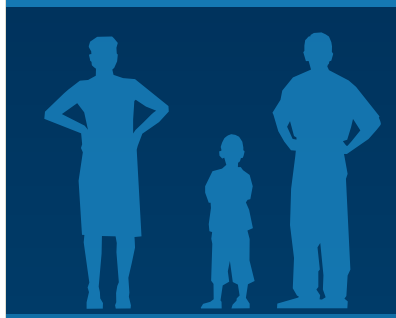
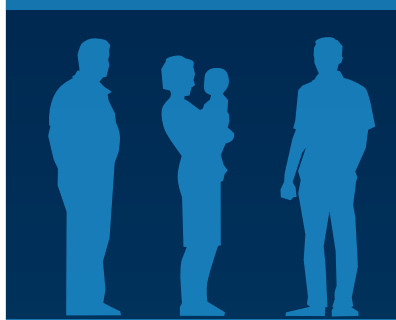


CITIZENS OF NOWHERE

SOLUTIONS FOR THE

STATELESS IN THE U.S.



A stateless person is not recognized as a citizen by any country.

Worldwide, there are an estimated twelve million men, women and children who are not citizens of any country. Many once had a nationality but lost it when the countries they were citizens of ceased to exist. Some have been arbitrarily stripped of their nationality. Others have been without a nationality since birth, due to nationality laws that discriminate based on gender or ethnicity. All are “stateless” — citizens of nowhere, without a country that recognizes them as its own — and all face undue hardships as a result.

Among the global stateless population, many live in the United States. Whether living in their adopted communities or detained, stateless people in the U.S. live without the fundamental rights that those with a citizenship enjoy on a daily basis. They cannot travel outside the United States. They face long-term or indefinite separation from their families and loved ones. They must report to immigration authorities anywhere from once per week to once per year. Detention is always a possibility. Uncertainty is ever-present. Many live with fear and anxiety.

As a result of the work of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), non-governmental advocacy organizations, and key governments from around the world, there has been a groundswell of attention in recent years to reducing the number of stateless people worldwide. During a ministerial meeting in Geneva in 2011, the U.S. Government continued its role as a global leader in human rights by making made several important pledges related to the prevention and elimination of statelessness, both globally and domestically. As part of those pledges, the United States acknowledged the need for federal legislation to reduce the number of stateless people on the domestic front and pledged to further that cause. The U.S. Government already has taken actions toward fulfilling that pledge.

In our report “Citizens of Nowhere: Solutions for the Stateless in the U.S.,” UNHCR and the Open Society Justice Initiative recommend a number of additional actions that the U.S. Government can take to alleviate the hardships that stateless people face in the United States.



The United States can help end the hardships of stateless people in the U.S. by:

“ If you will ask about my dream, of course my dream [is] to see my family together. ”

— Tatianna, a stateless woman in the U.S. who has been separated from her son for nearly two decades



- Adopting federal laws that allow qualified stateless individuals to follow a path to lawful permanent residency and citizenship.
- Establishing a procedure to determine whether an individual is stateless, automatically issuing a work permit and identity document once statelessness is established.
- Ensuring that stateless individuals are not unnecessarily detained or subject to restrictive reporting requirements.
- Issuing travel documents allowing stateless people to travel outside the country and return without hindrance.
- Improving the collection and assessment of statistical data concerning stateless individuals.
- Continuing to be a global leader on identifying, preventing and reducing statelessness through its actions both internationally and domestically.
- Signing the statelessness treaties, namely, the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, and adopts implementing legislation and regulations.



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“ I wish nobody would have to go through the same thing that I am going through. Because nationality is a fundamental link between the individual and the state. ”

Mikhail is stateless and presently stranded in American Samoa, a U.S. territory in the south Pacific. His stateless status has severely complicated his return home to the U.S. mainland where he has lived and worked legally for the past 16 years.