

RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY NETWORK ON STATELESSNESS IN THE MENA (RANS MENA)

ISSUE 1 – MAY 2023

[Message from the Chair](#) | [Why RANS MENA](#) | [A Discussion with...](#) | [Featured Publications](#)



RANS MENA and MENA Statelessness Platform Launch in Cairo, 2021

Our annual newsletter highlights the latest activities and research outputs from the Research and Advocacy Network on Statelessness in the Middle East and North Africa (RANS MENA). As the first newsletter, this issue also introduces the RANS MENA and the MENA Statelessness Platform.

The Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI) at the American University of Beirut, in its capacity as the Secretariat of the RANS MENA, is issuing the first newsletter, May 2023.

Members of the RANS MENA Management Board



Message from the RANS MENA Chair – Abdullah Yassen

"There are millions of people today in the MENA region, especially from minorities, who do not have access to nationality; this could come as a surprise, given that the right to citizenship is codified as a human right in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Accessing nationality remains a crucial prerequisite for the effective enjoyment of human rights and accessing institutions that secure these rights. It is regrettable that in the MENA region, there are number of key issues, including lack of exact data on how many stateless persons exist, lack of access to birth registration and civil documentation, protracted crisis and displacement, and existence of gender discrimination in nationality laws. Today, 24 countries around the world do not grant women the right to pass their nationality to their own children, and unfortunately half of that is in the MENA. Besides, only 6 countries in the MENA are party to the 1961 Convention on reduction of statelessness. It is therefore, the objective of this network to address these issues through advocacy and raise awareness on behalf and with those affected communities in order to bring people from different regions to work together in order to have the voice, identify the root causes of the problem, and identify the solutions. This is because individuals' citizenship remains central to his prospects in life, international mobility, and chances to have effective access to protection and basic economic rights."



Abdullah Yassen, Professor and Head of International Relations Office at Erbil Polytechnic University

Why RANS MENA: Brief background on the establishment of the network and the platform



MENA Statelessness Platform Launch in Cairo, 2021, including members of the RANS MENA Management Board: Rami Quwader, Ibrahim Awad, Abdullah Yassen, Yara Mourad, Zahra Al Barazi, Mohamad Farahat

On the occasion of the 2011 war in Syria, the risk of statelessness in the MENA region has been tremendously augmented with millions of Syrian refugees fleeing to neighboring countries. This came in parallel with lack of legal frameworks governing non-citizen persons, including stateless, and lack of factual research on statelessness in most of these countries. In response, IFI at AUB in collaboration with the Boston University International Human Rights Clinic (IHRC) launched the project titled “MENA Research and Advocacy Network on Statelessness”. This project aims to (1) develop a regional network to address statelessness and advocate for its mitigation, (2) conduct legal and factual research in countries of the MENA region, and (3) develop an online platform that brings together knowledge and research on Statelessness in the region.

Accordingly, RANS MENA has been established with seven international and regional organizations forming its Management Board, and the MENA Statelessness Platform has been launched in Cairo, December 2021.

“As the only research center on Migration and Refugee issues in Egypt, the engagement of CMRS in research and advocacy on statelessness represents an important development. The opportunity to host the launching conference of the MENA Statelessness Platform in Cairo in December 2021 offered a chance to bring together stakeholders concerned with statelessness in Egypt and to engage them with stakeholders from other countries of the region. The conference enabled Egyptian stakeholders to exchange knowledge and deepen their understanding of how to research and advocate to prevent statelessness. CMRS values its membership in the platform to raise awareness on statelessness and encourage Egyptian researchers and other relevant stakeholders to engage in the fight against statelessness.”

Maysa Ayoub, Associate Director of the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies (CMRS) at AUC.

MENA Statelessness Platform

The Research and Advocacy Network on Statelessness in the MENA

Was established as a coordinating body and expert resource for organizations and individuals working on aspects of citizenship and nationality, with the aim of promoting the right to nationality across the MENA region. The Network comprises organizations in and of the 22 MENA countries that are members of the League of Arab States.

Vision

To contribute to filling the academic gap in studies on nationality, citizenship and statelessness in the MENA region, and to ensure all Stateless persons in the region have access to justice, protection, and to their fundamental rights.

Mission

To promote and facilitate research and contribute to policy making aimed at combating statelessness in the MENA region.

MENA Statelessness Platform

This platform is the first of its kind in the MENA region. It aims to present stateless people, researchers, experts, activists, NGOs, government officials and journalists with information related to statelessness.

It aims to serve as a hub for organizations and individual experts to work together in hopes of reducing statelessness.

This platform supports the work of the Research and Advocacy Network on Statelessness (RANS) in the MENA Region



MENA STATELESSNESS PLATFORM
المنصة الإقليمية حول انعدام الجنسية في منطقة الشرق الأوسط وشمال إفريقيا


[Home](#)
[About](#)
[Resources](#)
[News](#)
[Regions](#)
[Campaigns](#)
[Contact us](#)
[العربية](#)


A Discussion with...

Highlights from interviews with **Abdullah Yassen**, Professor and Head of the International Relations Office at Erbil Polytechnic University, and **Martin Clutterbuck**, ICLA Regional Advisor at NRC Middle East Regional Office on Statelessness and contemporary challenges to nationality rights and citizenship across countries of the MENA region.



Abdullah Omar Yassen

Underlying factors of Statelessness in the MENA region

- 1.** Exclusionary and discriminatory nationality laws based on gender and paternal lineage in most countries in the MENA region, as well discrimination on the basis of religion, mixed marriages, ethnicity, minority status and political considerations in accessing nationality in some contexts
- 2.** Conflict and displacement, resulting in difficulties proving identity and nationality

- 3.** Strict evidentiary procedures to confirm identity and prove parental lineage
- 4.** Financial and logistical barriers to register births
- 5.** Lack of political will to address statelessness



Martin Clutterbuck

Challenges faced by Stateless persons

- 1.** Lack of civil documentation and identity
- 2.** Lack of access to basic human rights and services including education, healthcare, employment, travel, property, and ownership

- 3.** Exclusion from the public distribution schemes and government subsidies

Priority target areas to alleviate statelessness

- 1.** Ratification of the 1961 Convention on reduction of statelessness
- 2.** Amending nationality laws to remove gender discrimination and ensure that nationality can equally be derived from either father or mother
- 3.** Facilitating access and creating alternative procedures for birth registration and civil documentation
- 4.** Improving data and factual research on statelessness in countries of the MENA region
- 5.** Planning awareness campaigns to sensitize people on statelessness as an existing issue and promote social and cultural acceptance of stateless persons

A Discussion with...

IFI was able to catch up with **Mohamad Saleh**, an expert and consultant on stateless and refugee populations. We asked him about the impact and the success achieved so far by the RANS MENA and MENA Statelessness Platform, particularly that he was a key player during the inauguration of the network and the platform.

"[...] I believe the most important thing that we managed to do is bring people from the region together... from Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt and Tunis, we brought people from civil society, academic institutes and even officials from governments, security agencies, ministries... We brought everyone to the table, and this initiated a new dialogue and started a new conversation, despite some backlashes here or there...

This has created a new momentum for something that was, frankly, forgotten, everyone is talking about structural issues, economic and policy issues, and armed conflicts. No one was talking about stateless people. It was a taboo.

[...] And of course, for sure the studies and the reports that were produced so far contributed to the local and regional knowledge production that hopefully will contribute to the future policy reform efforts. So, it's accumulated steps, we need to continue step by step, [...], I think the success of the funding in this project was starting the movement." -

Mohamad Saleh



Mohamad Saleh

RANS MENA works closely with our partner Professor **Susan Akram**, Clinical Professor and Director of the International Human Rights Clinic at Boston University School of Law. Prof Akram leads the legal and factual research on Statelessness in many countries in the MENA region.



Susan Akram

"In 2018, with OSF funding, the Boston University International Human Rights Clinic (IHRC) launched a multi-year project to research, conduct conferences and workshops, establish an online platform and publish reports on statelessness across the region—and RANS MENA was born. Each year, the IHRC with RANS MENA partners, is building on the five countries researched and reported on so far (Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, Tunisia), with reports to be published and workshops being held on Morocco and Algeria this year. The launching of the Network in Cairo in 2021, and more recently, the establishing of the Platform based at IFI and the Steering Committee, has brought all the past years of work together to tackle the causes and consequences of statelessness in the region. We hope that with this strong collaborative engagement, we can gather momentum to reduce the growing, inter-generational problem of statelessness across the MENA." – Prof Susan Akram

Featured Publications



The Campaign to end Statelessness in Iraq

(2022)

[READ MORE](#)



Statelessness and Risks of Statelessness in Iraq: Faii Kurd and Bidoon Communities (2022)

[READ MORE](#)



The Campaign to end Statelessness in Egypt

(2022)

[READ MORE](#)



Background Note on Gender Equality, Nationality Laws and Statelessness

(2022)

[READ MORE](#)



Understanding statelessness among Syrian refugees in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (2022)

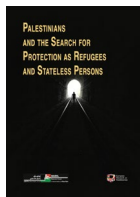
[READ MORE](#)



The Campaign to end Statelessness in Lebanon

(2021)

[READ MORE](#)



Palestinians and the Search for Protection as Refugees and Stateless Persons (2022)

[READ MORE](#)



The Campaign to end Statelessness in Jordan

(2021)

[READ MORE](#)



Contact Us

✉ info@statelessnessmena.com

👤 Zeinab Awad – RANS MENA, IFI Project Coordinator

☎ +961 (0)1 350000 Ext: 4448

🌐 Visit our platform : [MENA Statelessness Platform](#)