

STATELESSNESS: A SHORT GUIDE FOR REFUGEES & ASYLUM SEEKERS

WHAT IS STATELESSNESS?

In international law, a stateless person is “a person who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law”. This means someone who does not have the nationality (or citizenship) of any country in the world. People usually get a nationality from their parents, or from the country they were born in. Sometimes you can also get a nationality through marriage or when you live in a country for several years.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM STATELESS?

Being stateless is not the same as not having documents. But if you have never had any documents, or your country refuses to renew your documents, you might be at risk of statelessness. Some stateless people do have some documents, like a birth certificate or a document issued by a United Nations agency (like UNRWA for Palestinians), but other stateless people don't have any documents at all.

YOU MIGHT BE STATELESS IF SOME OF THESE STATEMENTS APPLY TO YOU:

- ✓ You have never had a valid passport
- ✓ You or your family never got any documents from the country you were born in
- ✓ The country you were born in does not exist anymore
- ✓ The country you were born in is not recognised by other countries
- ✓ Your country has refused to renew your passport or documents
- ✓ You cannot get documents for yourself or your children
- ✓ Your family members cannot join you because they don't have documents
- ✓ You could not go to school or work or register your marriage or children in your country of origin because you didn't have documents



HOW DO PEOPLE BECOME STATELESS?

People can become stateless if:

- ! They don't get a nationality from their parents (because they are also stateless, or because women are not allowed to pass on their nationality to their children)
- ! They live in a place where the national borders have changed, or a new country has been formed
- ! They belong to a minority group in a country that does not recognise them
- ! They cannot get a birth certificate to prove where they were born or who their parents are
- ! Their country takes their nationality away from them

WHO IS AFFECTED BY STATELESSNESS?

Statelessness can affect anyone. There are some large groups of stateless people around the world, for example, Rohingya from Myanmar, Kurds from Iraq, Syria and Iran, Palestinians, bidoon from Kuwait, Sahrawis, people from countries that were part of the Soviet Union.

HOW MIGHT STATELESSNESS AFFECT ME?

Everybody's refugee journey is different, but some people experience specific problems because they are stateless. Many stateless people don't have any documents or proof of family relationships, so access to legal procedures like asylum, resettlement or family reunion can be more difficult. Authorities might not believe you when you tell them you are stateless and might record your nationality incorrectly. Your children could face nationality problems if they do not have a birth certificate or if you cannot pass on a nationality to them because you are stateless or a woman from a country that does not allow women to pass on their nationality. Statelessness can also affect your options for integration or return. If you think you or your family might be affected, it is important to seek legal advice.

WHERE CAN I GET ADVICE

Greek Forum of Refugees

Advice in Greek, English, Farsi, and Arabic
info@refugees.gr • +30 213 028 2976
Monday-Friday 10:30-17:00



Greek Council for Refugees

Advice in Greek, English, Arabic, Farsi, Tigrinya and Bangla
Athens: gcr1@gcr.gr • +30 210 3800990
Monday-Wednesday 07:30-09:00
Thessaloniki: gcr_thess@gcr.gr • +30 231 0250045
Tuesday-Thursday 10:00-13:00



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