



**4 November 2014 – At least 10 million people worldwide are currently stateless and a baby is born stateless every 10 minutes. Not allowed a nationality, they are often denied the rights and services that countries normally offer their citizens.**

The UN refugee agency (UNHCR), together with high-profile supporters such as Angelina Jolie and United Colors Of Benetton, launched the global #IBELONG-campaign aimed at ending the plight of statelessness.

'Statelessness can mean a life without education, without medical care or legal employment...a life without the ability to move freely, without prospects or hope,' UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres, and more than twenty celebrities and world opinion leaders have published an [Open Letter](#) . 'Statelessness is inhuman. We believe it is time to end this injustice.'

Sixty years after the United Nations first agreed to protect stateless people, 'it's time to end statelessness itself.'

UNHCR's Special Envoy Angelina Jolie was one of the first to [sign](#) the Open Letter. According to the acclaimed actress and director, ending statelessness will strengthen society in countries where stateless people are found, by making it possible to draw on their energy and talents.

'It is both an obligation and an opportunity for governments everywhere to put an end to this exclusion,' she said.

Following the campaign launch, the Open Letter has become an [online petition](#) , aiming to collect ten million signatures in support of ending statelessness within a decade.



### Positive signals

The [#IBELONG](#) - campaign is being launched amid signs of a shift in international attitudes surrounding statelessness. In 2011, there were barely 100 states parties to the two statelessness treaties – the 1954 UN Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. Today the number of accessions

stands at 144, bringing critical mass within reach.

In addition, legislative and policy changes have allowed more than four million stateless people to acquire a nationality over the past ten years.

### **New risks of statelessness**

Despite such progress, new risks of statelessness have emerged with the growing number of major conflicts, which force millions of people into internal displacement or into becoming refugees.

Additionally, tens of thousands of refugee children have been born in exile, and UNHCR is working with the governments and partners in the countries receiving refugees on prioritizing birth registration for these children.

'We have a historic opportunity to end the scourge of statelessness within 10 years, and give back hope to millions of people. We cannot afford to fail this challenge.'