

**NOT FRESHMAN C**

TOPIC:STATELESS PERSONS



# SOCOMUN XXVI

NOT Freshman C

Stateless Persons

Greetings Delegates! My name is Jane Hutchinson and I will be your chair for NOT Freshman C on the topic of stateless persons. I am currently a junior at Santa Margarita and have been involved in MUN for the past two years. I have been very lucky to travel with MUN, having traveled to Santa Barbara and Washington D.C. Those travel experiences were exciting, fun, and very rewarding. I was able to experience a higher level of MUN and meet the best-spoken and thoughtful teenagers I have ever met. I continue to be a part of MUN because I always learn something from my MUN experiences. Whether it’s learning how to think better on my feet or how to collaborate with my fellow delegates, I have always taken something away from the MUN conferences I have attended. I hope that you all thoroughly enjoy SOCOMUN 2017 and are as excited for committee as I am. Besides participating in MUN, I am a part of the Santa Margarita swim team and enjoy reading, rock climbing, and dancing. I am so excited to see the debate and discussion that will take place and I look forward to meeting you all! If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to email me at [socomunnotc@gmail.com](mailto:socomunnotc@gmail.com) !

**Background:**

Under international law – specifically Article 1 of the 1954 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons -- a stateless person can be defined as an individual “who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law.” While statelessness is often related to refugees and a refugee crisis, refugees and stateless persons are not always the same. In most cases, stateless persons reside in a specific country, often from birth, and do not cross any borders as refugees usually do. They are often members of a specific ethnic group not recognized by the state in which they currently live. For example, some ethnic Turks born and raised in Greece are not recognized as citizens by either Greece or Turkey, living as stateless persons even though they were born in Greece. Statelessness causes many problems for children, families and entire groups. Without citizenship, stateless persons often lack many of the basic rights and services that are normally accorded to citizens of a country, including the right to vote and to trial by jury, access to many state-provided services such as health care and education, the ability to work and participate in social security pension systems, and so on. Stateless persons also can be prevented from owning property, buying a home, getting married (legally) or even registering the birth of a child. At the same time, a stateless person is not obligated to perform certain duties of a citizen such as having to pay taxes or join the military. Without citizenship persons are often denied rights where they live and do not have the same access to opportunities that others living in the same country do. These opportunities include economic and educational opportunities as well as access to healthcare. Stateless persons often suffer from a lack of equality and inability to participate in privileges allotted to citizens of a nation. In fact, without an officially recognized identity, and proof of citizenship, many stateless persons can be held by state governments in indefinite detention simply for existing. Without the rights of citizens, the quality of life of stateless persons is reduced. Although stateless persons lack rights of a citizen, the United Nations and other international bodies still insist that, as human beings, they possess the universal rights protected by international human rights laws.

According to the UNHCR, there are at least 3.5 million documented stateless persons in over 50 countries. However, the agency estimates that the number may be as high as 12 million. According to the UNHCR’S 2014 summary of stateless persons, the area of the world with the most statelessness is in Asia and the Pacific and the area with the least is the Americas. The UNHCR reports that, judging from their collected statistics, there are 1,422,850 stateless individuals in Asia and the Pacific. However, it is likely that the number of stateless individuals in Asia is twice this amount due to the fact that statelessness is often underreported in many countries. In comparison, there are only 200,000 reported stateless persons in the Americas (both north and south). The UNHCR has had trouble obtaining accurate numbers and statistics of stateless persons in Africa because only four of 47 African countries were covered in the UNHCR’s data collection methods. Despite only covering four countries, the UNHCR counts the number of stateless individuals in Africa at 721,303. Similar to Asia, there is also underreporting and unaccounted for statelessness so there is most likely a great deal many more stateless persons throughout the African continent. In contrast, statelessness in Europe has been more extensively and more easily calculated and estimated. The UNHCR calculates that there are 670,828 stateless persons in Europe. The majority of these individuals are in the countries of Ukraine, Latvia, Estonia, and the Russian Federation. As previously mentioned, the cause of this statelessness was primarily caused by the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Lastly, in Middle Eastern and North African countries the number reported by the UNHCR is 444,237 stateless persons. This region is particularly hard to map due to past and present political tension regarding citizenship, specifically, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

There are many causes of statelessness. In some cases, statelessness can be caused by something as ordinary as lack of proper birth registration systems in hospitals. This is common in some developing nations due to lack of funds to pay for advanced registration systems and because in some rural areas registration with the state is either not deemed very important, or, in some cases, is seen as possibly dangerous. Another cause of statelessness is dramatic political realignments or reorganizations of territories. A dramatic example of this was seen when both the Soviet Union and the former nation of Yugoslavia broke apart, creating new or reestablishing old countries. These breakups often left members of one ethnic group (for example, Russians) living in a country in which the majority population disliked them intensely (for example, Estonia) and denied them citizenship. Other causes include simple discrimination against ethnic minorities, administrative mistakes, laws restricting the attainment of citizenship, and so on. When researching this topic it is important to understand how your country restricts and allots citizenship. Nations have different laws regarding citizenship as well as different guidelines for determining citizenship – and these laws sometimes change, causing new instances of statelessness. For example, countries in the Americas are believed to have lower levels of statelessness because persons are granted citizenship simply by being born in that country. This is often called “birthright citizenship.” In many other countries, citizenship is determined by the nationality of the parents of the individual. Examining the different factors and ways that governments determine citizenship is crucial to understanding the causes of statelessness. The UN has been especially active in making efforts to end statelessness. The UNHCR recently launched the #ibelong campaign. This campaign’s driving goal is to end statelessness by 2024 by encouraging governments, society, and international organizations to become more involved in this issue. The UNHCR also works to document the number of stateless individuals so that organizations and the UN can help these stateless persons.

There are several controversies associated with stateless persons. In recent years, especially in countries with poor economies, there has emerged the idea of buying and selling citizenship. For example, in Kuwait the government is negotiating with the country of Comoros to offer citizenship to stateless Kuwaitis. The Kuwaiti government would then offer economic support to Comoros. Within Kuwait, there are nearly 100,000 Biduns, or persons without citizenship. Besides Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates also has a Bidun population and is also conducting discussions with Comoros about the idea of offering citizenship to the Bidun population. With this issue in Kuwait there comes the controversial idea of governments selling citizenship for economic benefits or monetary gains. Another controversy is gender discrimination within a country’s nationality laws. In countries such as Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Malaysia, Barbados, and Iran a mother is unable to bestow nationality on her children. This inability to pass on nationality to offspring can cause children to become stateless and not be able to access educational opportunities and healthcare services.

**Possible Solutions:**

Due to the nature of this topic there are no quick fix solutions to this issue. Solutions revolving around the improvement of birth registration systems in countries could help improve the issue. When approaching this kind of solution it is important to describe in detail what specific improvements could be made. Funding in regards to your solutions will not be an issue because it is not this committee’s responsibility to determine the allocation of funds but rather the Fifth Committee and the World Bank. Your solutions should be creative, detailed, well-planned, and should also bear in mind current efforts to tackle this issue. When creating solutions, it is recommended that you bear in mind the United Nations Refugee Agency’s (UNHCR) four categories of activities. These categories are identification, prevention, reduction, and protection. These categories could serve as pillars for building comprehensive solutions that address a wide variety of issues within the topic. Feel free to base solutions on specific sub-topics of this issue or on particular causes of stateless persons. Also bear in mind your country’s policies and create solutions that do not contradict the stance of your country. Besides birth registration creating solutions that address identification of stateless persons is also a pressing issue. The lack of accurate numbers and the failure of many governments to accurately report the number of stateless persons has been an obstacle to reducing the number of stateless individuals.

**Questions to consider:**

These questions are to guide you in your research and do not need to be addressed directly in committee.

1. Does your country restrict citizenship based on gender, race, or religion? If so how can you create solutions in-line with your policy that help reduce statelessness?
2. How can you improve or utilize current organizations or efforts? What areas of this issue have current efforts failed to address or provide solutions for?
3. How can the UNHCR improve their efforts?
4. What is the most common cause of statelessness? How can your country and other countries improve collaboration with each other to reduce statelessness?
5. Does your country follow international laws regarding human rights? Has your country violated the rights of their citizens or stateless individuals residing in their country?

Works Cited

"What Is Statelessness?" *The International Observatory on Statelessness*. N.p., n.d. Web. 05 Apr. 2017.

<http://www.nationalityforall.org/whatis>

This article explains what a stateless person is including what is under consideration for a person to be “stateless”. Since this article gives information on statelessness, it would be in the background. This article is objective as it is stating facts.

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Osborne, Louise. "Stateless in Europe: 'We Are No People with No Nation'." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 27 Dec. 2015. Web. 05 Apr. 2017.

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The Guardian includes statements from adults who have spent his or her lives without citizenship and includes statistics about Europe from the United Nations. This would be in country involvement. This article is biased against deporting stateless persons.

"Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons." *UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency* (n.d.): n. pag. UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency. UNHCR. Web. 5 Apr. 2017.

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"The Stateless in the United States." *The Center for Migration Studies of New York (CMS)*. The Center for Migration Studies, 20 July 2016. Web. 05 Apr. 2017.

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This article is from an NGO, the Center for Migration Studies, which includes explanations on reports from the UNHCR, the Immigration Modernization Act and includes information about the 1961 UN Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. This would be in UN involvement because it is from an NGO and includes committees of the United Nations. This is biased against the deportation of stateless people.

“The World’s Stateless.” *Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion*. Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, December 2014. Web.

<http://www.institutesi.org/worldsstateless.pdf>

This PDF is a summary conducted by the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion. Within this summary UNHCR statistics are frequently referenced. This PDF includes both the causes and effects of Statelessness. This information fits into my background summary of the issue.

“The Problem.” *Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights*. N.p., n.d. Web.

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This source provides information on which countries have restrictions on citizenship based on gender. This source also describes the effects of statelessness on individuals.

Adam Taylor. “The Controversial plan to give Kuwait’s stateless people citizenship of a tiny, poor African island.” *The Washington Post*. The Washington Post, 17 May 2016. Web.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/05/17/the-controversial-plan-to-give-kuwaits-stateless-people-citizenship-of-a-tiny-poor-african-island/?utm_term=.6f9506edd9cb>

This article describes the recent tension in Kuwait due to stateless persons. This article also thoroughly discusses the controversy of governments selling citizenship. This information also fits into my background.

“How UNHCR Helps Stateless People.” *The UN Refugee Agency*. The UN Refugee Agency. N.d. Web.

<http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/how-unhcr-helps-stateless-people.html>

This source describes how the UNHCR is tackling statelessness. Within this summary the UNHCR explains the categories of which they base their activities and efforts around. This information is included under possible solutions.

“Birth Registration.” *The International Observatory on Statelessness*. N.p., n.d. Web.

<http://www.nationalityforall.org/birth-registration>

This source describes the importance of birth registration worldwide. It also explains how lack of birth registration correlates to increased statelessness. This information can be included in both the background and under possible solutions.

Mandal, Ruma and Amanda Gray. “Out of the Shadows: The Treatment of Statelessness under International Law.” *The Royal Institute of International Affairs*. Chatham House, October 2014. Web.

<https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/field/field_document/20141029StatelessnessMandalGray.pdf>

This PDF describes the relationship between statelessness and international law. This information can be included under the background.

“Continuing Violations.” *Human Rights Watch*. N.p., n.d. Web.

<https://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/greece/Greec991-06.htm>

This source discusses statelessness in Greece due to the Greek government’s attitude toward the Turkish minority. Turkish individuals in Greece remain stateless due to issues with the Greek government. This can be included under background information.