

Forum on Minorities
Panel event: Statelessness resulting from conflicts, forced population movements and migration
affecting minorities: main challenges and possible solutions
29 November, 14:30-18:00
Room XVII

Remarks by
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- UNHCR is the UN Agency mandated by the General Assembly to prevent and reduce statelessness and to identify and protect stateless persons. Highlight that in November 2014, UNHCR launched the #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness in 10 Years. Explain that the thematic focus of the Campaign for the past 2 years has been on stateless minorities. In 2017, UNHCR published a Campaign report based on discussions with stateless and formerly stateless persons around the world.
- What unites the theme of statelessness as a potential consequence of conflict, forced displacement and migration is that all three phenomena often have the effect of uprooting a person from the place where they were born, or have lived most of their lives and placing them in a situation where they become 'outsiders,' or at least perceived as such.
- For those who belong to minority groups, this 'outsider' status can be reinforced because of the faith they may follow, the language they may speak, the customs they may follow, or the colour of their skin.
- Uprooting, caused by conflict, forced displacement and migration can also result in family separation, loss of identity documentation and prolonged exile from the place of origin. All of these impacts can make it more difficult for people to demonstrate the links (such as proof of parentage or place of birth) that might give them an entitlement to, or proof of entitlement to, a nationality.
- Discriminatory attitudes and policies towards minorities can not only exacerbate the negative treatment they receive because of their inability to prove or establish their nationality, but can also make it much harder for them to access to remedies that might be available to those who do not belong to minority groups.
- Conflict: Statelessness can result when minorities are targeted for denationalisation as part of a conflict. Children left orphaned or separated from their families by conflict may not be able to establish their parental ties or place of origin and risk being left stateless. Destruction of or lack of access to civil registration systems can also leave minorities vulnerable to risks of statelessness.
- Forced Displacement: Minorities in situations of forced displacement are particularly vulnerable to risks of statelessness as they are particularly susceptible to being displaced without adequate proof of their nationality (because of discrimination both in their countries of nationality/ origin and by the host State). This lack of documentation can also create problems at the post-conflict stage, when minorities try to return to their countries of nationality/ origin but find it difficult to prove their entitlement to nationality.

- **Historical migration:** Historical migration is a common factor uniting the situation of a number of stateless minorities today. In many cases, this historical migration was forced. Colonial powers moved indigenous populations within and between regions for labour and agricultural purposes. In other cases, historical migration was more voluntary in nature. Whatever the reason for the migration, many of these groups remained for generations in the countries they migrated to, gradually losing their ties with their countries of origin. In many cases, upon decolonisation or independence of their countries of long-term residence, many of these groups were regarded as non-indigenous outsiders and were excluded from citizenship under the nationality law of the newly independent State.
- **Irregular migration:** Irregular migration can leave children and adults at high risk of statelessness. Frequently undocumented, migrants in an irregular situation may shy away from applying for documentation in the countries in which they live and work for fear of being identified, punished or deported. Children of irregular migrants may not be registered at birth, again owing to concerns around being sanctioned, or because of exclusionary laws, policies or practices, particularly towards minority groups. [Examples of risks of statelessness arising amongst migrants from minority groups in an irregular situation, include ethnic Vietnamese in Viet Nam and Cambodia, and persons of Indonesian descent in the Philippines].
- Although the topic of this panel is ‘statelessness resulting from conflicts, forced population movements and migration’, statelessness can equally be a root cause of conflict, forced displacement and migration. Highlight that in this vein, the Global Compact on Refugees, which is to be validated by the General Assembly, recognizes that statelessness may be both a cause and consequence of refugee movements.
- Where statelessness is a cause, minority groups tend to be disproportionately represented as they are usually the ones that bear the brunt of the discrimination, marginalisation and denial of basic rights that accompany the condition of being stateless.
- UNHCR’s #IBelong Campaign to End Statelessness, and the Global Compact on Refugees, are focused on finding solutions to prevent statelessness both as a cause and a consequence of conflict, forced displacement and migration. UNHCR’s Global Action Plan calls on States, with the assistance of the international community to implement 10 Actions, which if fully implemented by all States, could lead to the eradication of statelessness, including amongst minorities.
- These Actions include:
 - Resolving existing protracted situations of statelessness which left unaddressed could contribute to conflict and forced displacement.
 - Preventing childhood statelessness through the establishment of safeguards in nationality laws. Such safeguards allow children of parents who are stateless or who are unable to pass on their nationality to acquire a nationality. Universal implementation of this safeguard could wipe out statelessness within a generation.
 - Identifying and protecting stateless persons who are in a migratory context through the establishment of a statelessness determination procedure that allows stateless persons to access basic rights and a pathway to facilitated naturalisation.
 - Preventing statelessness by ensuring universal birth registration and access to national identity documentation with those who have an entitlement to it, as minority

groups frequently face discrimination when it comes to accessing documents that prove or enable them to show an entitlement to nationality.

- Next year will mark the mid-point of the #IBelong Campaign and all States will be invited to a High-Level Segment as part of UNHCR's Executive Committee Meeting in Geneva in October 2019 announce their achievements and deliver pledges to address statelessness by the end of the Campaign in the year 2024.
- UNHCR looks forward to continuing its work with States, minority groups and other actors to address statelessness so that it does not continue to be a cause or consequence of conflict, forced displacement or migration.