject to change.

Country of residence	Population start-2013		Population end-2013	
	Total number of persons under UNHCR's statelessness mandate	<i>of whom: UNHCR-assisted</i>	Total number of persons under UNHCR's statelessness mandate	<i>of whom: UNHCR-assisted</i>
Albania ¹	7,443	-	7,443	-
Armenia	35	-	180	-
Aruba	-	-	1	1
Austria	542	-	604	-
Azerbaijan ²	3,585	-	3,585	-
Bahamas	*	-	*	-
Belarus ³	6,969	-	6,712	-
Belgium	2,640	-	2,466	-
Bosnia and Herzegovina ⁴	4,500	4,500	792	427
Bhutan	*	-	*	-
Brazil	1	1	2	1
Brunei Darussalam	21,009	-	20,524	-
Burundi	1,302	1,302	1,302	1,302
Cambodia	*	-	*	-
Colombia	12	-	12	-
Côte d'Ivoire ⁵	700,000	60,000	700,000	60,000
Croatia ⁶	2,886	177	2,886	177
Czech Republic ⁷	1,502	-	1,502	-
Dem. Rep. of the Congo	*	-	*	-
Denmark	3,623	-	4,263	-
Dominican Republic	-	-	210,000	4,837
Egypt	60	60	23	23
Eritrea	*	-	*	-
Estonia ⁸	94,325	-	91,281	-
Ethiopia	*	-	*	-
Finland	2,017	-	2,122	-
France	1,210	-	1,247	-

ANNEX: UNHCR STATELESSNESS STATISTICS (2013 GLOBAL TRENDS REPORT)

Georgia	1,156	1,156	776	776
Germany ⁹	5,683	-	11,709	-
Greece ¹⁰	154	-	178	-
Honduras	1	1	1	1
Hong Kong SAR, China	1	1	1	1
Hungary	103	-	113	-
Iceland	119	-	119	-
India	*	-	*	-
Indonesia	*	-	*	-
Iraq ¹¹	120,000	-	120,000	-
Ireland	73	-	73	-
Israel ¹²	14	14	14	14
Italy ¹³	470	-	470	-
Japan	1,100	-	852	48
Kazakhstan	6,935	1,234	6,942	1,128
Kenya ¹⁴	20,000	-	20,000	-
Kuwait	93,000	-	93,000	-
Kyrgyzstan	15,473	1,147	11,425	1,544
Latvia ¹⁵	175	-	230	-
Latvia ¹⁶	280,584	-	267,559	-
Lebanon	*	-	*	-
Liberia	1	1	1	1
Libya	*	-	*	-
Liechtenstein	5	-	2	-
Lithuania	4,130	-	3,892	-
Luxembourg	177	-	177	-
Madagascar	*	-	*	-
Malaysia ¹⁷	40,000	-	40,000	-
Mexico	7	2	13	3
Mongolia	220	-	16	-
Montenegro ¹⁸	3,383	42	3,341	-
Myanmar ¹⁹	808,075	250,000	810,000	100,000
Nepal ²⁰	*	-	*	-
Netherlands	1,951	-	1,951	-
Nicaragua	1	1	1	1
Norway	2,413	-	1,975	-
Pakistan	*	-	*	-
Panama	2	-	2	-
Papua New Guinea	*	-	*	-
Philippines ²¹	6,015	-	6,015	-
Poland ²²	10,825	-	10,825	-
Portugal ²³	553	-	553	-
Qatar	1,200	-	1,200	-
Rep. of Korea	179	-	194	-
Rep. of Moldova	1,998	3	2,029	10
Romania	248	-	297	-
Russian Federation ²⁴	178,000	1,750	178,000	3,295

THE WORLD'S STATELESS

Saudi Arabia	70,000	-	70,000	-
Serbia (and Kosovo: S/RES/1244 (1999))²⁵	8,500	4,750	4,195	1,014
Slovakia²⁶	1,523	-	1,523	-
Slovenia²⁷	4	-	4	-
South Africa	*	-	*	-
Spain	36	-	270	-
Sri Lanka	*	-	*	-
Sweden	17,416	-	20,450	-
Switzerland	69	-	79	-
Syrian Arab Republic²⁸	190,000	-	160,000	-
Tajikistan²⁹	2,300	-	1,364	-
Thailand³⁰	506,197	-	506,197	-
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia³¹	905	905	819	819
Turkey	780	-	780	-
Turkmenistan	8,947	8,265	8,320	8,243
Ukraine³²	35,000	61	33,271	138
United Arab Emirates	*	-	*	-
United Kingdom³³	205	-	205	-
Uzbekistan	*	-	*	-
Viet Nam	11,500	-	11,000	-
Zimbabwe	*	-	*	-
TOTAL	3,311,467	335,373	3,469,370	183,804

The World's Stateless

To end statelessness worldwide by 2024. That is the ambition of the #ibelong campaign, spearheaded by UNHCR, which aims to galvanise governments, civil society, UN agencies and others into action. It is a bold but appropriate objective. Statelessness has been a cause of human suffering for too long, and unnecessarily so: it is a man-made phenomenon and bringing it to an end is – at least in theory – entirely feasible. The Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion is committed to helping to inform and catalyse solutions for statelessness. In the hope of contributing to a better sense of the task ahead, this inaugural World's Stateless report explores currently available statistical data and discusses the challenges involved in accurately mapping or quantifying statelessness. From this analysis, the report distils recommendations to states, UNHCR and civil society on how to improve data collection and reporting on statelessness.

The Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion is an independent, non-profit organisation dedicated to leading an integrated, inter-disciplinary response to the injustice of statelessness and exclusion. Established in August 2014, it is the first global centre of expertise and action committed to promoting the rights of stateless persons and reducing statelessness worldwide. We believe in the value of research, education, partnership and advocacy. We aim to develop and share our skills and expertise with partners in civil society, academia, the UN and governments, and to serve as a catalyst for change.

