

ENDING STATELESSNESS IN CENTRAL ASIA



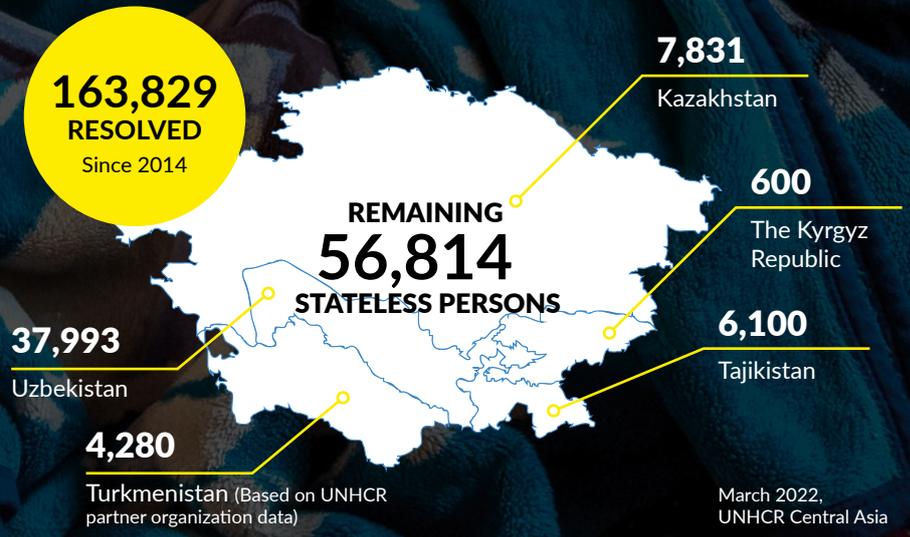
Without a nationality, stateless people have difficulty accessing basic rights.
© UNHCR / Frederic Noy



A stateless person is someone who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law.

Without a nationality, stateless people often have difficulty accessing basic rights such as education, healthcare, employment and freedom of movement. They are unable to register marriage, or even the birth of their children.

UNHCR works with governments, parliaments, authorities, and civil society across Central Asia to identify and protect people without a nationality, resolve existing situations of statelessness, and prevent new cases from emerging.



March 2022,
UNHCR Central Asia

TIMELINE OF ACTIVITIES TO PREVENT AND REDUCE STATELESSNESS IN CENTRAL ASIA

2011 – 2015

- Turkmenistan grants citizenship to 5,000 stateless persons and accedes to the two Statelessness Conventions
- Kyrgyzstan grants citizenship to 10,000 refugees
- Tajikistan enacts a new Law on Citizenship that includes statelessness prevention provisions
- UNHCR launches a “Seeds for Solutions” programme in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to identify, register and legally assist stateless persons and those at risk of statelessness, and support them to acquire identity documents

2016

- UNHCR and Turkmenistan hold a Central Asia regional conference on accession to the Statelessness Conventions

2017

- Kazakhstan amends legislation to ease requirements for naturalization of stateless persons

2018

- UNHCR and Kazakhstan hold a Central Asia regional conference on “Leaving No One Behind at Birth” to review the remaining actions needed to ensure the right to legal identity for all, and prevention of childhood statelessness
- Uzbekistan amends legislation to ensure universal birth registration

2019

- Kyrgyzstan assists over 13,700 stateless persons to confirm or acquire a nationality, becoming the first country in the world to resolve all known stateless cases on its territory
- UNHCR and Kazakhstan hold the second Central Asia regional conference on “Leaving No One Behind at Birth” to review progress made and explore further actions needed
- The High-Level Segment on Statelessness marks the mid-point of the 10-year #IBelong campaign. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan make 12 pledges to address statelessness within 5 years
- Kazakhstan amends the Marriage (Matrimony) and Family Code to ensure registration of all children born in the country, irrespective of the documentation status of their parents
- Tajikistan endorses an Amnesty Law to enable former USSR nationals irregularly residing in the country – many in stateless-like situations – to regularize their stay, paving the way for naturalization

2020

- Uzbekistan implements a new provision in the Citizenship Law to provide eligibility to citizenship for some 50,000 stateless persons
- Turkmenistan applies a new law on Civil Status Acts to ensure registration of all children born in the country, including those with undocumented parents
- Kazakhstan adopts Statelessness Determination Procedures and launches a nationwide campaign to identify and document persons with undetermined nationality, in partnership with UNHCR and civil society

2021

- Turkmenistan grants citizenship to 2,657 stateless persons
- Uzbekistan confirms or grants nationality to 33,000 stateless persons
- UNHCR and Turkmenistan hold a Central Asia regional conference on statelessness eradication to exchange good models and develop strategies to address remaining gaps towards accession to the 1954 and 1961 Conventions
- Kazakhstan extends the nationwide statelessness identification and documentation campaign, identifying 7,300 persons with undetermined nationality, of whom 4,130 are subsequently documented as citizens of Kazakhstan and more than 1,900 as Stateless.



Stateless for 20 years, a filmmaker becomes an Uzbek citizen at last.
© UNHCR/Elyor Nemat

STATELESS PEOPLE IN CENTRAL ASIA

For over a decade Central Asian States, supported by UNHCR, have made significant progress in reducing and preventing statelessness on their territories.

As of December 2021, around 56,800 people were known to be stateless across Central Asia. With stateless people continuously identified, the true number is believed to be higher.

A majority of stateless people in Central Asia are ex-citizens of the former Soviet Union who have not yet acquired or confirmed citizenship of the independent States. Others are born stateless or became stateless due to gaps in nationality laws, international migration, and mixed marriages.

In Central Asia, UNHCR serves:

- **Stateless persons:** individuals recognized and documented by the State as being without any nationality; and
- **Persons with undetermined nationality:** individuals who do not have proof that they possess any nationality, and have links to more than one State, or are perceived and treated by the authorities in the State of residence as possessing such links.

2022 PLAN

With only two years left of the #IBelong campaign, in 2022 UNHCR and partners will continue supporting the efforts of Central Asian States to accede to the Statelessness Conventions, develop and strengthen dedicated statelessness determination procedures, and align national legislation and practices with international standards.

With the upcoming round of national population censuses in Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, UNHCR will provide technical support and expertise in mapping the full extent of statelessness in these States.

In Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, UNHCR legal partners will continue outreach and providing legal counselling and support for confirmation or acquisition of nationality to stateless persons, persons with undetermined nationality and those at risk of statelessness.



Formerly stateless family looks forward to new life opportunities as Tajik citizens.
© UNHCR / Didor Saidulloev

STATELESSNESS IN NUMBERS

Since the start of the #IBelong campaign in 2014 to 31 December 2021

		Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan	Total
Stateless Persons	I	20,499	731	2,222	3,618	111,891	138,961
	R	11,490	258	313	10,271	72,662	94,994
Individuals with undetermined nationality	I	11,465	13,572	52,417	2,333*	NA	79,787
	R	6,7675	13,568	48,245	255		68,835

* Based on partner organization data

IDENTIFIED

RESOLVED

UN CONVENTIONS ON STATELESSNESS

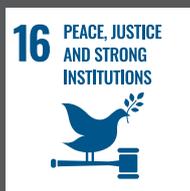
The **1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons** and the **1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness** are the key international conventions addressing statelessness.

Both are complemented by international human rights treaties and provisions relevant to the right to a nationality.

#IBELONG CAMPAIGN TO END STATELESSNESS

Launched in 2014, the global **#IBelong Campaign** aims to end statelessness within ten years.

The campaign is directly linked to target 9 of **Sustainable Development Goal 16**: to provide legal identity for all, including birth registration, by 2030.



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