

**Who is stateless and why?: Exploring how the UN and the international community are addressing statelessness by comparing two case studies of Syrian refugees living in Lebanon and Jordan.**

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April 9th, 2019

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**Abstract:**

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This thesis will explore how the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is addressing statelessness as an international crisis and their #IBelong campaign to eradicate statelessness by 2024. Next, it will define what statelessness is and how someone is determined to be stateless concerning the recommendations of UNHCR and international humanitarian law. Finally, it will focus on two case studies of how statelessness is affecting Jordan and Lebanon. The phenomenon of statelessness is not new. However, since the beginning of the Syrian Civil War, statelessness has become prominent among Syrian refugees living in Jordan and Lebanon. Both countries have strict citizenship laws which rule nationality can only pass on to a child through the father. Refugee children born to families with a Syrian father or fathers who died in the conflict are left without a nationality. Many children who fled Syria lack birth certificates and others who are born in refugee camps lack a claim to nationality. My thesis explores the leading causes of statelessness affecting Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon and how gender discriminatory citizenship laws perpetuate the phenomenon.

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**General Statements:**

\*For the purpose of this thesis all research and analysis refers to up until December 31st 2018. statelessness regarding Syrian refugees since this is a dynamic and evolving political issue.

\*As a clarification, throughout my thesis I am only considering how the UNHCR campaign to end statelessness is affecting Syrian refugees in both Jordan and Lebanon. I am not considering the situation of Palestinian refugees in either Jordan or Lebanon.

## What is statelessness:

*A man can lead a reasonably full life without a family, a fixed local residence, or a religious affiliation, but if he is stateless he is nothing. He has no rights, no security, and little opportunity for a useful career. There is no salvation on earth outside the framework of an organized state.*  
-Joseph R. Strayer, *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State* 3 (1970).

There are over 10 million stateless persons in the world today. According to UNHCR, over 3 million stateless persons are children and over 140,000 of them are Syrian refugees.

Another child is born stateless roughly every ten minutes. This thesis focuses on defining statelessness, what the United Nations is doing about it, and how it affects Syrian refugees living in Jordan and Lebanon. Leading factors of statelessness among Syrian refugees include a lack of birthright citizenship laws in the Levante, gender discrimination within Syrian nationality laws, and lack of documentation and registration paperwork due to the Syrian conflict.<sup>1</sup>

The word stateless does not have a direct translation in Arabic. Many dialects have a different word to describe a stateless person. Stateless people in Syria are often known as *maktoumeen*, which translates to “hidden”. Stateless people in Jordan are called *bedoon*, which translates to “without”. Both words have a connotation of not being worthy of recognition or rights. Statelessness is a fragile word in the Middle East because according to Islam, it is shameful to admit there are people living in the Muslim community that aren’t being acknowledged or taken care of<sup>2</sup>. The negative connotations used to describe stateless persons affects the way politicians and the public view stateless persons in their country. Governments should change the word they use to describe stateless persons that is more in line with the rights and attention they deserve<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> "International: It's Tough To live in Limbo; Statelessness." *The Economist*, vol. 385, no. 8557.

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR regional protection officer interview.

<sup>3</sup> Howard, *Analyzing the Causes of Statelessness in Syrian Refugee Children*, D. M. 2017

Definitions of citizenship also vary, however the general term implies “full membership” of a person to enjoy political, social, and civil rights within a community. Chief Justice Warren defined citizenship as “the right to have rights”. The U.S. Supreme Court defined stateless as a “membership in a political society, and implies a duty of allegiance on the part of the member and a duty of protection on the part of the society”. These rights include access to basic economic and social rights such as livelihood and healthcare.

There are two types of statelessness, the first is called *de jure* statelessness, when the laws of no state recognize a person as a citizen. And the second is called *de facto* statelessness, when a person is entitled to citizenship under a state’s nationality law but the law does not recognize that person as a citizen. For example, many Syrians still have citizenship under the Syrian regime however their status as citizens are ineffective due to the civil war<sup>4</sup>.

### The Problem

Over 4.8 million Syrian refugees are seeking asylum in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey and an estimated 68-80% of refugees have not registered with the UN due to concerns regarding statelessness<sup>5</sup>. Although it impossible to quantify the number of refugees that have NOT registered with the UN, there are two points of interest to keep in mind. First, this is a rough estimate since there is no method of counting how many refugees are not registered, in most cases the estimate printed is much lower than the perceived estimate of UN officials. Second, it is possible to provide a rough estimate because even though a refugee is stateless it does not mean that they are invisible and so UN officials working with refugees in camps in

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<sup>4</sup> Scott, J. B. (1930). Nationality: Jus Soli or Jus Sanguinis. *The American Journal of International Law*, 24(1), 58.

<sup>5</sup> Howard, pg 27.

Jordan and Lebanon are able to interact with persons both registered and unregistered and garner their estimates from such interactions.

The three most prominent cases of statelessness in Jordan and Lebanon is lack of birthright citizenship laws, gender discriminatory nationality laws, and the loss of identity documents. Syrian law does not guarantee women the right to pass Syrian nationality on to their children. Since most countries hosting Syrian refugees don't provide unconditional birthright citizenship, these children are in danger of becoming an "invisible" generation.

Registration problems remain one of the most prominent challenges to addressing statelessness. Since 2011, more than 30,000 Syrian children have been born in Lebanon. Many of these children become stateless due to the gender-discriminatory nationality laws. In Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon if the father is not present, a newborn child is unable to be registered making them stateless. This obstacle remains even if the child's mother is a national of the country of birth. For example, around 85,000 Jordanian women are married to non-citizens. There are more than 338,000 estimated children within these bi-national families who are at risk of becoming stateless. Statelessness can be avoided if the father's name is recorded on the birth registration form if the child is born outside the country of origin<sup>6</sup>.

Another why children are at risk of statelessness is if their birth certificates were lost or destroyed while fleeing Syria. Although this doesn't legally prove they are stateless, it does make it difficult to prove their citizenship and therefore they are subject to harassment and exploitation while lacking access to basic services like healthcare and education. UNHCR Director of International Protection, Volker Turk, said "Syrian refugee children have not been able to

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<sup>6</sup> Howard, pg 9.

acquire documentation which proved they were Syrian nationals and unless this can be resolved at a later date, these children may be left stateless”. Therefore, lacking a birth certificate does not make a child stateless automatically but unless resolved and proven through a second registration through UNHCR, this child will be treated as stateless, if not becoming officially stateless.

Senior advocate for the Middle East at Refugees International, Daryl Grisgraber, estimates that there are hundreds of thousands who are potentially not registered in the Middle Eastern region as a whole. This number contributes to the estimated 10 million stateless persons in the world today.

Furthermore, Syrian children born outside regime controlled areas are likely not recorded on the government birth rolls. Making it just as difficult for those children to gain and maintain proof of citizenship as children born in host countries such as Jordan and Lebanon. In addition, Syria is neither a member of the Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons nor to the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, which are legally binding documents for states to “grant its nationality to a person born in its territory who would otherwise be stateless”<sup>7</sup>. Not being a signatory state, it is difficult for UNHCR and other international organizations to keep Syria accountable to eradicating statelessness.

Immigration and national security drive citizenship policies. Another concern addressed by Sarnata Reynolds and Tori Duos in *A Generation of Syrian Born in Exile Risk a Future of Statelessness* is that ISIL is purposefully destroying birth certificates and passports belonging to Syrian citizens fleeing the country so that it is harder for them to return to Syria after the conflict. Syrian refugees face numerous obstacles crossing international borders if they lack identity

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<sup>7</sup> Howard, pg 10-11.



documents. ISIL's prerogative in destroying such documents is to make it more difficult for citizens to return to Syria causing more chaos and challenges to the regime re-establishing power of territorial gains<sup>8</sup>.

Rules of citizenship have changed globally throughout the 20th century. Citizenship is gained in four ways, birth, marriage, adoption, or naturalization. There are two legal categories of citizenship, *jus sanguinis*—blood descent and heritage determine citizenship and *jus soli*—birthright citizenship (except children of diplomats or other rare cases). There is unconditional *jus soli* which states a child becomes a citizen of the country in which he or she is born and there is conditional *jus soli* which limits citizenship rights to individuals born in a state to parents admitted for permanent residence and requires continued presence in state after birth. In 2004, the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act repealed unconditional *jus soli* in Ireland, making it the last country in Europe to have offered birthright to children born in their country. Today, there are roughly 30 countries that continue to offer unconditional *jus soli* but none of them are European<sup>9</sup>. Failure to grant citizenship to children born within state borders creates a generation of “invisible kids” that continue to be treated as second class citizens and grow in number creating a long lasting problem for the host country<sup>10</sup>.

#### How statelessness affects Syrians:

Syria become an independent country in 1946 when the French withdrew from the territory. Political organization such as the Muslim Brotherhood and the Ba'ath Party competed for control of the country's government. The Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party came to power in a

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<sup>8</sup> Sarnata Reynolds and Tori Duos in *A Generation of Syrian Born in Exile Risk a Future of Statelessness*.

<sup>9</sup> *Jus Sanguinis*, Black's Law Dictionary (10th ed. 2014). Pg 8.

<sup>10</sup> *Jus Soli*, Black's Law Dictionary (10th ed. 2014).

military coup in 1963 and Bashar al-Assad and his father ruled Syria since 1970. The Syrian conflict began in 2011 when the Arab Spring began and spread across the Levant. Protesters began to oppose Bashar al-Assad and civil war officially began in 2012.

In December 2016, the Syrian government retook Aleppo from the opposition. As Syria's second largest city this marked a turning point in the war in favor of Assad's regime. There have been multiple local ceasefire and de-escalation agreements that have decreased violence between opposition groups and the government forces. Yet, even within de-escalation zones civilians have not been protected from the violence of war, as seen during the clashes in the Idlib and eastern Ghouta areas. According to a UN report, 33% of the Syrian population faces food insecurity and 35% of the population depends on unsafe water sources<sup>11</sup>. As of November 2017, the UN delivered aid to 810,950 out of 3.5 million civilians in isolated regions. In addition, humanitarian agencies working in Syria reported the violation of protection rights by the Coalition-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which included Detention of IDPs, separation of families, restricting IDP movement, and the confiscation of identity documents. This phenomenon is one of the leading causes of statelessness. The confiscation of identity documents by rebel groups and the government lead forces make civilians vulnerable to losing identity papers vital to registering as a refugee or asylum seeker with the UN in a host country<sup>12</sup>.

The UN officially is not facilitation or promoting return to Syria. However, according to UNHCR around 720,000 IDPs and 66,000 refugees returned home during 2017. A report from the U.S. State Department of Population, Refugees, and Migration said the percentage of

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<sup>11</sup> Jayaraman, Shiva. "International Terrorism and Statelessness: Revoking the Citizenship of ISIL Foreign Fighters." *Chicago Journal of International Law*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2016, pp. 178-216.

<sup>12</sup> State Source PPRC 2018 ANE Syria Organizational and Regional policy paper.

refugees in Lebanon living below the national poverty line of \$3.84 per day increased from 71% to 76% in the last year, and around 90% of Syrian refugees in Jordan live under the Jordanian poverty level<sup>13</sup>.

Syrian citizenship law requires children to receive nationality through paternal jus sanguinis. A child can receive citizenship if their father is Syrian or through their mother under limited circumstances. For example, if her child is born in Syria illegitimately, or if her child is born in Syria and the child would not be able to acquire another nationality, or if she is Syrian and her child has not acquired another nationality and has not applied for Syrian nationality within the deadline. Even though the law includes the third provision to allow the mother to pass on nationality to her child if the father is absent, in reality these provisions are not implemented very often<sup>14</sup>. Therefore, Syria does not provide effective protection for children vulnerable to de facto statelessness.

However, Syria recognizes a naturalization process if, before applying, an applicant meets a five-year legal residency requirement, is free of diseases, has full legal capacity, has good character, has specialization or expertise or legitimate means to earn living, and can read and write Arabic. Although this provision is in place it is incredibly hard to fulfill and does not provide a reliable or probable path to citizenship. For example, persons who are stateless but living in Syria can not obtain legal residency and thus fail to meet the five-year legal residency requirement.

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<sup>13</sup> State Source PPRC 2018 ANE Syria Organizational and Regional policy paper

<sup>14</sup> Albarazi, Zahra. "The Stateless Syrians - Refworld.org." *Report of the Middle East and North Africa Nationality and Statelessness Research Project 7*, 2017,

In addition, Syria has a long history of gender discriminatory laws regarding nationality. For example, less than 3,500 Palestinians have acquired Syrian citizenship because Syria only grants citizenship to Palestinian women married to Syrian men, but not Palestinian men married to Syrian women. Syrian women married to a foreigner also cannot pass their nationality to their children because the law finds a Syrian Arab national's marriage to a foreigner likely to weaken the national inclination in children. Syrian women in a bi-national marriage are also prohibited from passing on inherited property to their child and lack access to free education and have limited access to health care and social security. Interestingly, Syria is a signatory of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which states all women have equal rights with men regarding transferring nationality to their children. However, disparities between signed treaties and national law as well as gender inequality and the lack of jus soli in European states make many Syrian children vulnerable to statelessness<sup>15</sup>.

Article 3(D) of Syrian Nationality Law states "If a child is born in Syria and the child would not be eligible to acquire another nationality, that child is a Syrian citizen". However, this provision is not enforced or upheld. Children born outside their parent's country of origin and whose mother is unable to pass down citizenship due to nationality laws, are vulnerable to statelessness. If a child lacks documentation, it is difficult for the parents to prove their identity or birth registration and thus they are denied basic rights.

"Not all refugees are stateless and not all stateless people are refugees"<sup>16</sup>. What both refugees and stateless persons have in common is that they are unable to rely on their state to

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<sup>15</sup> Albarazi, pg 15-20.

<sup>16</sup> Article 3(D) of Syrian Nationality Law, pg 6.

protect them or their rights. Some people are both refugees and stateless such as many in the Syrian conflict. As an unknown source said, “Statelessness is the absence of citizenship: Statelessness is a condition, caused by governments, that occurs when no state recognizes a person as its citizen under the operations of its laws”.

### **How UNHCR is addressing statelessness:**

#### #IBelong Campaign

In 2014, UNHCR launched its #IBelong global campaign to eradicate statelessness by 2024. This campaign seeks to decrease statelessness by addressing both those who have lost their identification papers and those who are born into statelessness. It does this by providing funding and personnel to establish registration tents in areas of high statelessness populations. These sites provide a uniform and legally recognized method of assigning identity papers and registering stateless persons as refugees under UNHCR<sup>17</sup>.

In April 2018, the UNHCR published its most recent #IBelong campaign update. Developments in the fight to end Statelessness include that on February 28th, the League of Arab States (LAS) gathered under the patronage of the Tunisian President, Beji Caid Essebsi for a Ministerial meeting on “Belonging and Legal Identity”. The members voted to adopt the Declaration on Belonging and Legal Identity (provided in both English and Arabic) which calls for equal nationality rights for women and children. During the same conference, LAS launched

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<sup>17</sup> “#IBELONG to a World Where Everyone Has the Right to a Nationality.” Received by Open Letter, 4 Nov. 2014.

its “I am Here” campaign to focus on tracking the progress of the declaration and the positive developments that flowed from it<sup>18</sup>.

UNHCR also published an updated *Background Note on Gender Equality, Nationality Laws and Statelessness* on March 8th, 2018 that called for law reform in Sierra Leone regarding women passing on their nationality to their children. In Brazil there was a consultation meeting of Latin America and the Caribbean as a regional contribution to the Global Compact on Refugees on February 19-20th, 2018. Additionally, South Africa hosted the second meeting of the member states of the African Union to discuss the “AU Draft Protocol on Nationality and Statelessness” on March 13-16th, 2018. New York hosted the 62nd session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women which held a session specializing in “Advancing Gender Equality in Nationality Laws” followed by the European Network on Statelessness hosting an innovative new online tool the Stateless Index on March 20th, 2018. This tool was developed to compare data on statelessness for 12 European countries<sup>19</sup>.

The index uses population data, statelessness determination procedures, detention, prevention, and reduction efforts throughout the 12 nations. Lastly, UNHCR’s Machine-Readable Convention Travel Documents (MRCTDs) for refugees and stateless persons reported progress regarding issuance of MRCTDs internationally. Currently, 30 states issue MRCTDs to stateless persons and 15 states issue other types of travel documents to stateless persons. While all of these conferences and reports are signs of progress toward decreasing

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<sup>18</sup> “Join the Campaign to End Statelessness.” *IBELONG*, 2014, [www.unhcr.org/ibelong/](http://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/).

<sup>19</sup> “Join the Campaign to End Statelessness.” *IBELONG*, 2014, [www.unhcr.org/ibelong/](http://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/).

statelessness, the #IBelong campaign has much work to do to reduce the number of stateless persons globally.

Lebanon and Jordan are also taking measures to implement the #IBelong campaign in their countries. In Lebanon, the government adopted measures to simplify birth registration procedures for Syrian refugees in the country between January 1st, 2011 and February 8th, 2018. Reports estimate that over 50,000 children could potentially benefit from this initiative. These measures fall in line with Action 7 of the #IBelong Campaign: “Ensure birth registration for the prevention of statelessness”<sup>20</sup>.

In Jordan, UNHCR and the governmental Ministry of Interior initiated a 7-month grace period to make uniform the status of Syrian refugees living in urban areas. This period will rectify the status of Syrian nationals who will then be able to benefit from UNHCR assistance and fulfill their birth and marriage registration processes. This method is expected to decrease the number of refugees vulnerable to statelessness within Jordan dramatically and was officially adopted on March 4th, 2018.

Other events regarding the #IBelong Campaign include UNHCR’s annual NGO consultations in Geneva on June 27-29th, 2018. The theme of the conference was “Putting People First” and included sessions on “Statelessness and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF)” which took place on June 27th, 2018<sup>21</sup>.

Interview with Program Officer for Asia and the Middle East Syria/Jordan and a Regional Protection officer:

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<sup>20</sup> “UNHCR Lebanon Statelessness Update.” UNHCR, 2014.

<sup>21</sup> “Join the Campaign to End Statelessness.” *IBELONG*, 2014, [www.unhcr.org/ibelong/](http://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/).

UNHCR is working with the League of Arab States to eradicate statelessness. They had a joint meeting in October 2017 which was the first time they had met together and it resulted in a declaration that was adopted by all members except the UAE. They drafted a model law and adopted a regional advocacy campaign called “I Am Here” that aims to end statelessness in the region. Additionally, there has been a revision in the Syrian law that only allows men to obtain certain civil documentation. This is a step backwards towards granting citizenship to more citizens and avoiding an increase in stateless persons. However, Syria claims to recognize foreign birth certificates which would be a step forward in decreasing statelessness and making it a smoother process for refugees once they return to their home country. A final sign of progress, at the start of the Syrian conflict there was a 35% gap in birth registration but now there is only a 2.5% gap (but this is birth registration, not evidence of citizenship)<sup>22</sup>.

In Jordan, citizenship can only be passed down through the male. If a Jordanian woman is married to a man from another nationality, that child automatically become Jordanian. For example, if a woman moved from Jordan to Syria 20 years ago and married a Syrian man and gave birth, that child won’t have the opportunity to gain a birth certificate. Then once the refugee crisis broke out, the mother moved to Jordan with their child and the father stayed behind in Syria the mother can’t claim Jordanian citizenship for her child since the father is not present. She also would not qualify for refugee status because she is Jordanian and the father is not present. She would find herself in a predicament and UNHCR couldn’t help her since she didn’t fall under their stateless persons mandate and neither will the Jordanian government recognize

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<sup>22</sup> Interview, program officer at the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration at the U.S. Department of State, “Update on the Statelessness in the Levant.” Apr. 2018.



the status of her child. This is a very specific example that affects a minority of people, however it is just one way that statelessness can present itself in unexpected ways<sup>23</sup>.

The U.S. Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) sees many Syrian children born in Syria but living in Jordan without identity papers. Even children born in Jordan may lack identity papers because their parents can't or didn't register them at birth and are now vulnerable to becoming stateless. Some of the challenges that stand in the way of children registering in their own country include lack of proof of marriage of their parents or if their mother was a minor at marriage or at birth. Under Sharia law women are allowed to be married at 16 and 17 years of age. However, couples who get married when the women is only 15 or younger often avoid registering their marriage because they fear legal repercussions. This sets them up to face problems once they have a child and need proof of marriage in order to get a birth certificate or identity papers for their child.

UNHCR is working to register Syrian refugees in Jordan and provide them birth certificates. When this is not possible, UNHCR works to collect data and provide them identity papers so that when they return to Syria they can apply their children for birth certificates. UNHCR promotes both reduction and prevention of statelessness. One way that prevention relates to ending statelessness is ensuring citizenship could be attainable through both parents. Jordan is being pressured to move in that direction. This will mean a long legislative battle that is highly politicalized. Jordanian moms and the UN are some of the biggest voices calling for change. They receive push back from the conservative East Bankers who don't want the number

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<sup>23</sup> Interview, program officer.

of Jordanian citizens to increase unless they are East Bankers too and other political and religious voices<sup>24</sup>.

#### UNHCR's Global Action Plan to End Statelessness

The Global Action Plan to End Statelessness provides a guiding framework of 10 Actions for states to undertake with support of UNHCR and other international organizations to effectively identify and protect stateless persons, resolve large populations of stateless persons, and prevent new cases of statelessness. UNHCR has the goal of eradicating statelessness by 2024 and encourages states and to partner with them and follow one or more of the 10 Actions laid out in the document. International agencies, civil society, stateless persons, global organizations and supporting governments are asked to join in the movement and pursue relevant actions<sup>25</sup>.

In 2013, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees announced his desire for the “total commitment of the international community to end statelessness”. This Action Plan is a major step in that direction. It is recommended that each state develop a National Action Plan for accomplishing any number of the actions laid out by the Global Action Plan (GAP) that are applicable for their nation. Not all of the 10 Action Plans are applicable to every country where statelessness is present and thus not all 10 Action points must be included in a country's National Action Plan. Additionally, the GAP focuses on non-refugee stateless persons even though it is possible to be both a refugee and a stateless person.

Resources to support the GAP have been allocated from the “Seeds for Solutions” fund to increase UNHCR's financial support of GAP from 12 million in 2009 to 40 million in 2015 and

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<sup>24</sup> Interview, program officer.

<sup>25</sup> Global Action Plan to End Statelessness: 2014-24. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2014. Pg 1.

welcomes continued support from outside sources and donors to help end statelessness. UNHCR has also hired 20 specialists to work with national governments to help implement their National Action Plan<sup>26</sup>.

Below is a framework of the 10 Actions laid out by UNHCR's plan to eradicate statelessness:

1. Resolve existing large populations of stateless persons.
2. Ensure no child is born stateless.
  - a. Goal: all states have a provision in their nationality laws to grant nationality to stateless children born in their territory, of unknown origin found in their territory, and born to nationals abroad who are unable to acquire another nationality.
3. Remove gender discrimination from nationality laws.
  - a. Goal: all states have nationality laws which treat women and men equally with regard to conferral of nationality to their children and with regard to the acquisition, change and retention of nationality.
4. Prevent denial, loss or deprivation of nationality on discriminatory grounds.
5. Prevent Statelessness in cases of state succession.
6. Grant protection status to stateless migrants and facilitate their naturalization.
  - a. Goal: 70 states identify stateless migrants through determination procedures which lead to a legal status that permits residence and basic human rights, and facilitates naturalization.

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<sup>26</sup> Global Action Plan to End Statelessness, pg 2.

7. Ensure birth registration for the prevention of statelessness.
8. Issue nationality documentation to those with entitlement to it.
9. Accede to the UN statelessness conventions.
  - a. Goal: 140 states party to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. 130 states party to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.
10. Improve quantitative and qualitative data on stateless populations.
  - a. Goal: Quantitative data on stateless populations is publicly available for 150 states and qualitative analysis on stateless populations is publicly available for at least 120 states<sup>27</sup>.

In 2014, there were 20 major non-refugee statelessness situations reported around the world. The goal of the GAP was to ensure that by 2017, there were law, policy, and administrative reforms to grant nationality to non-refugee stateless person in 10 of the major non-refugee statelessness situations. Also, that by 2020 there will be law, policy, and administrative reforms to grant nationality to non-refugee stateless person in an additional 5 of the major non-refugee statelessness situations. And finally, that by 2024 there will no non-refugee statelessness situations remaining<sup>28</sup>.

Major activities that the UNHCR can do is advocate and advise on the process of reforming nationality laws, policies, and procedures that grant citizenship to stateless persons. Support government activity of reviewing applications and issuing documentation as well as sending work teams throughout the population to ensure access to registration procedures.

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<sup>27</sup> Global Action Plan to End Statelessness, pg 3-4.

<sup>28</sup> Global Action Plan to End Statelessness, pg 7.

Finally, UNHCR can support and engage in long-term solutions through dialogue, reconciliation and confidence-building when governments face discriminatory social attitudes towards ending statelessness. For the purpose of this thesis, I will focus on Action Plans 2, 3, and 7 which are related to some of the largest challenges facing Jordan and Lebanon in their journey to eradicate statelessness.

#### Action Plan 2: Ensure that no child is born stateless:

As of 2014, at least 70,000 children were born in the 20 major reported non-refugee statelessness situations each year and were not able to acquire citizenship. Also, 28% of states have inadequate provisions for granting nationality to children who are born stateless, this statistic includes both Jordan and Lebanon. A child is born stateless if their parents were stateless, or were abandoned at birth and whose nationality is unknown, or if their parents were not able to pass on their nationality to their children based on the nationality laws of the host country. The 1961 Convention sets out a safeguard that ensures all children are granted citizenship if they were born otherwise vulnerable to statelessness. UNHCR suggests that host countries work with UNICEF and civil society organizations to raise awareness about children's rights within a host country's national law and international treaties. Also, UNHCR can help by supporting the legal community to grant children nationality who otherwise would be vulnerable to statelessness. This can be done by providing personnel and funds and legal aids to the legal professionals who are working in the justice sector regarding nationality laws<sup>29</sup>.

#### Action Plan 3: Remove Gender Discrimination from Nationality Laws:

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<sup>29</sup> Global Action Plan to End Statelessness, pg 11.

As of 2014, 27 states had nationality laws which did not permit women to pass on nationality to their children. How this applies to both Jordan and Lebanon as is further discussed in the case studies explored later on in the thesis. Such laws discriminate on the basis of gender and conflict with Article 9(2) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. To amend this problem, reform laws are needed to retroactively grant nationality to anyone who has been left stateless due to discriminatory laws. For example, a clause could be added to state law that children who are left stateless who have a mother who is a citizen automatically be granted their mother's nationality in order to avoid becoming stateless, regardless of the nationality of their father. UNHCR can help by providing legal and social support with UN Women, UNICEF, OHCHR and civil society members of the Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights.<sup>30</sup>

#### Action Plan 7: Ensure Birth Registration for the Prevention of Statelessness:

There is no data to count how many children are unregistered since the very act of being unregistered is uncountable. However, UNICEF estimated that in 2010 there were around 3 million unregistered children. This number is an estimate at best and there is reason to believe it has grown since 2010 as more refugees arrived in host countries where children were born in undocumented areas and not registered at birth. Some host countries lack working registration procedures and others have overly complex or strict registration policies. This is a major deterrent for a refugee considering registering in a new country because they might face social and language barriers making it difficult to register successfully. Also, some countries have lengthy, costly, and complicated procedures for late birth registration which deter families

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<sup>30</sup> Global Action Plan to End Statelessness, pg 12.

attempting to register their child years after they are born. Additionally, they will face numerous requests for identification documentation that they may feel weary to hand over to an unknown local official. UNHCR supports a free and accessible non-discriminatory basis for all refugees and non-refugee persons vulnerable to becoming stateless, including procedures for delayed birth registration. UNHCR can help by supporting the work of UNICEF, UN regional commissions, UNFPA, WHO, UNDP, the World Bank, regional development banks and bilateral donors to promote technical support for birth registration and statistics systems. This includes setting up registration tents with resources and personnel to serve stateless persons within the local area.<sup>31</sup>

## **Determination Procedures:**

### Guiding Principles on the Right to Humanitarian Assistance

This section will explore what makes a person stateless by international humanitarian law as adopted by UNHCR and other international organizations and states. International Humanitarian Law was first recognized as an official concept in the early 19th century. After the dramatic events of World War I and World War II, there was a need for agreed upon law relating to how military operations are conducted, political behavior of states, changing structure of international community, and the evolving international legal concepts and new technology. In order to apply international humanitarian law to the variety and diversity of global contexts, there are cardinal principles that must remain the same. For example, one such principle is the

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<sup>31</sup> Global Action Plan to End Statelessness, pg 18.

maintenance of absolute neutrality and impartiality when humanitarian action is involved to aid victims of violence.

This principle is easier said than done but remains vital for humanitarian assistance to avoid political cross-currents and bias. The United Nations seeks to enforce this principle by sending peacekeeping troops to mitigate military forces that prevent the delivery of humanitarian aid.<sup>32</sup> International humanitarian relief is a complicated issue that has drastic consequences for the provider, receiver, and the host country. For this reason, the International Institute of Humanitarian Law (IIHL) promotes the development of international humanitarian law through its publication called “Guiding Principles on the Right to Humanitarian Assistance” which includes aspects of the conclusions and recommendations of the 17th Round Table on Current Problems of Humanitarian Law: “The Evolution of the Right to Assistance” that was hosted by the IIHL in Sanremo, Italy in September 1992.<sup>33</sup>

The document lays out 14 Principles that reflect the goals and methodology of the IIHL in promoting international humanitarian law globally. Principles 1- state that every person has a right to humanitarian assistance and explains why and how that assistance may be requested and granted. For example, a person may request humanitarian aid when there is an emergency situation threatening the survival and/or respect for human dignity. Principles 4-7 state that the primary responsibility to assist victims of emergencies lie on the authorities of the given country and the right to deliver aid to the victims of emergencies lie on international organizations such as ICRC, UNHCR, and other professional humanitarian organizations. It is helpful to have these

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<sup>32</sup> United Nations. “Rule of Law and Transitional Justice.” *UNHCR*,

<sup>33</sup> Patrignic, Jovica. “The International Institute of Humanitarian Law -25 Years of Humanitarian Dialogue.” *ICRC*, 1, 31 Aug. 1995,



principles in writing in case the host country responds to the intervention from international organisations as a violation of their sovereignty. If a host country does refuse or resist the offer of humanitarian assistance to those suffering inside their borders the states and organizations in question have the right to take all steps necessary within the limits of international humanitarian law and human rights instruments to enforce the state principles.<sup>34</sup>

Principles 8-10 specify what type of aid may be delivered and the mechanisms to do so. For example, humanitarian assistance may include foodstuffs, water, medication, medical supplies and equipment, clothing, shelter, religious and spiritual assistance, and civil defence insofar as is stated within international humanitarian law and is not diverted for military or political means. Principles 11-12 determine the safety and protection of humanitarian assistance personnel involved in delivering aid and that the organizations involved in providing assistance are able to monitor their activities. Principles 13-14 declare that all humanitarian assistance efforts be coordinated to avoid duplication and waste and that the principles laid out in this document should not be used to impair or modify the rights of states or persons under international law.<sup>35</sup>

#### Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons

##### Part One:

The UNHCR published a Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons in Geneva in 2014 relating to the 60th anniversary of the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. Although the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness provides a set of tools for eradicating Statelessness, the 1954 Convention ensures that stateless persons maintain a life

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<sup>34</sup> Patrnoic

<sup>35</sup> Patrnoic.

of dignity and security. The responsibility of this handbook were initially focused on stateless persons who were refugees according to paragraph 6 (A) (II) of the UNHCR Statute and Article 1 (A) of the 1951 Convention. However, in 2006, the UNHCR was entrusted with the responsibility for identification, prevention, and reduction of stateless persons generally.<sup>36</sup>

Including a literature review of this handbook is important to understanding the basic laws and regulations of statelessness as defined by the UNHCR and other prominent IOs and NGOs working to eradicate it. However, it is important to understand that not all the laws and regulations included in this chapter relate to Jordan and Lebanon. While many of the rules are applicable in both countries, some of the rules are not followed by the governments of Jordan and Lebanon regarding Syrian refugees.

As introduction, the 1954 Convention remains the only international treaty that specifically regulates the standards of treatment for stateless persons. The Convention was organized after the end of World War II brought the need to protect stateless persons and refugees to the forefront. This handbook is comprised of the definition of a “stateless person”, their rights and obligations, and the provisions that govern accession to the Convention and cooperation of states with UNHCR. This handbook refrains from referring to stateless persons as “de jure” since that term does not appear in the text itself. The term “de facto” is sometimes used in this handbook even though it is not defined by any international instrument or official treaty. This handbook also supports the idea that each state must identify stateless persons with their own jurisdiction so that they can provide them treatment in line with Conventional commitments. The Convention also encourages more states to adopt official statelessness determination

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<sup>36</sup> Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons. Geneva, 2014, *Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons*.

procedures to enhance respect for the human rights of stateless persons through legal status and rights. States benefit from introducing statelessness determination procedures because it reveals the root causes and scope and size of the issue so governments can work towards prevention and eradication more effectively.<sup>37</sup>

This handbook examines the issue of stateless persons in countries that are and are not signatories of the 1954 Convention as well as those that are considered “de facto” stateless. An important point of the handbook is to recognize that although all stateless persons must be treated in line with international standards, their treatment can vary depending on the state and context of the situation. The last point covered in the handbook is the difference between a refugee and stateless person and which Conventions address each person in question.

The beginning of the handbook contains criteria for determining statelessness. Article 1(1) of the 1954 Convention defines a stateless person as one who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law. This definition remains binding to all signatories of the 1954 Convention. The handbook argues it is preferable for a person to gain nationality compared to recognition and protection as a stateless person. A stateless person does not, by definition, have had to cross an international border. However, this thesis focuses on how statelessness affects Syrian refugees in Jordan or Lebanon which have, by definition, crossed an international border. The definition of “state” in Article 1(1) is defined by the 1933 Montevideo Convention on Rights and Duties of States as a defined territory, government, and population that has the capacity to enter into relations with other States.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons, pg 22.

<sup>38</sup> Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons, pg 11.

Another important part of the definition to consider is when a person “is not considered as a national” of any state. It is not always beneficial to consult the law of the state on what defines a national or not because not all states follow their written law. Rather it is more helpful to establish whether an individual’s nationality status depends on an automatic or non-automatic mode. Automatic modes include when nationality is acquired as soon as the legal criteria are met, such as birth or birth to nationals of a state.<sup>39</sup> In contrast, non-automatic modes include when an individual or a state authority is required to take an action before the change in nationality takes place. When an automatic mode of nationality is lost, a state institution that has the power to clarify an individual’s nationality status is responsible for determining their determination status. Examples of such an authority include, passport authorities, consular’s office, or civil registration officials.

The competent authority has the power to declare an individual eligible for automatic acquisition of nationality if they don’t already have it, over the letter of the law. This rule is set in place to override possible discrimination by the government or ruling authority. It is also possible that an individual be treated inconsistently by different competent authorities. For example, a person may receive public benefits without obtaining proof of nationality and then be denied a passport when they reach adulthood. Inconsistent treatment like this may be an instance of a national’s rights being violated, however it is hard to prove this or to defend that person’s rights if they never received documentation of their nationality.<sup>40</sup>

An interesting addition to the law states that if the competent authority provided an individual non-automatic nationality in bad faith or due to an misunderstanding of the law, this

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<sup>39</sup> Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons, pg 14.

<sup>40</sup> Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons, pg 18.

action does not automatically invalidate the individual's nationality status. The same rule applies to individuals who have had their nationality stripped away due to a fraudulent application or mistakes in their application. Under Article 1(1), if the competent authority treats the individual inconsistently with the decision of a nationality review body, the national's rights are being breached and the competent authority is responsible.<sup>41</sup> This rule depends on the relationship between the executive and judicial branches of the government and the ultimate decision lies with the branch that has the mechanisms to enforce their decision.

Another issue is the voluntary renunciation of nationality. If an individual relinquishes their nationality status it is an act of free will and should take the form of an oral or written declaration. Opposed to what some states argue, voluntary renunciation of nationality does not mean that a state authority is able to exclude that individual from coverage of Article 1(1). The 1954 Convention equally covers stateless persons and their human rights for those who voluntarily or involuntarily withdraw their nationality.

As regards the definition of statelessness, each country has their own definition for what a national is for their country. For example some indicate a national as a "citizen" or "subject". The 1954 Convention regards the definition of a stateless person to reflect a political and legal link between the individual and the state under international law. This type of nationality does not relate to a membership of a religious, linguistic, or ethnic group.<sup>42</sup>

There are also instances where an individual may obtain nationality that gains them right of entry and re-entry into particular places in a state. For example, a national may only be granted permission into a non-metropolitan territory for certain historical reasons. This fact does

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<sup>41</sup> Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons, pg 19.

<sup>42</sup> Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons, pg 21.

not allow for a national to be treated any differently than another according to Article 1(1). There are also prohibitions against discrimination based on grounds such as race as supported by international human right treaties.

Part two:

The next section of the handbook on protection of stateless persons includes the procedures for the determination of statelessness.<sup>43</sup> The assessment of statelessness is necessary when an individual seeks protection under the application of the 1961 Convention. *In situ* refers to the type of statelessness where the individual remains in their own country. Depending on the type of statelessness, some states are encouraged to undertake nationality campaigns or nationality verification efforts rather than statelessness determination procedures.

The difference between nationality campaigns and determination procedures is the former focuses on resolving statelessness through granting nationality, whereas the latter focuses on identifying the person as stateless to provide them with an official status. One of the benefits of nationality verification is that it helps individuals who have difficulties obtaining proof of their nationality status, obtain documentation with a swift and straightforward process. Interestingly, where there is a lack of documentation, such as birth registration, the sworn testimony of community members that an individual is from a certain territory or descent from a parent who is a national may suffice to prove their nationality during a nationality verification procedure. This method is beneficial in the case of an individual having lost or been robbed of their identity papers.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons, pg 25.

<sup>44</sup> Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons, pg 55.

Although the 1954 Convention sets out rules and regulations for the registration procedures, it does not mention anything about the design or operation of statelessness determination procedures. These are left up to the discretion of the states and should be based on the estimated size and diversity of the local stateless population and the legal and evidentiary issues at hand. The UNHCR recommends centralized procedures opposed to locally run procedures because official oversight is key to maintaining successful and effective registration procedures. The UNHCR recommends that states allow the submission of written applications through local offices to the central determination body. Even a personal interview with the applicant can take part at the local level as long as there are appropriate oversight provisions for the rest of the application process. It also deciphers what kind of registration process is the most appropriate regarding the type of stateless procedure taking place. For example, some states choose to integrate the stateless determination procedures within the immigration authorities.

Others may decide to place stateless determination procedures within the same body responsible for nationality issues, such as a naturalization applications and nationality verification requests. Stateless persons can also be refugees. In this case, UNHCR recommends that statelessness and refugee determination take place within a single procedure so as to increase efficiency. However, maintaining confidentiality requirements for asylum seekers and refugees is incredibly important. The handbook on protection of stateless persons suggests the following safeguards to ensure fairness, transparency, and clarity in determination procedures.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons, pg 43.

1. Information regarding eligibility criteria, the determination procedure, rights of recognition of statelessness is disseminated widely and with counseling in a language the applicant can understand.
2. A right to an interview with a decision-making official.
3. Help is available for translation/interpretation of written applications and interviews.
4. Every individual of a family has a right to an independent application.
5. An adult may apply on behalf of a dependant child and safeguards for unaccompanied children are also in place.
6. A child has a right to be heard if they have the ability to present an opinion.
7. Where free legal advice is available, it should be accessible to applicants free of charge.
8. Each determination is made regarding the specific nationality laws and practices of the state in question pertaining to the law and practice applicable to the period of time that is relevant.
9. If the determination process takes place in a judicial setting, the process should be inquisitorial and not adversarial.
10. The decision of the competent authority should be made in writing and with a relevant explanation and within a reasonable time period.
11. There should be a right of appeal and access to UNHCR.

The handbook also suggests the determination procedures be formalized in law.

Access to registration procedures is vital given that many individuals are hesitant to apply for statelessness status or unaware of how to do so. There is no time limit within the Convention for an individual to claim statelessness status. Also, anyone and everyone within a state's



territory is eligible to apply for statelessness status. Each state authority is required to make a decision regarding the individual's application within a few months if the application is clear and the statelessness claim is well-founded.<sup>46</sup>

The next section regards coordinating refugee status and statelessness determinations. When an individual applies for both refugee and statelessness status, both applications should be equally considered. Under the 1951 Convention there are more rights at the national level than under the 1954 Convention. Sometimes a refugee status can expire before a person officially acquires a nationality. Hence, that person should receive international protection as a stateless person.<sup>47</sup>

In addition, the identity of a refugee or an asylum seeker should not be disclosed with the state authority of the person's country of origin. If both the determination procedures for refugee status and statelessness status are being conducted simultaneously, and there is insufficient information to determine whether a person is stateless or not, then the refugee status determination should proceed. Sometimes these procedures cannot continue simultaneously because an authority from a foreign state must be contacted to gather more information. However, a statelessness claim can be reactivated if and only if; a refugee claim fails, a refugee status is reviewed by subsequently ceases, a refugee status is cancelled due to the inclusion criteria of Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention were not met fully, or additional evidence confirms that an individual is stateless.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons, pg 19.

<sup>47</sup> Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons, pg 30.

<sup>48</sup> Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons, pg 31.

Next, the process requires the assessment of evidence, both fact and law, during a statelessness determination procedure. A case cannot be settled only through the analysis of nationality laws alone. Therefore, both evidence regarding the individual's circumstances and evidence regarding laws of the host country are necessary to conduct a realistic assessment of the person's status. Examples of evidence that may be assessed include; testimony of the applicant (this may include more than one interview), enquiry from a foreign authority concerning the individual's nationality status, national identity card, voter registration document, travel documents, certificate of naturalization, marriage certificate, applications to obtain nationality or proof of nationality, military service records, school certificates, medical certificates, responses by states to enquires of an applicant's nationality status, identity documents of family member, immigration documents, property deeds, record of sworn oral testimony of neighbours and community members. It is preferable if each piece of evidence presented is obtained from multiple reliable and unbiased sources.<sup>49</sup>

Interestingly, the burden of proof is shared between the applicant and the examiner during a statelessness determination procedure. Both parties are responsible for being truthful and fully examining all evidence available. However, contact with authorities from a state from which the individual has expressed a fear of persecution is not to be considered unless that individual has not been approved for status as a refugee or entitled to a form of protection.

Under Article 1(1) of the 1954 Convention, the stateless person definition requires a proof of a negative that a person is not considered as a national by any state. This wording makes it especially important and tedious to examine all possible evidence of an applicant's claim. The

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<sup>49</sup> Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons, pg 32.

examiner should not automatically conclude negative inferences where there are discrepancies between the nationality laws of the state in question and the applicant. Some of the discrepancies could be due to the amount of emotional and physical trauma that the applicant has undergone. Instead, the applicant should be given the opportunity to clarify any gaps or contradictions in their account as well as be judged only according to the laws of the specific location and time where they are claiming statelessness status. This handbook suggests states adopt the same standard of proof required during a refugee status determination, namely, that statelessness be granted whenever it is deemed “a reasonable degree” that an individual falls under the 1954 Convention definition.

Additionally, sometimes it is appropriate to conduct *Prima facie*, or recognition based on “proved stateless until proved otherwise” as laid out in the 1954 Convention. This pathway is helpful when there is objective information regarding the lack of nationality of a certain group. This procedure does not require an individual assessment procedure but rather is based on a group determination basis. It must be maintained that all group determination procedures follow the exclusion clauses set out in Article 1(2) of the 1954 Convention which include;

- (i) To persons who are at present receiving from agencies of the United Nations other than the UNHCR protection or assistance so long as they are receiving such protection or assistance;
- (ii) To persons who are recognized by the competent authorities of the country in which they have taken residence as having the rights and obligations which are attached to the possession of the nationality of that country;
- (iii) To persons with respect to whom there are serious reasons for considering that: They have committed a war crime or non-political crime or a crime against peace or humanity. Or they have

committed acts contrary to the principles of the United Nations (iii was paraphrased from the original text).<sup>50</sup>

Detention of stateless persons may sometimes be necessary but is not encouraged and many restrictions and recommendations apply. The absence of identity papers immigration permits cannot be the sole grounds for detention of individuals. Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) guarantees the right to liberty and security of person, prohibiting unlawful and arbitrary detention. Stateless persons are at a much higher risk of prolonged and/or arbitrary detention and thus addressing statelessness also lowers an individual's vulnerability to detention.<sup>51</sup>

According to this handbook, the role of UNHCR is to assist states to maintain their statelessness mandate through ensuring the fairness of determination procedures from its role as an international mediator or as a conductor of statelessness determination procedures at an individual or group level itself. There are also additional procedural and evidentiary safeguards for specific groups based on their age, gender, diversity, level of education which require a separate individual procedure. Women might face increased obstacles when acquiring relevant documentation. Also, during interviews it is most appropriate to pair interviewees with interviewers of the same sex.<sup>52</sup>

The next topic is of increased importance to both Jordan and Lebanon. Neither state is a signatory of the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, however both states are still responsible for following certain regulations of international human rights law.

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<sup>50</sup> Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons, pg 40.

<sup>51</sup> Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons, pg 56.

<sup>52</sup> Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons, pg 43.

Statelessness itself is juridically relevant because it includes the right for women and men to be treated equally (Article 9 of the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women). Officially, *de facto* statelessness is not included in the 1954 Convention, however some states have incorporated *de facto* statelessness into their determination procedures alongside the criteria of the 1954 Convention.<sup>53</sup>

Part three:

The next section of the handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons addresses the status of stateless persons at the national level. The 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons is modelled on the text from the 1961 Convention on Refugees. Both conventions state that a person is stateless the moment they satisfy the criteria in the 1954 Convention and not the moment that they are recognized as stateless by either a state or by UNHCR. A stateless person may also be a refugee simultaneously. Articles 12-32 of the 1954 Convention list a number of civil, economic, social and cultural rights for states to follow regarding stateless persons. However, the duties placed on the state to protect and respect the 1954 Convention rights of stateless persons is balanced by the responsibility of the stateless person to abide by the rules and laws of the state in question.

Additionally, a state is obliged to grant certain rights to a stateless person if they are officially under the jurisdiction of that state and another set of rights if they are “lawfully in” a state party, such as the right to self-employment (Article 18), freedom of movement within a state (Article 26) and protection against expulsion (Article 31). Regarding international law, one of the most important rights for stateless persons is in Article 12(4) of the ICCPR which allows

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<sup>53</sup> Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons, pg 5.

someone to enter their “own country” of nationality if their citizenship has been stripped away in violation of international law.<sup>54</sup>

The Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons recommends that persons waiting for the results of their statelessness determination procedure are to be granted the rights of an individual “lawfully in” the territory, or the same rights as an individual who is seeking asylum. Additionally, the handbook suggests that granting individuals the right to earn a wage may reduce the burden on the state to provide resources and even provides the individual a sense of dignity and self-sufficiency.<sup>55</sup> This is an approach that is employed in Jordan where some persons who are not registered with UNHCR continue to work from their homes or under the radar to provide for themselves and rely less on humanitarian aid. One solution to avoid a heavier burden on the state is to grant persons a residence permit valid for two years at the minimum. Additionally, there is a possibility of an individual to acquire or re-acquire nationality within another state if there is a rapid and simple process available. This is not a viable option if the nationality acquisition process only offered transitional status to stateless persons because this process is unreliable and has no guaranteed outcome. Also, this process requires the individual to be present in the state in question which is not always a feasible requirement.

Finally, many individuals who qualify as a stateless person under the 1954 Convention definition, live in states that are not signatories of this treaty. However, as mentioned above, the recommendations laid out in the Convention are applicable to any state that is addressing statelessness in their territories. States that are not signatories should take special note of the practice to provide identity papers and travel documents to stateless persons which is a practice

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<sup>54</sup> Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons, pg 57.

<sup>55</sup> Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons, pg 47.

that has been adopted by a number of non-contracting states. Streamlining practices like the above will decrease the burden on individual states to address statelessness on their own. Importantly, all states must comply with their obligations under international human rights law, such as protection against arbitrary detention and the right to enter and remain in one's own country (Article 9(1) and Article 12(4) of the ICCPR).<sup>56</sup> *De facto* statelessness is not included in the protection of the 1954 Convention, but it is recommended that they receive temporary permission or else residence permit to remain inside the host country in order to ensure a level of stability. Where there are obstacles to securing either of those permits, this handbook recommends humanitarian considerations support local solutions through the process of nationalization as the best response. This concludes the summary and analysis of the recommendations presented in the Handbook on the Protection of Stateless Persons published by UNHCR.

## **Case Studies:**

### Jordan

Jordan is a constitutional monarchy ruled by King Abdullah II bin Hussein. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has a population of 10 million as of 2019 and is bordered by Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Palestine. Jordan, as we know it today, came into existence after WWII and gained its independence from Britain in 1946. The capital of Jordan is Amman, with a population of about 4 million people. Roughly 96% of Jordanians are Arabs but other minority

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<sup>56</sup> Handbook on Protection of Stateless Persons, pg 15.

groups exist. About 82% of Jordan's population is Muslim with 93% being Sunni Muslims and only 6% being Christian.<sup>57</sup>

On 15 June there were 666,590 Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR Jordan. Unaccompanied or separated children number 3,235. Single parent homes number 19,908. The largest influx of refugees entering Jordan happened in 2013 reaching 665,097 and since then has continually dwindled each year reaching only 12,898 in 2018.<sup>58</sup>

There are 89 refugees per 1,000 inhabitants in Jordan. The government of Jordan has taken concrete steps to provide refugees assistance. Nearly 50,000 refugees have active work permits. The U.S. supports UNHCR's Jordan operations with 274.9 million dollars as of June 2018. UNHCR can process up to 4,000 refugees a day at the largest urban registration centre in the MENA region, which is UNHCR's Anmar Hmoud Registration Centre in Amman.<sup>59</sup>

In 2016, the U.S Department of State published a human rights report on Jordan. Jordan's main human rights problems are citizens' inability to choose their ultimate governing authority, restrictions on the freedom of expression, and the mistreatment and allegations of torture by security and government officials. Additionally, other human rights violations include the prevention of the entrance of refugees, deportation of asylum seekers, and stripping of Palestinian refugees from Syria of their Jordanian citizenship. There are also reports of legal and

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<sup>57</sup> "Jordan Population 2019." Jordan Population 2019.

<sup>58</sup> "Operational Portal." Document - *UNHCR Jordan External Statistical Report on UNHCR Registered Syrians 15 June 2018*.

<sup>59</sup> "Operational Portal." Document - *UNHCR Jordan External Statistical Report on UNHCR Registered Syrians 15 June 2018*.



societal discrimination against women which adds to the legal complications of nationality only being passed down through the birth father and gender discrimination within nationality law.<sup>60</sup>

Section d. “Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees, and Stateless Persons” relates to Jordan’s human rights abuses as reported in 2016. Jordan’s law guarantees the freedom of movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, however some restrictions apply. UNHCR and UNRWA reported that Jordan’s government cooperated for the most part in providing assistance and protection to refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and internally displaced persons. Regarding, freedom of in-country movement, Jordan subjected asylum seekers to forced return to Syria following a suicide attack at the Jordanian/Syrian border where seven members of the government’s armed guards were killed. Authorities cleared and transferred around 1,500 asylum seekers who were in the process of registering at the Azraq camp inside Jordan.

As of November 9th, 2016 UNHCR with the cooperation of the Jordanian government, reported over 655,000 registered Syrian refugees, this does not include the number of unregistered Syrian refugees. As noted earlier, Jordan is not a signatory of the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol, however, the Jordanian government respects UNHCR’s eligibility determination procedures and official recommendations seen in their handbook and as written in international humanitarian law. In fact, in 2014, the Jordanian government renewed a treaty they signed with UNHCR in 1998 regarding the official definition of a refugee, agreeing to respect the principle of non-refoulement, and providing up to a year for

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<sup>60</sup> Jordan 2016 Human Rights Report. State Department, 2016, Jordan 2016 Human Rights Report.

a refugee to stay in country while UNHCR seeks a durable solution. In 2014, the government decreed that all Syrian refugees must obtain an official residency card distributed by the Ministry of Interior. Additionally, each refugee over the age of 12 must obtain a health certificate which cost five JD (the equivalent of seven dollars).<sup>61</sup>

Another human rights violation committed by the government was banning a number of Syrian refugees from entering the country to seek asylum. The government only allowed for minimal entry across its northeastern desert border. Official estimates reported that between 70,000 and 100,000 Syrians camped at the northeast desert border during 2016. Jordan allowed minimal humanitarian aid to be distributed to the Syrians along this border. UNHCR recommended the government to allow the sick, elderly, children, and pregnant women be admitted into refugee camps as asylum seekers for access to food, water, and medical care.

Additionally, the government was found guilty of refoulement, forcefully returning Syrian refugees and stateless persons to Syria. Some of those forced to return were women, children, war-injured, as well as persons with disabilities. The Jordanian government returned some Syrian refugees that were found to be working illegally, not presenting refugee documentation, and living in informal tented settlements to areas of Syria such as Dara's Province that was not safe for return. Some areas of Dara's Province were controlled in 2016 by Da'esh (the transliterated Arabic word for ISIS).<sup>62</sup>

Regarding employment, the Jordanian government did allow Syrian refugees to work in the formal labor market and provided 50,000 opportunities for Syrian refugees during 2016.

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<sup>61</sup> Jordan 2016 Human Rights Report, pg 21.

<sup>62</sup> Jordan 2016 Human Rights Report, pg 22.

Work permits were released through the Ministry of Labor and between February and November 2016, around 32,000 permits were granted to refugees. The government even waived fees for applying for work permits and extended amnesties for Syrians working illegally in order to combat statelessness and regularize their status. The downside to this process, were legal gaps between what the government promised and what the Ministry of Labor delivered. For example, offices of the Ministry of Labor had difficulty implementing their procedures outside the city limits of the capital, Amman. Also, many refugees did not know the procedure to request a work permit and feared applying for a work permit would bar them from receiving humanitarian aid from UNHCR. For this reason, thousands of Syrian refugees continued to work in the informal market economy even though a government commissioned report stated that 26% of Syrian refugees were active in the national labor market.<sup>63</sup> An estimated 3,000 Syrians continued to work in the unofficial labor market and there were reports of the government detaining and deporting Syrian refugees for working without authorization.

Regarding access to basic services, the Jordanian government transports newly arriving Syrian refugees to Raba's Sarhan reception center. Here, refugees register through the official UNHCR process and receive food, water and medical attention either through ICRC or UNHCR. However, stateless persons who fear official registration through the Jordanian government may opt out of this process by crossing the border illegally. Authorities have limited entry for Syrians accessing asylum along the northeastern border since 2014. It was also reported that these Syrian refugees were denied aid from humanitarian organizations while the crossing was closed and

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<sup>63</sup> Jordan 2016 Human Rights Report, pg 4.

authorities did not permit the stranded persons to enter Jordan or register as refugees. This situation adds to the statelessness problem in Jordan.<sup>64</sup>

The most prominent manifestation of human rights abuses in Jordan adding to the number of stateless persons is gender discriminatory nationality laws. Under Jordanian law, only the father can transmit nationality to their child. Women do not have the legal right. This law manifests itself in many ways. For example, if a female citizen gets married to a male noncitizen, their children will receive the nationality of their father and will be denied the right to attend public school and other government services in Jordan. They will not hold legal residency and they must reapply every year with no guarantee of it being granted. Since 2014, if children of Jordanian mothers and noncitizen fathers apply and obtain certain criteria they should be able to gain access to free primary and secondary education as well as subsidized health care. Also, they will be granted the right to own property, invest, and obtain a Jordanian driver's license.<sup>65</sup> According to a report from the Minister of Interior, this ruling affected 88,983 families and 355,932 children where the father was a noncitizen. However, children in this position must first apply for and obtain an identification card through the Civil Status Bureau and currently reside in Jordan with their mother having lived in Jordan for at least five years.<sup>66</sup>

This issue applies to Syrian refugee parents unable to present an official marriage certificate or other form of nationality document when their child is born inside Jordan. Often identification documents are destroyed or lost when refugees flee their homeland or are confiscated by government authorities at the border. Single mother refugee households have

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<sup>64</sup> Jordan 2016 Human Rights Report, pg 23.

<sup>65</sup> Jordan 2016 Human Rights Report, pg 24.

<sup>66</sup> Jordan 2016 Human Rights Report, pg 24.

difficulty certifying the nationality of their children when the father is not present or has died. This increases the probability of statelessness among refugees because if there isn't a father present with Syrian citizenship and the mother's nationality does not legally transmit to her child, then the child is left without a nationality. The child is not Syrian since their Syrian father is not present and they are not Jordanian since they are born in a refugee camp. It doesn't matter that their mother is Syrian, or even Jordanian (in the rare occurrence that the mother was originally Jordanian before moving to Syria where she fled with her family after the conflict and her husband was not able to flee with her). In either case, the nationality of the mother is a mute point since she is not able to transmit nationality to her child. Government authorities have set up civil registry departments and sharia courts in the Azraq and Za'atri camps (the two largest refugee camps in Jordan) to help refugees register at birth and decrease their vulnerability to becoming stateless.<sup>67</sup>

Interestingly, gender discriminatory nationality law also affect other groups of children besides refugee children. The government did not provide birth certificates to every child born in Jordan during the fiscal year. Children of unmarried women, orphans, interfaith marriages, illegitimate or abandoned children are not eligible for nationality under Jordanian law. If a refugee child qualifies under either of the groups above then it is more difficult for them to have access to public education, health services, or to receive other forms of identification documentation.

This concludes the section on human rights abuses facing Syrian refugees and stateless persons in Jordan as reported by the United States Department of State annual report.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Jordan 2016 Human Rights Report, pg 35.

<sup>68</sup> Jordan 2016 Human Rights Report, pg 43.

## Discriminatory Nationality Laws in Jordan and Their Effect on Mixed Refugee Families

A report from the journal of the Program on Law and Human Development at the University of Notre Dame Law School published that Jordan hosts an estimated 2 million refugees with the highest percentage of refugees in the world per capita. The gender discrimination within the nationality laws makes it especially difficult for women lead refugee households since women can not pass on their nationality to their children. Approximately 65,000 Jordanian women and about 500,000 children are affected by these laws. Some scholars argue that Jordan's nationality laws are contrary to its obligations due to treaties and international law.<sup>69</sup>

This section of the paper explores the history of the gender discrimination in Jordan's nationality laws as well as how the law disproportionately affects refugee families. Jordanian law regarding citizenship is outlined in Law No. 6 of 1954 on Nationality and additionally in its 1987 amendment. Specifically, article 3 states “(3) Any person whose father holds Jordanian nationality; (4) Any person born in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan of a mother holding Jordanian nationality and of a father of unknown nationality or of a Stateless father or whose filiation is not established; (5) Any person born in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan of unknown parents, as a founding in the Kingdom shall be considered born in the Kingdom pending evidence to the contrary.”<sup>70</sup>

Also, Article 9 states “the children of Jordanian men shall be Jordanian wherever they are born.” It is interesting that the provision is provided for citizenship to be granted through the mother if she is Jordanian and the father is stateless if and only if the child is born within the

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<sup>69</sup> Emanuel, James. *Discriminatory Nationality Laws in Jordan and Their Effect*, 2012.

<sup>70</sup> Emanuel, James. Pg 1.

country. It must be that the father is officially a non-Jordanian citizen in order for the law to exclude women from passing down their nationality to their children. This analysis implies that the law is more concerned with the nationality standing of the father being specifically a non-Jordanian citizen instead of the fact that he is a Jordanian citizen. In addition, Jordanian women are not allowed to pass on their nationality to the non-native spouses.<sup>71</sup>

The gender discrimination within Jordan's nationality laws are harmful to women for multiple reasons. Not only are they unable to pass down their citizenship to their children but women are treated as second class citizens. A Jordanian's rights as a citizen are determined by whether they are a male or a female rather than whether they are a Jordanian or not. The question remains, where does the basis for Jordan's laws come from? Some scholars argue that patrilineal nationality is mandated by Sharia law. One Islamic Sheikh quoted Sura 33, verse 5, from the Quran that refers to children of Muslim parents and says "call them by the names of their father: that is (more just) in the sight of God".

However, other prominent scholars and sheikhs argue this verse does not support patrilineal nationality. These scholars interpret verses in the Quran like this one as referring to "Nassah" which is the relationship between the father and child and not the mother, rather than referring to nationality laws. In fact, these scholars go further to argue that the concept of "Nassh" is already accounted for in Jordanian law elsewhere where it states a child must take the surname of their father and not their mother. In the end, there is not a strong argument that gender discrimination in Jordan's nationality laws is supported or confirmed by the Quran. Interestingly, the history and origin of Jordanian nationality law stems more from the British

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<sup>71</sup> Emanuel, James. Pg 4.

Nationality Law than it does from Sharia Law. The effects of Imperialism had a larger effect on nationality laws in Jordan than the official religion of the country.<sup>72</sup>

Also, politicians argue granting nationality to non-native husbands and the children of Jordanian women and non-Jordanian men might ultimately decrease national resources. However, commentators suggest the opposite is true. If Jordanian women were allowed to pass on their nationality to their children than it is estimated the country would receive an economic benefit. Families who pass on their nationality to their children in this manner already live in Jordan and increased citizenship results in greater human capital, increased tax revenue, investment, and consumption. Experts say allowing family members citizenship when the mother is a Jordanian citizen would increase the national net gain of 10 million JD to Jordan's economy. Scholars have termed the issue regarding Jordanian's law with gender discrimination as "masculinity-based nationalism" (34 Amawi, *supra* note 12, at 164).<sup>73</sup>

Discriminatory laws such as this one greatly affect Jordan whose population is one third foreign-born. Husbands and children of Jordanian women do not have the right to remain in the Kingdom and even though gaining a residency permit is *possible* it is a very difficult and rarely a successful process and is especially difficult for refugee families. If a child or non-citizen spouse does not have their birth and marriage certificates and identity papers prior to applying for a residency permit, they are extremely vulnerable to becoming stateless. Jordan's residency laws are outlined by Chapter 3 of Law No. 24 of 1973 on Residence and Foreigners' Affairs (Law No. 24 of 1973 on Residence and Foreigners' Affairs (Jordan), at chap. 3 (Jan. 1, 1973).

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<sup>72</sup> Emanuel, James. Pg 5.

<sup>73</sup> Emanuel, James. Pg 8.



Even if a residency permit is granted, it is only good for one year and must be renewed by the Ministry of Labor directorate. As outlined by Law No. 29 of 1973 on Residence and Foreigners' Affairs: anyone eligible to apply for a residency permit must: (a) have an employment contract with a Jordanian employer, along with certification from the Ministry of Labor that his activities are not in competition with those of Jordanians, or (b) have certification of secure and lawful source of income, or (c) have the intention and approval to invest in the Jordanian economy, or (d) unique skills for which there is no equivalent in the Kingdom.<sup>74</sup>

Refugees and stateless persons face an impossible challenge because to obtain a work permit they must have a residency permit, but to obtain a residency permit they must have a work permit. Lack of both permits results in a person becoming either a refugee, or if they don't have a birth or marriage certificate, becoming a stateless person.<sup>75</sup>

Next, the thesis will explore what the Jordanian government is doing to address statelessness in their country. Recently, the government decided to rectificate the status campaign which aims to formalize the legal status of unregistered Syrian refugees living in urban areas. This campaign also allows refugees to obtain service cards from the Ministry of Interior for access to basic services such as education and health care. To register, refugees can access help desks at UNHCR's mobile registration sites in Irbid, Mafraq, and Amman. Over 5,299 cases and 18,357 individuals have received rectified status through UNHCR. This campaign lasted until September 28th, 2018.

After the London Conference of 2016 regarding the Syrian refugee crisis, the Jordanian government decided to waive the fees of obtaining a work permit. This decision largely helped

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<sup>74</sup> Emanuel, James. Pg 10.

<sup>75</sup> Emanuel, James. Pg 13.

Syrian refugees in Jordan because occupations became more likely to hire foreign workers and the documentation requirements were simplified. Over 49,000 refugees currently have work permits and over 100,000 work permits have been renewed since 2016.<sup>76</sup>

However, difficulties continue and over 100,000 Syrians remain unable to register due to document deficiencies or other obstacles. Conflict at the border, a portion of the Syrian-Jordanian border, continued to rise throughout 2017 after the border officially closed in June 2016. Another complicating factor related to the protection of refugees is the continued presence of terrorist groups in the Levant. For example, according to the 2016 State Department Country Reports on Terrorism, ISIS and al Qaeda and affiliates have a presence in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon. While Hizballah and Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps both have a presence in Syria and Lebanon. These terrorist groups are responsible for numerous attacks on civilians throughout the past year and pose a threat to NGOs and IOs delivering aid to refugees. This issue also marks a key difference between the refugee response in Jordan and Lebanon.<sup>77</sup>

PRM accounts for this by partnering with UNRWA to put controls in place and conduct in-person monitoring visits to mitigate the risk of terrorist financing. There is a much lower risk of diversion in Jordan compared to Lebanon. This is one of the differences between the two host countries that makes it harder for Lebanon to organize its response to the refugee crisis. It costs Lebanon time and resources dedicated to mitigating the terrorist risk in its country that it otherwise could focus on its refugee response. Jordan has the advantage on this issue.

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<sup>76</sup> Jordan Fact Sheet. Geneva, 2018, pp. 1–4, *Human Rights Report by the U.S. Department of State*.

<sup>77</sup> Jayaraman, Shiva. "International Terrorism and Statelessness: Revoking the Citizenship of ISIL Foreign Fighters." *Chicago Journal of International Law*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2016, pp. 178-216.

In the U.S. State Department's goals for the fiscal year 2018, they advocated for the Jordanian government to allow UN agencies greater access to deliver humanitarian aid. This includes refugees inside the country as well as in the berm region. They also advocated the Jordanian government complete refugee security screening for those admitted in 2016 to the Azraq Camp to enable free movement within the camp boundaries. This is an important policy point because the longer the Jordanian government delays security screening the longer a refugee is at risk for statelessness. To fully complete the security screening in Jordan, a refugee must obtain a Ministry of Interior card. This documentation allows refugees access to humanitarian aid and basic health care inside the host country.<sup>78</sup>

Currently, PRM funded and oversaw IOM-operated Resettlement Support Centers in Amman, Jordan and a sub-office of the ICMC-operated Resettlement Support Center in Beirut, Lebanon. PRM also runs a program to identify and implement in-person monitoring visits to host countries where the political and military security conditions are too unstable for PRM officials to visit. In Lebanon, PRM does this by hiring Refugee Specialists that are local citizens to visit program sites and conduct in-person monitoring visits on behalf of the U.S. government. Since FY 2012, PRM has contributed \$3.74 billion to the Syrian humanitarian crisis. In FY 2017, PRM gave \$179.5 million to Syria, \$160.5 million to Jordan, and \$275.5 million to Lebanon.<sup>79</sup>

Another organization that is key to expanding livelihood, health, and food access to refugees and those vulnerable to statelessness is USAID. In its recent report, PRM recognized the ways both agencies should prioritize working together to support relief and development in Jordan and Lebanon. PRM is dedicated to fulfilling its role in the Syrian refugee crisis. In FY

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<sup>78</sup> U.S. State Department. *Syria Organizational and Regional Policy Paper*. FY 2018.

<sup>79</sup> U.S. State Department. *Syria Organizational and Regional Policy Paper*. FY 2018.

2017, USAID/OFDA contributed \$290.3 million to the humanitarian response in Syria.

USAID/FFP contributed \$401.8 million for humanitarian aid for Syrian refugees inside host countries. As well as supporting both the Jordanian and Lebanese governments burden the cost of the refugee population affecting the countries' education and water systems.<sup>80</sup>

### Lebanon

Lebanon is a parliamentary republic since the establishment of the 1943 National Pact that appointed a Maronite Christian president and Shia speaker of the Chamber of Deputies and a Sunni prime minister. Lebanon hosts over 856,546 refugees. Interestingly, Lebanon does not allow UNHCR to report on the number of stateless persons in country and therefore there are zero persons reported under UNHCR's statelessness mandate. In addition, Lebanon is not a signatory of either the Convention of 1954 or Convention of 1960 regarding statelessness and thus stateless persons in their country are not included in UNHCR's statelessness mandate. However, UNHCR has been an active partner with the government of Lebanon until June of 2018 when Lebanon froze UNHCR's staff residency applications. This was a reaction against accusations of UNHCR staff "spreading fear" and discouraging Syrian refugees from returning home.<sup>81</sup>

Although there are not qualitative statistics regarding the number of Syrian refugees in Jordan, UNHCR estimates there are over 50,000 children born stateless in the Middle Eastern region. Even though a large number of those children are eligible for Syrian citizenship, the Syrian government is not able to grant them citizenship and so they are left vulnerable to the

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<sup>80</sup> U.S. State Department, pg 4.

<sup>81</sup> Dawn Chatty, Nisrine Mansour & Nasser Yassin (2013) Statelessness and Tribal Identity on Lebanon's Eastern Borders, *Mediterranean Politics*, 18:3, 411-426.

laws regarding statelessness in their host country.<sup>82</sup> UNHCR found that nearly 78% of new births reported since arriving in Lebanon were not registered with the local authorities.<sup>83</sup>

In 2016, the U.S Department of State published a human rights report on Lebanon. The most prominent human right abuses in Lebanon regard arbitrary or unlawful killings, allegations of torture by security forces, violation of citizens' privacy rights, restrictions on freedoms of speech, press and assembly. In addition, there are laws in place that criminalize forms of political expression in contrast to what international organizations have recommended.<sup>84</sup> There is also a lack of governmental investigation into the abuse against refugees and the limits on political participation in elections due to deeply rooted corruption in the government.

The country has also suffered a great deal both economically and politically due to the Syrian conflict. The civil war has created a massive refugee crisis that strained Lebanon's infrastructure and ability to provide social services. The crisis has also increased terrorist activity in the region. Despite efforts by UN security forces and the Lebanese government, Hezbollah maintains significant influence in the region. The law does allow for the freedom of internal movement, emigration, foreign travel, and repatriation and the government has placed many additional limitations on the rights of refugees. As of June 30th, 2017, UNHCR registered more than 1 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Multiple reports from NGO's and UNHCR speak of sexual harassment and exploitation of refugees by the government or landlords or employers. A

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<sup>82</sup> "UNHCR Lebanon Statelessness Update." UNHCR, 2014, pg 8.

<sup>83</sup> "UNHCR Lebanon Statelessness Update." pg 10.

<sup>84</sup> Ending Statelessness Within 10 Years. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2014.

few examples of exploitation include working long hours, debt bondage, and forcing families into early marriage or non-consensual sex or rape for their daughters.<sup>85</sup>

As determined by the report of the U.S. Department of State, the Lebanese government lacks the capacity to provide adequate protection for refugees. Refugees self reported instances of abuse by political parties or gangs. This type of abuse would take the form of LAF (Lebanese Armed Forces) raids on settlements where harassment and vandalism of personal property ensued. The Lebanese authorities required all Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR to pay of 300,000 Lebanese pounds (\$200 U.S. dollars) to annually renewal their registration if they were 15 years old or above in order to remain in the country legally. This legislation was only valid until February of 2017. For refugees arriving January 2015 or later, the legislation said that they can only enter the country if the refugee has a Lebanese sponsor.<sup>86</sup>

The financial stipulation and sponsor requirement is extremely difficult for a Syrian refugee to obtain. The DGS (General Security Directorate), the Lebanese government intelligence agency decided to waive the fees for residency renewal for all refugees who registered with UNHCR before 2015. However, this law did not include stateless persons, or unregistered refugees as well as those who had a Lebanese sponsorship, property ownership, or tourism in 2015-2016. Unfortunately, many DGS offices did not implement this change effectively and very few refugees benefited from this ruling due to inconsistent local practices. However, Syrian refugees have a legal right to residency through nationwide implementation of

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<sup>85</sup> Ending Statelessness Within 10 Years. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2014.

<sup>86</sup> Ending Statelessness Within 10 Years, pg 13.

the residency fee waiver. PRM continues to advocate for expansion of the waiver to include all refugees to ensure safe and dignified asylum with documentation being a key focus.<sup>87</sup>

The issue of implementing a residency fee waiver continues to be a contributor to increasing statelessness in Lebanon. The United Nations' conducted a household assessment of over 100,000 Syrian refugee families, around 85% of them had at least one member who did not have legal status due to problems renewing their residency. The majority of Syrian refugees face challenges because of the unorganized implementation of residency renewal processes. When a refugee is unable to renew their residency they have limited freedom of movement in country due to the possibility of arrests at checkpoints. Authorities fail to release detainees on time and there have been reports of detainees being forced to pay a fine before release. This phenomenon especially affects adult men who are at greater risk of being arrested.<sup>88</sup>

The government of Lebanon has remained mostly committed to its agreement of non-refoulement. Although, it has been guilty of detaining Syrian refugees without legal cause broke their commitment to not force the return of refugees to their homeland according to UNHCR's records. Even though the country does not legally allow for the granting of asylum or refugee status, Lebanon has hosted an estimated 1.5 million refugees registered with UNHCR.

As of 2015, the Lebanese government demanded UNHCR to stop registering Syrian refugees. Some scholars suggest that the government did not want to continue registering refugees in an effort to dissuade other refugees fleeing to their country. It is unclear if this effort was successful since there is no way to officially count the number of refugees currently living in Lebanon since UNHCR was instructed to end their registration procedures. Estimates project that

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<sup>87</sup> Ending Statelessness Within 10 Years, pg 7.

<sup>88</sup> Ending Statelessness Within 10 Years, pg 19.

18% of Syrian refugees live in temporary tent settlements with no plumbing, dirt floors and limited heating options. Another major issue facing refugees both registered and unregistered living in Lebanon is debt. About 90% of Syrian refugees borrow money in order to pay for their basic living needs such as health care, food, and rent. Also, there is an insecure environment including armed actors, aid seizure, diversion, fraud and corruption due to terrorist groups interfering with PRM's efforts to deliver aid.<sup>89</sup>

In 2015, the Lebanese government created new regulations to ban all Syrian refugees from entering the country unless they qualified for "humanitarian exceptions". Such exceptions, as defined by the Ministry of Social Affairs, were reviewed on a case by case situation and included separated children, persons with disabilities, the sick, and elderly. Additionally, UNHCR reported that there was a number of evictions that disproportionately affected Syrian refugees after the event of security incidents. The LAF carried out evictions that affected the informal refugee settlements which were closely located to important supply routes or to LAF headquarters. These events also increased the risk of statelessness affecting refugees who have no place to stay and no formal settlement to live in. For example, on March 2017, an estimated 3,175 individuals were relocated from their homes in the Riyak area and the Zahle municipality and were forced to find new informal settlements to live in.<sup>90</sup>

Currently, Lebanese authorities allow Syrian refugees to obtain a residency permit in which they agree to abide by Lebanese rules and authorities. This permit allows Syrian refugees to work in agriculture, construction and cleaning. This is another example of a disadvantage

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<sup>89</sup> "Lebanon Freezes UNHCR Staff Residency Applications in Row over..." Reuters, Thomson Reuters, 8 June 2018.

<sup>90</sup> Lebanon Fact Sheet. Geneva, 2017. *Human Rights Report by the U.S. Department of State*.



facing stateless persons. In order to receive even a basic form of work permit, a refugee must obtain a residency permit. But to receive a residency permit, a refugee must be able to provide identity papers and register as an official refugee in country. This process is not an option for any persons who don't have a birth certificate or other form of identity documentation.<sup>91</sup>

Regarding educational opportunities, the Lebanese Ministry of Education and the Higher Education provided 195,000 spots in public schools for non-citizen children in the 2016-2017 school year. Even though this created a positive opportunity for stateless children, the ruling was also negative because the Ministry of Education banned informal education assistance to refugee children. NGO's in Lebanon offered to provide educational opportunities for Syrian refugee children and stateless children to help students catch up when they were not performing at grade level. However, the Ministry of Education ruled that no informal educational opportunities be offered unless it was directly linked to the public school system. This law limited the number of refugees and stateless children access to education and many NGO's had to terminate educational programs they had in place.<sup>92</sup>

Due to a lack of education, many refugee and stateless children in Lebanon were forced to live and work on the street. Many Syrian refugee families rely on their children to make money for the family because the adults are limited in their freedom of movement and livelihood opportunities. Because of this, refugee and stateless children are at greater risk of child labor and exploitation since they have more freedom of movement than their parents who don't have a residency permit.

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<sup>91</sup> Lebanon Fact Sheet, pg 21.

<sup>92</sup> Lebanon Fact Sheet, pg 23.

In Lebanon, the law rules that citizenship can only be derived from the father. This means that any child born of a mother who is a Lebanese citizen and a father who is not a Lebanese citizen, the child also will not be a Lebanese citizen. This gender discrimination in the law is especially affecting female lead refugee households. Another problem is that many children born to a Lebanese father did not register for citizenship at birth due to a lack of understanding the rules and regulations of nationality law. If a family does not register their child for a birth certificate within the first year of their life, the process for legitimizing the birth is long and costs a great deal. This process is often a large deterrent for families, even families with Lebanese fathers, to register their children.<sup>93</sup> These children become stateless whether they are born to refugee families or not. In either case, statelessness is a hereditary circumstance that stateless parents pass on to their children. There are however, no official statistics on the number of stateless persons since they are unregistered. This concludes the section on human rights abuses facing Syrian refugees and stateless persons in Lebanon as reported by the United States Department of State annual report.<sup>94</sup>

Next, the thesis will explore what the government is doing to address statelessness issues in their nation. In Lebanon, UNHCR is barred from registering new Syrian refugees and so many refugees are at risk of arrest and harassment since they lack legal residency. In 2017, political tensions and public anger regarding the number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon has grown. Even the Hezbollah political coalition called for an agreement with the Assad government to create a pathway of safe return for refugees back into Syria. In spite of the growing pressures and tensions, Lebanon has maintained its policy of non-refoulement for Syrians. Prime Minister Saad

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<sup>93</sup> Lebanon Fact Sheet, pg 29.

<sup>94</sup> Lebanon Fact Sheet, pg 38.

Hariri resigned suddenly in November 2017 following tensions with Saudi Arabia. This has created a political stir that threatens the current policy toward non-refoulement.<sup>95</sup>

On June 8th, 2018 Reuters reported that Lebanon's Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil required a freeze of all residency applications for UNHCR staff stationed in their country. The reasoning given was that Lebanon's government suspected UNHCR staff of spreading rumors that it was not safe to return to Syria. This upset local authorities who believed UNHCR was discouraging Syrian refugees from returning home even though Lebanon deemed them otherwise. Lebanon hosts over one million Syrian refugees and Lebanon is feeling strained by the drain of public services and growing economic hardship. Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil and other officials are calling for refugees to return to "secure areas" in Syria instead of remaining in refugee camps in Lebanon.

However, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees denies these claims and says that its staff has not discouraged refugees from returning home if the refugee expressed a genuine desire. However, UNHCR remains committed to a policy of non-refoulement and will never support a nation who encourages or forces refugees to return home against their will if the conditions are not safe according to the UN's standard and assessment. Tensions have remained high since summer of 2018 between Lebanon and UNHCR.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> U.S. State Department. *Syria Organizational and Regional Policy Paper*. FY 2018.

<sup>96</sup> "Lebanon Freezes UNHCR Staff Residency Applications in Row over..." Reuters, Thomson Reuters, 8 June 2018.

## Conclusions:

The refugee issue is too big for one country to solve, instead the solution must be a group effort. Attempting to resolve the refugee crisis in isolation of the regional security environment is a waste of resources and increases frustration between states. The millions of refugees fleeing Syria don't affect countries individually. The attempt to solve the refugee crisis one country at a time leads to the relocation of violence and instability to its neighbors instead of a long term solution.

The role of the United Nations is to write reports, provide recommendations, and pass resolutions that encourage European states to work together to address the refugee crisis. The UN advocates for fair and effective pathways for asylum seekers across the Middle East and for local governments to enhance opportunities and support local integration of refugees.

Economic down turns and political strains are felt across the continent because of the geographical proximity and interconnectedness of EU member states and the Middle East. Working together allows countries to find durable solutions with the financial and social support of the international community. For example, the amount of U.S. aid to Europe through the UN increased from 487 million dollars in 2014 to 878 million dollars in 2016 when the Syrian refugee crisis began.<sup>97</sup>

Also, in 2016 all 193 UN member states signed the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants agreeing to protect those forced to flee and supporting host countries as a shared international responsibility. Since this declaration, the High Commissioner for Refugees has

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<sup>97</sup> "Europe." *Europe | Global Focus*, UNHCR, 2018, [reporting.unhcr.org/node/31](https://reporting.unhcr.org/node/31).

drafted and presented the Global Compact on Refugees and Migration to the General Assembly. These compacts aim to ease pressures on host countries, enhance refugees self-reliance, expand third country solutions, and support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity (UNHCR Declaration, 2016). The UN drafts recommendations and passes legally binding resolutions that aim to streamline registration and aid distribution for refugees. The UN can also act as a mediator during treaty negotiations between states decreasing the chance of conflict of interest.

Even though its drafting in 2017 was a step forward for countries working together to solve the refugee crisis, it had to be approved by the 193 members of the UN General Assembly by December 2018. The language in the document is non-binding yet countries like the U.S. are hesitate to commit too much aid or support for European refugee policy. One of the greatest challenges in resolving statelessness is the lack of numerical data on the issue. This is due to the nature of what statelessness entails, mainly unregistered persons. There is no method for counting or recording the number of people not registered and not a part of any governmental or international organizational database.<sup>98</sup>

Another challenge facing UNHCR and Jordan when implementing its goal to end statelessness is reforming nationality laws which is a tedious and difficult practice. Also, strong political and social views against the stateless population are difficult to overcome. Many social groups in Jordan resent the stateless population because they believe non-refugee stateless persons are draining national resources. This complaint especially affects non-refugee stateless

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<sup>98</sup> Ending Statelessness Within 10 Years. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2014.

persons because if they are not registered refugees then they are not counted in the national refugee count and therefore not included in how much international aid is allocated to Jordan as a host nation.

## **Recommendations:**

### Solutions:

The best solution to eradicate statelessness is to increase number of countries offering birthright citizenship. During the keynote address at the Global Forum on Statelessness in September 2014, Nils Muiznieks, the Commissioner for Human Rights at the Council of Europe stated “The automat granting of citizenship at birth to children who would otherwise be stateless, is probably the best tool to eradicate statelessness at birth and prevent its transmission from generation to generation”. In fact, article 15(1) of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights states that everyone has the right to citizenship. The UN’s #IBelong campaign to end statelessness by 2024 encourages Jordan and Lebanon to abide by the Universal Declaration on Human Rights by offering citizenship to children born within the state’s territory and who otherwise are at risk of statelessness. This requirement is a version of jus soli.

Another prominent solution is for the UN to provide their own type of citizenship to stateless persons. This citizenship would resemble something like an E.U. citizenship and would help protect stateless children by providing them documentation and basic rights under the United Nations. Applicable rights for stateless persons include the right to non-discrimination on the basis of nationality and the right to move and reside freely. Problems to this solution include the reluctance of states to provide protection for stateless persons or enforce refugees’ rights.

Also, due to continual conflict in the Middle East it is hard to determine who and where refugees are at risk of stateless and overcome their fear of authorities or lack of resources that prohibit them from registering

It is also important to make sure the father's name is included on a child's birth registration form. This is problematic because estimates say 25% of Syrian refugee households are fatherless either because the father died, went missing, or was separated from their family. Without the physical presence of the father there is a lack of proof of nationality. To address this problem, UNHCR urges host countries to simplify the registration process at birth so that children can be regarded as Syrian citizens even if the father is physically not present.<sup>99</sup>

There are two prominent UN treaties that address the issue of statelessness. The first is the 1961 United Nations Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and the 1954 Convention. Even though most European states have ratified both conventions, the majority have not adopted statelessness determination procedures and do not legally recognize statelessness status. As long as this attitude remains, there will not be a probable solution to ending statelessness even if every country becomes a signatory of the UN treaty. In addition, the Arab Charter on Human Rights provides every individual a right to a nationality and rules states must provide protection in accordance to their domestic laws to allow a mother to pass on her nationality to her child. Countries such as Jordan, Libya, UAE, and Saudi Arabia provide legal exceptions to children whose father has died to gain citizenship through their mother's nationality, however these exceptions are not always upheld in practice.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Albarazi, Zahra. "The Stateless Syrians - Refworld.org." *Report of the Middle East and North Africa Nationality and Statelessness Research Project 7*, 2017.

<sup>100</sup> Albarazi, Zahra. "The Stateless Syrians - Refworld.org." *Report of the Middle East and North Africa Nationality and Statelessness Research Project 7*, 2017,

### Challenges:

One of the major challenges to decreasing statelessness in Jordan is the gender discriminatory laws that forbid women to pass on their nationality to their children or foreign husband. These laws make it nearly impossible for non-citizens to apply for residence or work permits and thus makes it difficult for a non-citizen to survive within the Kingdom. This issue disproportionately affects refugee families who have a spouse or child without a marriage or birth certificate and is vulnerable to statelessness. My recommendation includes ensuring that Jordan amend its nationality to allow women to pass on their nationality to their children.

The international community should apply diplomatic pressure for Jordan to abide by its treaty obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and ICCPR which forbid any signatory country to discriminate with its nationality law based on gender. Specifically, there is a violation between Jordan's law and the ICCPR's regarding articles 2(1) and 3 of the Covenant in conjunction with article 17(1). This change in law would affect an estimated 10% of the nation's population who is negatively affected by gender discriminatory nationality law.<sup>101</sup>

Additionally, I believe the international community should leverage their international monetary aid to Jordan by earmarking it for refugees. Many donor countries are contributing to developing infrastructure in Jordan and Syria in both health and education.<sup>102</sup>

This recommendation is in line with Action 3 of the 10 Action points of UNHCR's Global Action Plan to eradicate statelessness by 2024. Both the U.S. and the European Union are

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<sup>101</sup> Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

<sup>102</sup> Chatelard, Geraldine. "Iraqi Refugees and IDPs: From Humanitarian Intervention to Durable Solutions". Report from the Foundation pour la Recherche Stratégique, 2011.



the largest international aid donors to Jordan and therefore have the most influence on pressuring the Kingdom to comply by international treaties that support human rights and women's rights. The U.S. State Department Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration should pressure Jordan to change Law No. 6 of 1954 and provide equal rights for women regarding nationality laws. If Jordan refuses to comply by this request the U.S. State Department could threaten to decrease the amount of funding earmarked for refugee relief. As one of the nation's most supportive donors, the U.S. has a considerable amount of diplomatic leverage regarding the Kingdom's political actions.<sup>103</sup>

#### **Future Questions:**

1. What will it take for the government of Lebanon to allow UNHCR to restart operations in country?
2. Which interest groups have the most power and leverage to lobby for legislative reform in both Lebanon and Jordan regarding gender discriminatory nationality laws?
3. How effective are the international treaties that recommend countries create their own action plan to eradicate statelessness in their country. Are any countries currently carrying out their national action plan?
4. Who is taking more steps to eradicate statelessness in their nation, Jordan or Lebanon?
5. Are there any case studies from the past that would be helpful to refer to when searching for durable solutions in Jordan and Lebanon?

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<sup>103</sup> Global Action Plan to End Statelessness: 2014-24. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2014.

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## Organizations with Useful Resources Moving Forward

ICRC

UNHCR

Refugee One

World Relief

Norwegian Refugee Council

Legal Agenda

## Mise Links

<http://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/>

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

<http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/protection/statelessness/546217229/special-report-ending-statelessness-10-years.html>

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## **Biography:**

Jillian Pflederer was born in Chicago, Illinois on November 8th, 1996 and moved to Albania with her family where she spent the first eight years of her life. She grew up with an interest in how people around the world interact with each other and how globalization affects her generation. She moved back to the U.S. and decided to attend the University of Texas at Austin to major in Plan II Honors and join the Arabic Flagship Program. In college, she studied abroad in Morocco, Oman, and Jordan while learning about the unique dialects and diverse cultures in the Middle East. She spent a semester living in Washington D.C. as an Archer Fellow interning at the U.S. State Department in the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration. She is graduating this May and returning to Chicago to begin her career in public service and invest in the community where she grew up.