



International Children's Day: Over 30,000 stateless children in Daesh deserve a future

Brussels, Monday 20th November 2017- On this International Day of the Rights of the Child, *Make Mothers Matter (MMM)* and the mothers it represents all over the world **urge the governments of 25 countries where mothers cannot pass their nationality to their children to change their legislation. It is time to end child statelessness by registering all births to ensure equal rights to all children.**

31,000¹ women who were pregnant under Daesh are now mothers to children who find themselves without valid documents and on the brink of statelessness. **The UNHCR reports that already 130,000 persons are stateless in Iraq**, specifying that the most vulnerable are the children of Iraqi mothers and non-national fathers.

Therefore, in accordance with Article 7 of UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on birth registration, **we urge the Iraqi government to register the births of this new generation of stateless children in order eliminate the institutional violence and discrimination.**

The primary cause of statelessness, whereby an individual is not recognized as a citizen by any country, is gender discrimination in nationality laws. Statelessness can occur when children are unable to acquire their parents' nationality, or when a woman loses her nationality due to her gender and marital status. Statelessness results in wide-ranging and significant human rights violations and hardships that can impact individuals and their families for generations. There are an estimated 12 million stateless individuals worldwide.

Ending gender discrimination in nationality laws is critical to eradicating statelessness and is listed as Action #3 in the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' Global Action Plan to End Statelessness by 2024.

For many years, *Make Mothers Matter* has drawn attention to the discrimination against mothers in Lebanon's nationality law, where mothers have been prevented to pass their nationality on to their children if they are married to foreign nationals since 1925. In October 2016, we partnered with our member association AJAD on a project in the Ivory Coast to register more than 100 "Ghost children" from the Songon Region. These children have now received a birth certificate, ensuring their full rights as citizens and safeguarding their access education.

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¹ ([According to the Quilliam Foundation](#))

Notes to Editors - Backgrounder

While a 2006 reform of Iraqi law allows for nationality to be inherited through mothers and fathers, single mothers remain unable to acquire birth certificates for their children because the law forces them to prove the father's identity, an almost impossible feat when fathers are often missing or deceased. Furthermore, children born of Iraqi women outside of the country's official borders, in Daesh-controlled Syria for example, cannot receive Iraqi nationality through their mother.

Nationality laws in 25 countries worldwide prevent mothers from passing their nationality to their children on an equal basis with fathers. Over 50 countries deny female citizens equal rights with male citizens in their ability to acquire, change and retain their nationality, and to confer nationality to non-national spouses. This discrimination results in significant human rights violations and suffering for individuals and families, contributing to a myriad of problems. These laws also contradict international law, including state commitments to a number of international conventions.

Countries that discriminate against mothers in their ability to confer nationality on their children*: *The Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Brunei, Burundi, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kiribati, Kuwait, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Malaysia, Mauritania, Nepal, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Swaziland, Syria, Togo, United Arab Emirates*

Countries that discriminate against unmarried fathers in their ability to confer nationality on their children*: *The Bahamas, Barbados, and Malaysia*

Countries that discriminate in a woman's ability to confer nationality to spouses and/or acquire, change and retain her nationality: *Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Benin, Brunei, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Comoros, Congo (Republic of), Egypt, Guatemala, Guinea, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kiribati, Kuwait, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mauritania, Mauritius, Monaco, Morocco, Nauru, Nepal, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent & Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Somalia, Sudan, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen*



About Make Mothers Matter

Make Mothers Matter (MMM) is an international NGO created in 1947 to raise the awareness of policy makers and public opinion on the contribution of mothers to social, cultural and economic development. MMM brings together and represents a network of 45 organisations from 23 countries around the world. MMM has no political or religious affiliations, and thus transparently voices the concerns of mothers at international level with permanent representatives at the United Nations (with a General Consultative Status) and at the European Union.