

Universal Periodic Review

All country summary and recommendations

related to the right to a
nationality and the rights of
stateless persons

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This document highlights the statelessness related challenges in States that will be reviewed during the 47th Session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR): **Albania, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Congo (Democratic Republic), Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominica, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Korea (DPR), Nicaragua, Norway, Portugal and Qatar**. The issues raised in this summary include gender and racial discrimination in nationality laws, arbitrary deprivation of nationality and the child's right to a nationality. All recommending States are urged to draw on this document when formulating recommendations to States under review. In addition to this summary, the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion (ISI) and its partners made joint submissions on human rights and statelessness issues in [Brunei Darussalam](#), [Nicaragua](#) and [Qatar](#).

Albania

Albania is a party to both the 1954 Convention relating to the status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. Only limited data on the statelessness population in Albania is available.¹ Despite initiatives undertaken by the Albanian authorities to address birth and civil registration, access to such registration is still a barrier, particularly affecting the Roma community. Without birth registration, Roma people face challenges in obtaining other documents from the civil registry office, putting them at risk of statelessness. In June 2023, the Albanian Government established its statelessness determination procedure (SDP). This is a positive step towards the protection of stateless people in Albania as it fills a gap in the legislation. However, the implementation of such instruction needs to be monitored in practice, as uncertainties remain as to how it will operate.²

Proposed Recommendations:

1. Address structural discrimination against Roma in their access to documentation, enjoyment of their right to a nationality, and all other human rights;
2. Ensure that all civil registration and documentation procedures, including birth registration, are universally accessible by simplifying complex procedures and eliminating barriers related to cost, time, distance and bureaucracy;
3. Monitor and strengthen the implementation of the new statelessness determination procedure (SDP) towards the protection of stateless people in the country.

Bhutan

Bhutan is not a party to either the 1954 Convention relating to the status of Stateless Persons or the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. No official data is available on stateless people in the country. Bhutan lacks legal safeguards against childhood statelessness because Bhutan's citizenship laws do not guarantee Bhutanese nationality to foundings and children born to stateless parents. Late birth registration and the lack of parents' marriage documents can also leave children at risk of statelessness. In the late 1980s, members of the ethnic communities known as 'Lhotshampas' living in the south of the country were labelled as non-citizens through a census count, stripping them of their Bhutanese citizenship and rendering them stateless. The most recent estimates of the remaining population of Lhotshampas still living in Bhutan puts the population at 250,000.³

Proposed Recommendations:

1. Ensure that all children who are born on the territory are granted with birth registration and the right to a Bhutanese nationality;
2. Take specific measures to grant Bhutanese citizenship and access to basic rights to ethnic communities such as the Lhotshampas;
3. Accede to both the 1954 and 1961 Conventions and take all steps necessary to implement them.

Brunei Darussalam

Brunei Darussalam is not a party to either the 1954 Convention relating to the status of Stateless Persons or the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. According to UNCHR, there were 20,863 stateless people in Brunei at the end of 2023,⁴ totalling approximately 5% of its total population.⁵ However, the estimated figures are significantly larger.⁶ Statelessness is perpetuated in Brunei through racial and gender discriminatory provisions in Brunei's Nationality Act. Citizenship is automatically conferred to children born to male citizens, but not to those of female citizens. Brunei also keeps its reservation to Article 9 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

¹ European Network on Statelessness, 'Statelessness Index: Albania', available at: <https://index.statelessness.eu/country/albania>.

² Ibid.

³ Nationality for All, 'Statelessness Encyclopaedia Asia Pacific (SEAP)', 2024, available at: <https://nationalityforall.org/resource/seap/>.

⁴ UNHCR, 'Global Trends 2023. Statelessness', available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends>.

⁵ Department of Economic Planning and Statistics, 'Population', available at: <https://deps.mofe.gov.bn/SitePages/Population.aspx>.

⁶ US Department of State, 'Brunei 2021: Human Rights Report', available at: https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/313615_BRUNEI-2021-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf.

(CEDAW) on granting women equal rights with men.⁷ Requirements for naturalisation are also extremely onerous. In addition, UNHCR reports that race functions as *“the primary criterion by which nationality is acquired by operation of law, contributing to the creation of conditions for statelessness in Brunei.”*⁸

Proposed Recommendations:

1. Amend the Brunei Nationality Act to ensure that women have equal nationality rights as men, in particular, in relation to the acquisition and retention of their own nationality, and the conferral of their nationality on their children and non-national spouses;
2. Reform all citizenship provisions in law that are racially discriminatory in nature to uphold non-discrimination with retroactive effect;
3. Withdraw the reservation to Article 9, paragraph 2 of CEDAW to grant women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children and ensure full compliance with the Article.

Congo (Democratic Republic)

Congo (Democratic Republic) is not a party to either the 1954 Convention relating to the status of Stateless Persons or the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. No official data is available on stateless people in the country. In 2004, a new law on nationality was adopted to clarify who is and is not a citizen of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Although such law provides the possibility to recognise several populations as DRC's citizens, it still relies on ethnicity as a basis on which nationality is granted.⁹ Next to that, during the 3rd UPR Cycle, multiple countries recommended DRC to facilitate birth registration in the country.¹⁰ In the same year, the country pledged to *“reform the system of civil registry and production of statistics on vital events, take initiatives such as identifying cases of statelessness and persons at risk of statelessness, institutionalize the collection of data on stateless persons and persons at risk, and prevent statelessness through the establishment of national mechanisms, including civil registration/ issuance of national identity documents.”*¹¹

Proposed Recommendations:

1. Review the 2004 Law N.04/024 on Congolese nationality to remove provisions that base nationality on membership of particular ethnicities, and instead create objective criteria for determining citizenship;
2. Continue its efforts to facilitate universal birth registration, including by raising public awareness and facilitating and expediting access to civil registry offices;
3. Accede to both the 1954 and 1961 Conventions and take all steps necessary to implement them.

Costa Rica

Costa Rica is a party to both the 1954 Convention relating to the status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. According to UNHCR, there were 327 stateless people at the end of 2023.¹² In early 2024, the Government approved a bill aimed at revoking Costa Rican nationality from naturalized citizens convicted of drug trafficking and money laundering in the first debate. The bill also prevents the deprivation of nationality being suspended through a precautionary measure by a court.¹³ Further, in 2020, the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) recommended Costa Rica to *“implement a strategy to ensure that all indigenous, Afrodescendent and migrant children, as well as children with disabilities, are registered at birth and provided with personal identification documents.”*¹⁴

Proposed Recommendations:

1. Amend nationality laws to ensure that nobody can be deprived of their nationality in Costa Rica;
2. Continue its efforts to ensure that all children born in its territory are immediately registered and receive identity documents.

⁷ Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights, Equality Now and others, 'Submission to the Human Rights Council at the 47th Session of the Universal Periodic Review: Brunei', 2024, available at: https://files.institutesi.org/UPR47_Brunei.pdf.

⁸ Nationality for All, 'Statelessness Encyclopaedia Asia Pacific (SEAP)', 2024, available at: <https://nationalityforall.org/resource/seap/>.

⁹ Citizenship Rights in Africa Initiative, 'Democratic Republic of Congo', available at: <https://citizenshiprights4africa.org/region/democratic-republic-of-congo/>.

¹⁰ Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, 'Database on Statelessness and Human Rights', available at: [https://database.institutesi.org/?field_country_target_id\[\]=154&field_un_body_target_id=All&field_reporting_cycle_target_id_1=All&field_recommendation_accepted_no_value=All&field_specific_special_procedure_target_id_1=All&field_reference_to_statelessness_value=All](https://database.institutesi.org/?field_country_target_id[]=154&field_un_body_target_id=All&field_reporting_cycle_target_id_1=All&field_recommendation_accepted_no_value=All&field_specific_special_procedure_target_id_1=All&field_reference_to_statelessness_value=All).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² UNHCR, 'Global Trends 2023. Statelessness', available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends>.

¹³ Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, 'Monthly Bulletin: February-March 2024', available at: https://www.institutesi.org/resources/feb_march_2024_bulletin.

¹⁴ Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, 'Database on Statelessness and Human Rights', available at: [https://database.institutesi.org/?field_country_target_id\[\]=228&field_un_body_target_id=All&field_reporting_cycle_target_id_1=All&field_recommendation_accepted_no_value=All&field_specific_special_procedure_target_id_1=All&field_reference_to_statelessness_value=All](https://database.institutesi.org/?field_country_target_id[]=228&field_un_body_target_id=All&field_reporting_cycle_target_id_1=All&field_recommendation_accepted_no_value=All&field_specific_special_procedure_target_id_1=All&field_reference_to_statelessness_value=All).

Côte d'Ivoire

Côte d'Ivoire is a party to both the 1954 Convention relating to the status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. According to UNHCR, there were 930,978 stateless people at the end of 2023.¹⁵ Statelessness mainly affects the descendants of migrants to Côte d'Ivoire as a result of gaps in the implementation of the nationality law adopted after independence and subsequent amendments to the law in 1972 that restricted access to nationality. The nationality law does not provide for access to nationality based on birth in the territory, even for children who would otherwise be stateless or for foundlings – although a circular issued in 2019 does provide for the possibility to issue certificates of nationality to children of unknown parents.¹⁶ Côte d'Ivoire became the first country in Africa to introduce a statelessness determination procedure in 2020, and the country has made pledges to ensure a route to nationality for stateless children and to remove remaining gender discrimination from its nationality law. However, it is still unclear how the implementation phase has been with regard to such provisions.

Proposed Recommendations:

1. Establish specific procedures to assess the nationality/statelessness status of historical migrants and of others at risk of statelessness, and to grant citizenship to people who would otherwise be stateless;
2. Provide access to nationality to all children born in the country, including those children who would otherwise be stateless and foundlings;
3. Provide public information on the pledges that Côte d'Ivoire made on nationality for all stateless children and gender equality in its nationality laws.

Dominica

Dominica is not a party to either the 1954 Convention relating to the status of Stateless Persons or the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. No official data is available on stateless people in the country. It is unclear how statelessness is treated in the country. In 2020, the Human Rights Committee (CCPR) recommended the country to collect and publish data on stateless people and accede the Statelessness Conventions.¹⁷

Proposed Recommendations:

1. Conduct and make publicly available, mapping studies and data collection on statelessness in the country;
2. Accede to both the 1954 and 1961 Conventions and take all steps necessary to implement them.

Equatorial Guinea

Equatorial Guinea is not a party to either the 1954 Convention relating to the status of Stateless Persons or the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. No official data is available on stateless people in the country. Its nationality legislation is regulated by its Law No.3/2011, which removed gender discrimination and simplified existing provisions surrounding acquisition of nationality. However, it increased the period of residence necessary for naturalisation from 10 to 40 years, and does not mention statelessness.¹⁸

Proposed Recommendations:

1. Conduct and make publicly available, mapping studies and data collection on nationality, statelessness and birth registration;
2. Create pathways to nationality and facilitated naturalisation for stateless persons on the territory of Equatorial Guinea;
3. Accede to both the 1954 and 1961 Conventions and take all steps necessary to implement them.

Ethiopia

Ethiopia is not a party to either the 1954 Convention relating to the status of Stateless Persons or the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. Although no official data is available on stateless people in the country, there is not data indicating that there are more than 2.5 million forcibly displaced and stateless persons in the country.¹⁹ In 2019, Ethiopia

¹⁵ UNHCR, 'Global Trends 2023. Statelessness', available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends>.

¹⁶ Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, 'Côte d'Ivoire', available at: <https://www.statelessnesshub.org/country/cote-divoire>; Citizenship Rights in Africa Initiative, 'Côte d'Ivoire', available at: <https://citizenshiprightsafrika.org/region/cote-divoire/>.

¹⁷ Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, 'Database on Statelessness and Human Rights', available at: [https://database.institutesi.org/?field_country_target_id\[\]=230&field_un_body_target_id=All&field_reporting_cycle_target_id_1=All&field_recommendation_accepted_no_value=All&field_specific_special_procedure_target_id_1=All&field_reference_to_statelessness_value=All](https://database.institutesi.org/?field_country_target_id[]=230&field_un_body_target_id=All&field_reporting_cycle_target_id_1=All&field_recommendation_accepted_no_value=All&field_specific_special_procedure_target_id_1=All&field_reference_to_statelessness_value=All).

¹⁸ Citizenship Rights in Africa Initiative, 'Equatorial Guinea', available at: <https://citizenshiprightsafrika.org/region/equatorial-guinea/>.

¹⁹ UNHCR, 'Ethiopia – Data on forcibly displaced populations and stateless persons', available at: <https://data.humdata.org/dataset/unhcr-population-data-for-eth>.

pledged to simplify and improve access to birth registration procedures. However, these remain challenges with the legal framework and its implementation, including the inability to register births due to the lack of pre-natal care²⁰ and the requirement for both parents to present themselves as declarants for birth registration, despite provision in their law indicating otherwise.²¹ Furthermore, acquisition of another nationality results in the automatic loss of Ethiopian nationality.²² The implementation of this provision has caused problems for Ethiopians of Eritrean descent, who failed to prove that they were not Eritrean citizens and are hence at risk of statelessness. In addition to that, Ethiopian laws do not protect the child born in the territory of parents who themselves are stateless, or of unknown nationality, or who cannot transmit nationality to their children. Ethiopian law provides nationality to an “infant” found abandoned in Ethiopia, and the upper age of an “infant” is not defined.²³

Proposed recommendations:

1. Continue efforts to ensure the issuance of birth certificates and other civil registration to all persons born in Ethiopia, including those living in remote and rural areas;
2. Ensure that the nationality law complies with the Constitution in providing for the right to nationality for all and ensuring that no person is stateless or rendered at risk of statelessness as a result of revocation of nationality;
3. Ensure that no child remains stateless on Ethiopian territory;
4. Accede to both the 1954 and 1961 Conventions and take all steps necessary to implement them.

Korea (DPR)

The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea) is not a party to either the 1954 Convention relating to the status of Stateless Persons or the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. No official data is available on stateless people in the country. North Korean defectors, trafficked people and their children are at risk of statelessness. A birth certificate is administered upon birth registration. For North Korean women living outside the territory, administrative barriers make it extremely difficult to register the birth of their children. When a North Korean woman has a child in China with a Chinese citizen, often the child’s birth registration is refused until the mother is deported back to North Korea.

Proposed Recommendations:

1. Create pathways to nationality and facilitate them to North Korean defectors, trafficked people and their children who are at risk of statelessness;
2. Review its bilateral agreements to ensure that children born to women who are nationals of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea but residing outside its territory have access to birth registration and nationality without the children or their mothers being forcibly returned to the DPRK’s territory;
3. Accede to both the 1954 and 1961 Conventions and take all steps necessary to implement them.

Nicaragua

Nicaragua is a party to both the 1954 Convention relating to the status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. No official data is available on stateless people in the country. There has been a recent huge upsurge in the practice of nationality deprivation by the Nicaraguan Government. Other crackdowns on dissent have been well documented, and include arbitrary arrests, deprivation of liberty, weakening of civic space, attacks on religious freedom, among many other human rights abuses. On 10 September 2024, the Nicaraguan Supreme Court stripped 135 political prisoners of their nationality.²⁴ In total, more than 450 political opponents of the Ortega regime have now had their nationality revoked by Nicaragua since February 2023.²⁵ This specific use of deprivation of nationality as a mechanism of political reprisal is extremely concerning.²⁶

Proposed Recommendations:

²⁰ UNHCR Ethiopia, ‘Challenges in Access to Birth Registration for Refugees and Asylum-Seekers in Ethiopia’, 2024, available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/111528>.

²¹ Child Identity Protection, ‘Children’s right to identity in Ethiopia: 99th pre-session’, 2024, available at: <https://www.child-identity.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/CRC-factsheet-ETHIOPIA-ENG.pdf>.

²² EUI, RSCAS and Global CIT, ‘Report on Citizenship Law: Ethiopia April 2020’, https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/66827/RSC_GLOBALCIT_CR_2020_9.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

²³ UNHCR, ‘Citizenship and statelessness in the Horn of Africa’, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/reference/research/unhcr/2021/en/123981>; See also Child Identity Protection, ‘Children’s right to identity in Ethiopia: 99th pre-session’, 2024, available at: <https://www.child-identity.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/CRC-factsheet-ETHIOPIA-ENG.pdf>.

²⁴ Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, ‘More than 450 political prisoners stripped of their nationality by Nicaragua in the last two years’, 2024, available at: <https://www.institutesi.org/news/450-political-prisoners-stripped-of-nationality-by-nicaragua-in-last-2-years>.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion and others, ‘Submission to the Human Rights Council at the 47th Session of the Universal Periodic Review: Nicaragua’, 2024, available at: https://files.institutesi.org/UPR47_Nicaragua.pdf.

1. Repeal Law No. 1145 of 2023 and Law No. 1190 of 2024 enabling loss of nationality to be imposed on persons declared “traitors to the homeland”;
2. Urge the Government of Nicaragua to immediately restore the Nicaraguan nationality of all people who have been deprived of it and prevent further deprivations;
3. Take steps to ensure that everyone who has been arbitrarily deprived of their Nicaraguan nationality and their families, can fully enjoy their human rights on a non-discriminatory and equal basis, including the right to nationality, identity, and all economic, social and cultural rights.

Norway

Norway is a party to both the 1954 Convention relating to the status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. According to UNHCR, there were 2,046 stateless people at the end of 2023.²⁷ The framework for statelessness in the country is lacking as there is no clear legal definition of stateless persons in the law and there are insufficient safeguards to prevent statelessness among all children born in the country. Currently, no specific procedure to determine statelessness exists (SDP).²⁸

Proposed recommendations:

1. Provide a specific definition of statelessness in national laws, in line with international standards;
2. Establish a clear and predictable statelessness determination procedure that guarantees basic procedural rights and safeguards;
3. Ensure birth registration of all children, including those born to refugee and asylum-seeking women.

Portugal

Portugal is a party to both the 1954 Convention relating to the status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. According to UNHCR, there were 31 stateless people at the end of 2023.²⁹ In 2023, a new law entered into force that introduces the definition of a stateless person and recognises that people who are considered stateless are entitled to a travel document and statelessness status. Despite such progress, further legislation must be approved to establish a statelessness determination procedure (SDP), safeguards for applicants, the rights granted upon recognition of statelessness status, and the authority responsible for assessing claims.³⁰

Proposed Recommendations:

1. Establish a clear and predictable statelessness determination procedure that guarantees basic procedural rights and safeguards;
2. Provide information on the new law that entered into force which added the definition on a stateless person and that stateless people are entitled to travel documents and a statelessness status.

Qatar

Qatar is not a party to either the 1954 Convention relating to the status of Stateless Persons or the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. According to UNHCR, there were 1,200 stateless people at the end of 2023.³¹ The Nationality Act No. 38 of 2005 does not allow Qatari women to automatically confer nationality on their children under any circumstance, whereas Qatari men confer nationality upon their children automatically regardless of whether they are born abroad or within the country. Qatar’s nationality laws also discriminate against the conferral of nationality upon non-citizen spouses.³² The Bidoon are mostly descendants of nomadic groups in the Arabian Peninsula, who are stateless as they were not registered as citizens at the time of Qatar’s state-formation, and children born to the community have systematically been denied the right to a nationality.³³ In May 2024, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) recommended Qatar to “*adopt all measures necessary, including by amending the Nationality Act, to prevent the arbitrary deprivation of nationality and to ensure that all persons who have been deprived of their nationality are provided with redress and effective legal remedies, including judicial appeals procedures.*”³⁴

²⁷ UNHCR, ‘Global Trends 2023. Statelessness’, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends>.

²⁸ European Network on Statelessness, ‘Statelessness Index: Norway’, available at: <https://index.statelessness.eu/country/norway>.

²⁹ UNHCR, ‘Global Trends 2023. Statelessness’, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends>.

³⁰ European Network on Statelessness, ‘Statelessness Index: Portugal’, available at: <https://index.statelessness.eu/country/portugal>.

³¹ UNHCR, ‘Global Trends 2023. Statelessness’, available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends>.

³² Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights, Equality Now and the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, ‘Submission to the Human Rights Council at the 47th Session of the Universal Periodic Review: Qatar’, 2024, available at: https://files.institutesi.org/UPR47_Qatar.pdf.

³³ SALAM for Democracy and Human Rights and the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, “‘thing But a Pen and a Word’: Voices from the Stateless Bidoon Community in Kuwait during the COVID-19 Pandemic”, 2023, available at: <https://salam-dhr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/ISI-SALAMDHR-Impact-of-Covid-on-Stateless-Report-English.pdf>.

³⁴ Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, ‘Concluding Observations on the combined twenty-second and twenty-third periodic reports of Qatar’, 23 May 2024, CERD/C/QAT/CO/22-23.

Proposed Recommendations:

1. Amend the Nationality Act, Law No. 38/2005 to ensure that women have equal nationality rights as men, in particular, in relation to the acquisition and retention of their own nationality, and the conferral of their nationality on their children and non-national spouses;
2. Take all necessary steps to protect the human rights, including the right to nationality for all stateless people in Qatar such as the Bidoon;
3. Take all the necessary steps to prevent arbitrary deprivation of nationality and ensure that everyone who has been arbitrarily deprived of their nationality and their families, can fully enjoy their human rights on a non-discriminatory and equal basis;
4. Accede to both the 1954 and 1961 Conventions and take all steps necessary to implement them.