

# The Campaign to End Statelessness

October 2017 Update



# #IBelong

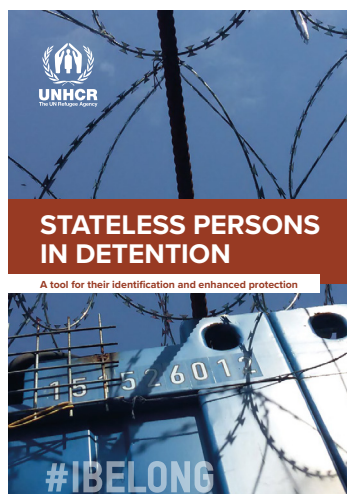
Join us in our Campaign to End Statelessness



In cooperation with  
UNITED COLORS  
OF BENETTON.

## Mobilizing governments and civil society

On 13 June, the **European Parliament** adopted a [resolution on statelessness in South and South East Asia](#). Among other things, the resolution calls for the European Union (EU) to develop a comprehensive strategy on statelessness that deals with urgent situations and defines long-term measures to end statelessness.



In June, UNHCR issued a new publication: [“Stateless Persons in Detention, A Tool for their Identification and Enhanced Protection”](#), to assist legal practitioners working with persons in detention. In August, another practical publication was released: [“Representing Stateless Persons Before U.S. Immigration Authorities”](#). It aims to assist

immigration lawyers in the United States recognize when a client is stateless and to effectively represent such clients before immigration authorities.

On 20 July in **Lebanon**, the national NGO Frontiers Rights convened a [roundtable on statelessness](#) with the support of the Lebanese Ministry of Human Rights, the Norwegian Embassy, the European Union and UNHCR. Participants included representatives from relevant ministries, Parliament and the judiciary, as well as the press and civil society. A set of recommendations to bring statelessness forward on the national political agenda and to promote legal and administrative reforms on the prevention and reduction of statelessness was adopted.

On 13 August, Lawyers for Human Rights, Citizenship Rights in Africa Initiative and UNHCR co-hosted the 2nd annual meeting of the **“Regional network of civil society organizations working on statelessness”** in **Johannesburg, South Africa**. The gathering allowed participants to exchange views on how they could contribute to efforts in progress under the auspices of the [UNICEF-UNHCR Global Coalition on every child’s right to a nationality](#). Participants also discussed how they could help promote the adoption, by Member States of the African Union, of the “Draft Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Specific Aspects on the Right to a Nationality and the Eradication of Statelessness in Africa” (“AU Protocol on Nationality”).



Sixth Regional Course on Statelessness in the Americas ©UNHCR

On 21 July, the Ministry of Justice of the **Kyrgyz Republic** and UNHCR jointly organized a multi-stakeholder meeting to discuss measures to enhance birth registration and statelessness prevention in Kyrgyzstan. Participants included other Ministries, the Ombudsman's Office, civil society organizations and UNICEF. In order to help advance legislative reform, a working group under the Ministry of Justice was created. On 21 September, a similar event was organized by UNHCR and the Ministry of Justice of **Tajikistan**. The meeting was attended by representatives of several Ministries as well as UNDP and UNICEF. Next steps include close collaboration among the authorities, UNHCR and UNDP on the **EPOS** project concerning improvement of civil registration in the country and providing practical guidance on implementation of the Law on Civil Registration.

On 7-9 September in **Mauritius**, a meeting of experts from Member States of the **African Union** took place to discuss and review the draft "AU Protocol on Nationality". The event was organized by the Department of Political Affairs of the African Union Commission with UNHCR's support. The draft Au Protocol will need to be reviewed by the AU's Specialized Technical Committees on Migration and Justice and Legal Affairs before it goes forward to Member States for adoption.

From 14-16 August in **South Africa**, the **Southern Africa Civil Society Forum** brought together diverse civil society groups to discuss challenges and to support the realization of the Southern African Development Community agenda on regional integration. As a result, a [Plan of Action](#) was approved, which includes advocating for SADC Member States to support adoption of the AU Protocol on the Right to Nationality, and engaging with Member States to design and implement regional and national plans of action to eradicate statelessness.

On 29-30 June, the sixth **Regional Course on Statelessness in the Americas** took place at Oranjestad, Aruba. Forty-nine participants from twenty seven different countries in the Americas attended. Participants included representatives of the National Commissions for Refugees, civil registry offices, Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Parliamentarians. This year, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the Universal Civil Identity Program in the Americas took part as facilitators. The course emphasized the relationship between the prevention of statelessness and civil registration. It also covered facilitated naturalization for stateless persons and the development of protection frameworks.

On 8-9 August, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of **Peru** and UNHCR jointly organized the [Third Regional Meeting on Statelessness Determination Procedures and Naturalization Facilities](#). Forty-six participants from sixteen Latin American countries gathered to exchange good practices, to deepen discussion of the international standards concerning protection of stateless persons and to study the ["Draft articles on the Protection of Stateless Persons and the Facilities for their Naturalization"](#). Participants included technical officers, parliamentary advisers, national Commission for Refugees officials, as well as members of the civil society group Red ANA and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

On 9-11 August, Beninese national civil registry authorities, supported by UNHCR, organized a workshop in a border town in south-central **Benin** aimed at building the capacity of national staff and authorities involved in birth registration. Participants included civil registry officials as well as local chiefs and Mayors.

On 9-10 August, UNHCR and partner DHRRA Malaysia organized a "Training of Trainers" activity to build the capacity of 30 young paralegals, representatives from civil society and communities from the surrounding areas in East Sabah, **Malaysia**, to prevent and reduce statelessness. The event focused on the legal and procedural requirements for birth registration, as a tool to prevent statelessness, and on helping persons to submit applications for nationality.



Participants at the Workshop on Nationality and Legal Status in Chiang Mai, Thailand ©UNHCR Thailand

Two additional events focused on improving the prevention of statelessness and the protection of stateless people took place in the **Philippines**. On 27 July, UNHCR and UNICEF hosted a forum on birth registration aimed at government partners and civil society. The gathering aimed to identify challenges that hinder the implementation of birth registration initiatives and to strengthen local partnerships and collaboration. On 30 August, the Government, through the Refugee and Stateless Persons Protection Unit, convened a workshop to discuss the establishment of a system of facilitated naturalization for stateless persons and refugees and consider measures to increase the protection of these groups pending naturalization.

UNHCR and **Thailand's** Ministry of the Interior (MoI) facilitated two workshops on nationality and legal status aimed at building the capacity of government officials and local NGOs on the legal and procedural requirements concerning confirmation and acquisition of nationality. Over 160 participants attended the workshops, which took place in Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai provinces, on 28-30 August and 4-6 September 2017, respectively. During the workshops, UNHCR and MoI also launched a new Handbook on Principles on Nationality and Statelessness.

On 5-6 September, the **World Council of Churches** and **Bread for the World** organized a conference on **'Statelessness in the European context: prevention, reduction and protection'** in Berlin, Germany. Among the participants were representatives from churches in ten different countries, as well as the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), UNHCR, the OSCE-HCNM, the European Network on Statelessness and the Institute for Statelessness and Inclusion. Participants discussed the role that church officials can play in promoting birth registration during baptismal procedures. They also agreed to work towards developing referral networks to assist stateless people.

In September, the **European Commission** published its revised **Return Handbook** which provides guidance to national authorities in Member States of the European Union competent for carrying out return related tasks. It acknowledges the specific situation of stateless persons, who may be unable to benefit from consular assistance, and advises States to make sure that there is a reasonable prospect of removal that justifies imposing or prolonging detention.

On 12 September, representatives of a broad range of faith based organizations attended a workshop on statelessness organized by Lawyers for Human Rights and UNHCR in Pretoria, **South Africa**. The participants developed an understanding of the causes and consequences of statelessness in the Southern African region. They committed to provide assistance to persons at risk of statelessness, to engage in advocacy for birth registration as a tool to prevent statelessness, and to join the regional civil society organization network on statelessness.

On 1-2 October in Cairo, Egypt, a **Conference for Arab States on Good Practices and Regional Opportunities to Strengthen Women's Nationality Rights** was organized by the League of Arab States and co-sponsored by the Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights, UNHCR, UN Women and UNICEF. The conference brought together an array of prominent experts on nationality law and women's rights from across the region, including Parliamentarians, jurists, academics and others. The event built on existing efforts in the region to promote and expand good practices in strengthening women's nationality rights. It culminated in the adoption of an Outcome Statement that promotes gender equality in the acquisition, change, retention or conferral of nationality.

# Implementation of the Global Action Plan

Regional and national initiatives continue to contribute to reduction in the number of stateless persons. In **Central Asia**, from 2014 to the end of July 2017, 29,871 stateless people had their stateless situation resolved. In the **Philippines**, thanks to a joint effort with the Government of Indonesia, 6,353 had their Philippine nationality confirmed as of July 31 2017.

In August, the Government of **Mali** officially adopted its [National Action Plan](#) to end statelessness, becoming the fourth country in West Africa to do so.

In line with **Action 1 of the Global Action Plan (Resolve existing major situations of statelessness)** the **Malaysian** Government, supported by the civil society organization Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas, undertook the “Mega MyDaftar” campaign to register and assist undocumented and stateless Indian Tamils in 23 locations in West Malaysia with applications for nationality. More than 2,000 persons have been assisted in submitting applications for nationality since the [Malaysian Indian Blueprint initiative](#) was launched in April 2017.

On July 9, the **Sudanese Supreme Court** issued a [positive ruling](#) confirming the right of Sudanese women with South Sudanese spouses to confer their Sudanese nationality to their children. The court ruling obliged the Minister of Interior to restore the Sudanese nationality of the applicant without delay. This positive outcome follows a similar ruling by the [Constitutional Court](#) last year.

**With respect to Action 6 (Grant protection status to stateless migrants and facilitate their naturalization)**, the **Belgian Parliament** approved a [bill introducing a new article 632bis into the Judicial Code](#), giving exclusive competence for determining statelessness to the family courts established at the five seats of the courts of appeal and to the family tribunal of Eupen for cases in German. The improvement follows a recommendation in UNHCR’s 2012 mapping study on the appointment of a centralized and independent authority. The bill entered into force on 3 August 2017.

In August, the President of **Ecuador**, through Executive Decree number 111, enacted the [Regulation to the Organic Act on Human Mobility](#). Through this new legal framework stateless persons will have access to temporary residency status that may be converted to permanent resident status, and people applying for stateless status will have a humanitarian visa while awaiting a decision.

On 22 August, the President of **Chile**, and the Ministers of International Relations, Interior and Public Security, [signed a bill on the new Migration Law](#). The bill, which has been introduced to Congress, includes guarantees such as temporary residence permits for stateless persons and appoints the Ministry of Interior and Public Security as the competent authority for conducting statelessness determinations.



First person to be granted stateless status by the Bulgarian Government since the adoption of the statelessness determination procedure ©UNHCR/ Nikolay Kondev

On 13 September, a young man born in the former Soviet Union who moved to **Bulgaria** at the age of three became the first person to be granted stateless status in Bulgaria since the adoption of its new statelessness determination procedure in 2016. He has now filed an application for identity and travel documents, which will allow him to access basic rights that were previously unattainable.

**With respect to Action 7 (Ensure birth registration for the prevention of statelessness)**, in August, the municipality of Jose Abad Santos in Southern **Philippines** became the third locality to pass a resolution exempting persons of Indonesian descent (PIDs) residing in the municipality from paying civil registration fees and local fees relating to the correction of entries on birth registration.



Mercy Hands lawyer providing counselling to a group of Bidoun in Basra governorate, in Iraq ©Mercy Hands

With respect to **Action 8 (Issue nationality documentation to those with entitlement to it)**, the NGO [Mercy Hands](#) completed in July a two-month survey in targeted governorates in **Central and Southern Iraq** to improve qualitative and quantitative data on stateless populations. During this exercise, Mercy Hands also provided legal assistance to 519 individuals and contributed to the issuance of 133 Nationality Certificates (*Jinsiyeh*), Civil IDs (*Hawiyeh*) and other legal documents.

With respect to **Action 9 (Accede to the UN Statelessness Conventions)**, **Burkina Faso** and **Luxembourg** acceded to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, bringing the total number of States Parties to this international treaty to 70.

## Upcoming Events

UNHCR and others will mark the **3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the #IBelong Campaign** at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam on 3 November. The event will feature remarks by UNHCR's Director of the Division of International Protection, Carol Batchelor, and the Executive Director of Minority Rights Group International, Mark Lattimer. A new UNHCR report on stateless minorities will also be launched at this event. A number of "echo" events will be hosted by UNHCR operations and other actors around the world to commemorate the anniversary.

Also on 3 November, the **European Association of former Members of Parliament of the Member States of the Council of Europe (FPAP)** will convene a half day meeting on statelessness in Malta. The FPAP has member associations in 22 European countries and is linked to the European Parliament. It is expected that about 50 persons will participate and that the meeting will result in a statement that will be distributed to all associated Parliaments.

On 2-3 November, a **sub-regional thematic consultation meeting on Statelessness** will be carried out in Buenos Aires, Argentina to review progress under the Brazil Plan of Action (BPA) with respect to national steps taken towards the eradication of statelessness.

On 8-10 November, the **14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean Council of Civil Registry, Identity and Vital Statistics (CLARCIEV)** will be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina. For the first time the CLARCIEV annual meeting will have a day dedicated to statelessness issues.

## Campaign Resources

Want to support the Campaign? Take a look at our [#IBelong website](#) and post a digital banner on your website, mobilize your social media contacts by sharing one of our posts, download and post our Twitter cards or embed a short video that explains statelessness. Videos, photo essays and web stories can be found on our [#IBelong stories page](#). Legal resources are available on [Refworld](#).

## Learn More About Statelessness

Learning about statelessness is fun and easy. Take advantage of our [self-study module](#) from the comfort of your armchair!