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United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

Topic 1: Human Rights and Statelessness

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Statelessness is a severe and persistent problem affecting over four and a half million people.[1] However, this figure is only an estimate, and the actual number is presumed to be significantly higher due to underreporting, with some estimates placing it at closer to ten million.[2] These individuals lack a recognized nationality and often fall through the proverbial cracks in the legal system. Based on the 1954 *Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons*, a stateless person is defined as "[a] person who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law."[3] Although an individual may be stateless for many reasons, the primary causes include discrimination based on gender, religion or ethnicity, the breakdown and formation of new states, and gaps in nationality laws.[1] In 1961, the UN adopted the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, which established international safeguards to prevent and reduce statelessness.[4] Furthermore, in working toward eliminating childhood statelessness the UN in *Convention on the Rights of the Child* established a child's right to birth registration, a name, and the right to acquire nationality.[5] Despite this, discriminatory nationality laws can prevent a parent from passing citizenship to a child, and gaps in birth registration can make it harder to prove legitimacy.

Stateless individuals often face great difficulty finding employment, receiving an education, accessing healthcare, and exercising marriage and family rights. In 2014 the United Nations began its ten year long #IBelong campaign which worked to identify and help end statelessness.[6] The campaign was effective in raising awareness of the severity and prevalence of statelessness. It worked toward gaining legal reforms, and aided people in gaining statehood.

While you research this topic and your country's perspective you may want to consider these questions to help guide you:

1. https://www.unhcr.org/us/news/stories/five-things-know-about-statelessness
2. https://2017-2021.state.gov/other-policy-issues/statelessness/
3. https://www.unhcr.org/us/about-unhcr/who-we-protect/stateless-people
4. https://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/6_1_1961.pdf
5. https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child
6. https://www.unhcr.org/us/ibelong-campaign-end-statelessness

- How is statelessness being reported in your country? How does your country attempt to combat underreporting?
- What steps, if any, is your country taking toward addressing the question of statelessness within its boundaries? Providing citizenship? Providing access to healthcare, education, legal protections?
- How should governments or NGOs change their policies or intervene to prevent statelessness from occurring?
- Should states reform nationality laws to prevent children from being born stateless and if so how?
- Under what circumstances should countries grant citizenship to stateless individuals, and how can that country balance this responsibility with their national sovereignty?

As you research this topic and write your position papers please keep a few things in mind: firstly remember that you are representing your countries beliefs (and they might not be similar to your own)! Additionally, we are strongly against plagiarism so make sure to include any sources you gained information from. Thirdly, while AI has a lot of amazing uses, writing your position paper is not one of them. As an FYI, papers flagged for improper AI usage will not be eligible to win awards! If you have any questions, comments or concerns as you research and write your paper please feel free to reach out to rsulliv2@mail.yu.edu. I'm looking forward to an incredible conference, *#YUNMUNXXXVII!!!*

Sincerely,

Rivka Sullivan

Chair, United Nations Human Rights Council

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