

Overview

Drawing on our Jewish values and history, and working with host communities, HIAS provides vital services to refugees, asylum seekers, and other forcibly displaced and stateless persons around the world and advocates for their fundamental rights so they can rebuild their lives.

Stateless people experience many of the same hardships as other refugees or asylum seekers, but they also face distinct barriers. Though UNHCR has estimated that by the end of 2023 there were [approximately 4.4 million stateless people](#) and people with undetermined nationality, it is likely that the number is much higher — possibly closer to 10 million — due to challenges in data collection and the fact that many stateless individuals are either not connected to organizations working on this issue or do not know that they are stateless.

HIAS strives to help end statelessness by leveraging evidence and insights from humanitarian operations on the ground, as well as organizational expertise on displacement.

Europe

HIAS Europe

HIAS Europe is a member of the [Europe Network on Statelessness](#) (ENS). HIAS Europe participates in joint advocacy calling for European countries to step up their efforts to protect stateless refugees and migrants. This advocacy often focuses on legal and policy frameworks that uphold the fundamental rights of stateless people, including the right to a nationality. HIAS Europe supports ENS efforts to ensure stateless people and communities are at the forefront of advocacy.

HIAS Greece

HIAS Greece provides free legal aid to stateless individuals — mainly Palestinians, Kurds, and Bidoon from Kuwait — in relation to their asylum procedure, as Greece does not have an official process for determining if someone is stateless. Stateless asylum seekers in Greece are not properly identified as stateless, and they are often incorrectly registered as nationals of the country of their last residence. HIAS Greece also provides mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services to stateless asylum seekers.

Right to Protection (R2P)

Right to Protection (R2P), a close Ukrainian partner organization of HIAS, provides direct legal assistance to stateless populations, trains local and national level government bodies, and builds the capacity of partner organizations to support individuals without legal documentation.

Africa and the Middle East

HIAS Kenya

Since 2021, HIAS Kenya has been participating in Kenya's national statelessness working group convened by UNHCR. The organization supports national partners and affected communities who advocate to end statelessness in Kenya. HIAS Kenya implements protection activities that support access to legal identity and civil registration documents for all refugees, including birth certificates and marriage certificates. HIAS Kenya raises awareness among government agencies and communities and advocates for the

inclusion of refugees in accessing legal identity documents to reduce their risk of becoming stateless. In collaboration with the national statelessness working group, we continue to support legal reform to prevent statelessness, the resolution of existing statelessness cases, and Kenya's accession to the two statelessness conventions.

HIAS Israel

HIAS Israel operates a comprehensive legal aid program focused on aiding stateless people and those without regular status. This initiative, established in 2014, encompasses various aspects of legal representation. It primarily involves advocating for the rights and recognition of stateless individuals, with a particular focus on those born in Israel to asylum seeker parents from Sudan and Eritrea. These children, due to their parents' unresolved status, are effectively stateless within Israel. Moreover, HIAS Israel extends its support to stateless individuals originating from Western African nations such as Côte d'Ivoire and Gabon, where diplomatic relations with Israel are absent. The organization is dedicated to promoting the registration, legal status, and socio-economic inclusion of undocumented individuals who are essentially stateless, whether they were born in Israel or arrived as minors. Through legal representation, HIAS Israel endeavors to secure the rights and recognition of these marginalized populations within Israel's legal framework.

Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)

HIAS LAC

HIAS LAC works to address nationality and statelessness-related concerns, with a particular focus on countries such as Costa Rica, Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador. HIAS' teams tackle challenges linked to late childbirth registration, civil registry, confirmation of nationality, community awareness raising, and official processes to determine statelessness. HIAS works collaboratively with UN agencies, local authorities, partners, and communities to ensure that asylum seekers who are at risk of statelessness can access legal support and essential documentation.

HIAS Colombia

HIAS Colombia provides information and guidance on access to identity documentation, birth registration, and confirmation of nationality. Additionally, HIAS Colombia offers legal assistance in filing legal actions for access to Colombian identity and nationality and refers cases to UNHCR and other partners for comprehensive support.

HIAS Costa Rica

HIAS Costa Rica provides information, advice, and legal representation in cases where people are at risk of statelessness or people require confirmation of nationality. HIAS Costa Rica also engages in various strategic litigation initiatives with the purpose of fighting legislation that includes discriminatory clauses against refugees and stateless people. Once stateless individuals have received their documents, HIAS Costa Rica provides additional integration support through economic inclusion programs.

HIAS Ecuador

HIAS Ecuador, jointly with UNHCR, identifies children at risk of statelessness and refers them to a special process for determining statelessness, conducted by Ecuadorian authorities. HIAS Ecuador also advocates for children's and adolescents' registration in the Ecuadorian Civil Registry to prevent risk of statelessness. For the same reason, HIAS Ecuador also advocates for the late identity registration of children before the Venezuelan and Colombian consulates in Ecuador.

HIAS Venezuela

HIAS Venezuela supports registration brigades of late or unregistered births, a critical step in providing legal identity for children, in indigenous communities along with UNHCR and UNICEF. Additionally, HIAS staff provide legal counsel to those who are stateless or at risk of statelessness.

North America

The HIAS U.S. Legal team provides potential clients with comprehensive intakes to determine if they are stateless or at risk of becoming stateless. HIAS U.S. provides legal representation to stateless individuals before the immigration court or U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Additionally, HIAS U.S. advocates with congress to set policy that supports the right of stateless individuals to obtain permanent legal status in the United States (e.g., encouraging congress to pass the [Stateless Protection Act](#)). HIAS U.S. previously partnered with [United Stateless](#), a stateless-led national organization focused on building and inspiring community among those affected by statelessness, and advocating for their human rights.