



European
Network on
Statelessness

“Everyone has the right to a nationality”

OVER 50 CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS CALL ON EU MEMBER STATES TO FOLLOW THROUGH ON THEIR PROMISE TO PROTECT STATELESS PERSONS LIVING IN EUROPE

Brussels - 14 October 2014

Today the European Network on Statelessness (ENS) which represents over fifty civil society organisations from across Europe will hand over a petition to members of the European Parliament calling on European leaders to protect stateless persons across Europe by ratifying the UN Statelessness Convention and committing to set up a system of safeguards and a regularisation procedure.

The petition coincides with the 60th anniversary of the 1954 UN Statelessness Convention, and is part of a wider campaign bringing together a broad spectrum of actors mounting pressure on the European Union to fulfil its pledge made in 2012 that all Member States would accede to the 1954 Statelessness Convention.

As part of its campaign, ENS has gathered together in a new report testimonies from stateless migrants across the continent. These too long unheard voices speak powerfully to the human impact that statelessness has on people living in Europe. This report will be formally launched in the European Parliament on 14 October.

“For too long Europe has allowed stateless individuals to exist as “legal ghosts” exposed to human rights abuses and with no recourse to justice. Now is the time to resolve this issue once and for all”, said Chris Nash, Director of the European Network on Statelessness. “Stateless individuals often face years of uncertainty, destitution and repeated, lengthy immigration detention. Yet the solution is a relatively simple one. Ratifying conventions is an essential first step, which most EU states have already taken, but must be followed by the introduction of identification and regularisation procedures which are critical to helping stateless persons re-build their lives.”

Jean Lambert, Green MEP from the UK who is hosting the event at the European Parliament said: “Stateless people live outside the margins of our society and are denied the opportunity to contribute as citizens. They urgently need our help and today civil society groups have made it known that Europe needs to act. I will be meeting my Parliamentary colleagues from across the political spectrum to make sure we address this and resolve the issue by putting into place safeguards that will protect these vulnerable people.”

NOTES TO EDITORS

1.) “[Protecting Stateless Persons in Europe](#)” event hosted by Jean Lambert MEP will take place at the Members salon, European Parliament (14 October, 18.30-20.30). The programme will include short film and multimedia pieces, including by the photographer Greg Constantine, and will seek to shed

light on this historically forgotten issue which afflicts millions across the globe and over 600,000 in Europe alone.

2.) The [European Network on Statelessness](#) (ENS) is a network of non-governmental organisations, academic initiatives, and individual experts committed to address statelessness in Europe. Based in London, ENS is a coordinating body and expert resource for organisations across Europe who work with or come into contact with stateless persons. It currently has 53 member organisations in over 30 European countries.

3.) The UN Refugee Agency has estimated that there are over 12 million stateless persons worldwide. Some 600,000, at least, live in Europe. Yet statelessness remains a relatively hidden and little understood issue. With both government and civil society organisations often unaware of the problem, many stateless persons find themselves stuck in the margins of society without respect for their basic human rights.

4.) The petition calling on European leaders to act on statelessness was launched on 28 May 2014 via the ENS website and calls for:

- a) All European states to accede to the 1954 Statelessness Convention by the end of 2014.
- b) All European states without a functioning statelessness determination procedure to make a clear commitment during 2014 to take necessary steps to introduce one by the end of 2016.

5.) As part of its campaign to protect stateless persons in Europe, the European Network on Statelessness (ENS) has gathered testimonies from stateless migrants across the continent. ENS hopes that their voices can help persuade European leaders to prioritise as a matter of urgency, the strengthening of protection for stateless persons. The publication called *Still Stateless, Still Suffering - Why Europe Must Act Now to Protect Stateless Persons* will be launched on the 14 October in European Parliament

http://www.statelessness.eu/sites/www.statelessness.eu/files/ENS_Still_Stateless_Still_Suffering_online%20version_2.pdf

For media enquiries please call Chris Nash on 0207 354 9631 or email chris.nash@statelessness.eu