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A day in the life of... Chris Nash, Director, European Network on Statelessness

"I relish the fact that my work is so varied and brings me into contact with so many talented and inspiring people – including stateless individuals who endure their situation with such dignity on a daily basis. Having worked in the human rights field for over 15 years, I have never witnessed an issue receive such accelerated interest and increased profile as has recently been achieved in the space of just a few years."

Read the full interview in this month's "A day in the life of..." at the bottom of this bulletin.

What's new: Publications, Tools & Resources

[Good Practices Paper - Action 1: Resolving Existing Major Situations of Statelessness, UNHCR](#)

First in UNHCR's new Good Practices Series shows how States like Bangladesh, Brazil, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, Turkmenistan and Viet Nam have found solutions to end protracted, large-scale situations of statelessness.

["Statelessness: a research guide", by Elisa Mason](#)

Guide posted on Forced Migration Review Current Awareness is to introduce readers to the concept of statelessness and point them to key information in order to help raise awareness about a challenging, but ultimately, solvable problem.

["Campaign Update" \(January 2015\), UNHCR](#)

The first in a series of quarterly updates published by UNHCR to track global progress towards the goals of the #ibelong Campaign, to report on UNHCR's activities to address statelessness, and to highlight upcoming events.

["Citizenship and Statelessness Fact Sheet 2", DHRRA Malaysia](#)

An update on mapping, registration and legal assistance project currently being conducted by DHRRA in Malaysia, which is helping to shed light on the scale of the problem of statelessness in West Malaysia and promote solutions.

["Promoting Citizenship and Preventing Statelessness in South Africa: A Practitioner's Guide", LHR](#)

Lawyers for Human Rights has launched the Promoting Citizenship and Preventing Statelessness in South Africa: A Practitioner's Guide that will assist practitioners in dealing with the growing phenomenon of statelessness in South Africa.

["Solving Statelessness, Saving Lives", by Zahra Albarazi](#)

Blog piece for the Lancet Global Health Blog, describing encounters with three people affected by statelessness and how these show that there is a need for more research and advocacy to address the specific health concerns of the stateless.

Missed the latest mapping studies on statelessness from around Europe?

- [Mapping statelessness in Iceland \(Dec. 2014\)](#)
- [Mapping statelessness in Finland \(Nov. 2014\)](#)
- [Mapping statelessness in Malta \(Nov. 2014\)](#)
- [Scoping paper on statelessness in Ireland \(Oct. 2014\)](#)

What's new: Law & Policy

ECOWAS Ministerial Meeting ends in adoption of Declaration on Eradication of Statelessness

From 23-25 February, a very successful expert meeting and conference of ministers from the ECOWAS region took place in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. It ended in the adoption of a [Declaration on the Eradication of Statelessness](#), which indicates that West African states are 'Convinced that the enjoyment of the right to a nationality contributes to peace and security in the region as well as to social and economic development'. The Declaration includes 25 concrete actions to which these West African states have committed. A list of the other [documents and speeches from the meeting is available here](#), which include a set of ["Conclusions and Recommendations"](#) adopted by the multi-stakeholder expert meeting, a ["Joint Statement](#)

[by the National Commissions of Human Rights'](#) and speeches by UNHCR High Commissioner [António Guterres](#) and President of Côte d'Ivoire, [Alassane Ouattara](#). For more on the conference, as well as a selection of stories and multimedia about persons affected by statelessness in West Africa, visit the [UNHCR site for the region here](#).

General Comment on right to nationality, African Committee of Experts on Rights and Welfare of the Child

A [General Comment](#) has been issued on Article 6 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, on right to a name, right to birth registration and right to acquire a nationality. A helpful blog post explaining background and relevance by [Bronwen Manby can be found here](#).

Constitutional Court in Hungary quashes 'lawful stay' requirement for statelessness determination

On 23 February 2015, the Constitutional Court of Hungary quashed the requirement in Hungarian law under which only lawfully staying persons could apply for stateless status. The detailed judgment is not yet out, but the press release says that the Court agreed that it is in breach of international law (Article 1 of the 1954 Convention). Both the UNHCR and the Hungarian Helsinki Committee (one of the founding members of the European Network on Statelessness) officially intervened in the case.

Tally of states parties to 1954 statelessness convention reaches 85

On 9 February 2015, El Salvador acceded to 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, bringing the number of states parties to 85. [Click here](#) to see which states are currently parties to the convention.

Announcements & events

[Stateless in Holland photography exhibition at University of Amsterdam](#)

Exhibition of the photography series looking at the lives of stateless persons in the Netherlands, kicked off with a symposium entitled 'What awaits the Dutch stateless in 2015?'

Dates and Venue: **symposium 2 March 2015, 2-5pm, University of Amsterdam** (exhibition on throughout March)

[Oxford University Refugees Studies Centre short course on Palestine Refugees and International Law](#)

Dates and Venue: **6-7 March in Amman** (British Institute); **13-14 March in Beirut** (Asfari Institute, AUB)

['Achieving Gender Equality in Nationality Laws'](#)

CSW Parallel Event by the Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights

Dates and Venue: **12 March, New York** (4.30 – 6.00pm in the Armenian Convention Centre).

[Amnesty International Appeal: Urgent Action on Dominican Republic](#) (participate / send appeals **by 13 March**)

Save the Date: ENS conference 'None of Europe's children should be stateless', **2-3 June, Budapest**

Save the Date: Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion & Tilburg University Statelessness Summer Course 2015: **3-7 August, Tilburg** (the Netherlands)

Popular on Twitter this Month

From @refugees: "I may be a great farmer, but having no nationality has confined me to my fields" Pascal, 72 <http://trib.al/06rqFvy>

From @Oikumene: Church leaders address statelessness in Dominican Republic <http://bit.ly/16eJyTD> #WCC

From @BronwenManby: [#BurkinaFaso](#) reports 4 million previously unregistered children reached in [#birthregistration](#) campaigns, commits to eradicate [#statelessness](#)

From @BHWatch: "My country is still Bahrain" [@abdulemam](#) writes in [@ForeignPolicy](#) about the revocation of his citizenship <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/02/13/bahrain-is-still-my-country-stateless-ali-abdulemam-human-rights/>

From @ergasiaedo: Thematic Focus: Statelessness & Nationality: Event:Symposium: What Awaits the Dutch Stateless in 2015?, Amsterdam <http://bit.ly/1a6ikAS>

From @annaleichtfried: Reflecting on [#statelessness](#) of [#Roma](#) in Serbia | by [@grconstantine](#) [@ENStatelessness](#) <http://bit.ly/1EQ4koc> [#ibelong](#)

Chris Nash

Director

European Network on Statelessness



How did you get involved in working on statelessness?

I first encountered stateless clients while working as an asylum lawyer in the late 1990s. However, despite now having worked in the human rights field for over 15 years, I have to (somewhat guiltily) confess that I'd never really given proper thought to the extent or ramifications of statelessness until 2010 when I took up a consultancy role working on the UNHCR/Asylum Aid study [Mapping Statelessness in the United Kingdom](#). Happily, soon afterwards the UK government pledged to introduce a dedicated [statelessness determination procedure](#) which took effect from April 2013 to some [excitement](#). Buoyed by this and other developments around this time, a small group of us met in London in late 2011 and the idea of the [European Network on Statelessness](#) (ENS) was born. Those at the meeting became the Network's founders and initial Steering Committee members, a website was launched in June 2012 and within a matter of months we had attracted 65 members from over 30 European countries. So what for me started as a short term research consultancy quickly became a rather more enduring (and frankly addictive) commitment to working on the issue of statelessness.

Can you give us a short description of the type of work you do?

ENS is a network of NGOs, academic initiatives, and individual experts committed to address statelessness in Europe. We believe that all human beings have a right to a nationality and that those who lack nationality altogether – stateless persons – are entitled to adequate protection. We are dedicated to strengthening the often unheard voice of stateless persons in Europe, and to advocate for full respect of their human rights. The strength of ENS very much derives from its active [membership](#) (now including 55 NGOs) and its highly committed [Advisory Committee](#) members and [Board of Trustees](#). My role as Director is to run the Secretariat – including to lead fundraising, strategic planning and membership development, as well as to oversee all projects and represent the Network externally (including as its media spokesperson).

Briefly describe what type of statelessness activities your organization is involved in.

We aim to reach our goals by conducting and supporting legal and policy development, awareness-raising and capacity building activities. Last year we published a number of [reports](#), and currently we have two comparative research projects underway – one on [childhood statelessness](#) and the other on the [arbitrary detention of stateless persons](#). Cutting across (and seeking to maximize) both these projects we have also recently launched a three year [litigation strategy](#). In terms of our [capacity building work](#) we have established a Europe Wide Training Programme which last year saw us roll out national-level training with our members in Ireland, Macedonia, Russia and the Ukraine. Later this year we will run a Train the Trainer (ToT) event on statelessness - hopefully repeating the success of our last [ToT event](#) held in 2013 as we seek to grow our pool of ENS trainers. A good example of our communications work is last year's pan-European campaign ["Protecting Stateless Persons in Europe"](#) which achieved significant [impact](#) and culminated with an [event](#) in the European Parliament where we handed over our online petition with over 7000 signatures –many inspired by this [animation](#) and a [compilation of individual stories](#). An important part of our awareness-raising work is to try to put a [human face](#) on what for too long has been perceived as a dry legal issue. ENS also publishes a [weekly blog](#) which can be subscribed to [here](#) and we very much welcome guest contributions.

Could you describe a particular project you are working on right now?

As a Network our major focus this year is our new campaign ["None of Europe's Children should be Stateless"](#) which was launched on International Children's Day on 20 November 2014. We recognize that in order to realise children's right to a nationality in Europe, the phenomenon and the challenges need to be better understood. The initial phase of the campaign therefore involves ENS-funded [research](#) in eight European countries – Albania, Estonia, Italy, Latvia, Macedonia, Poland, Romania and Slovenia. This will study the presence/absence, content and implementation of legislative safeguards for the prevention of childhood statelessness at the national level in these countries. The research findings will be presented at a [regional conference](#) on children's right to nationality in June 2015, and thereafter will feed into both national and regional-level advocacy as part of the awareness-raising and public-facing phase of the campaign. Key to success will be efforts to engage child rights actors as well as young people themselves, and ENS is already piloting outreach work in secondary schools. A variety of social and digital media tools will also be rolled out over the next 12 months. We are very pleased to

have the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion as an expert partner for this project, as well as excellent collaboration with UNHCR and other organisations.

What do you most enjoy about this work?

I relish the fact that my work is so varied and brings me into contact with so many talented and inspiring people – including stateless individuals who endure their situation with such dignity on a daily basis. Having worked in the human rights field for over 15 years, I have never witnessed an issue receive such accelerated interest and increased profile as has recently been achieved in the space of just a few years. So many professional acquaintances (both old and new) comment on this when I bump into them. And there's no doubt that increased international attention on statelessness – including that generated through UNHCR's [#ibelong campaign](#) - creates significant space for impact. It also creates a responsibility to seize this current momentum.

What do you find are the biggest challenges you face in your work?

In terms of the bigger picture, raised awareness about statelessness also brings with it raised expectations at a time when available resources are still struggling to keep up. Equally, as [recent reports](#) have made clear, we still don't know enough about statelessness in many countries which can inhibit an effective response. Bringing this back to immediate challenges faced by ENS, foremost among these is the need to continue efforts to sensitise the donor community – including advocacy necessary to hopefully unlock larger funding streams, including for example through the European Union (EU) which has hitherto paid little attention to statelessness although there are [welcome signs](#) that this is now changing. Indeed, a specific challenge facing ENS, as opposed to some other pan European networks, is the limited competence of the EU on statelessness and nationality. Unlike refugee protection, statelessness *per se* is not (yet) a ground for obtaining an international protection status under EU law. At the same time, most European states have yet to properly implement their obligations towards stateless persons due to a failure to set up dedicated identification and protection mechanisms. This also contributes to the continuing relative invisibility of the issue in many countries.

What advice would you give to someone who wants to get involved in / others working on statelessness?

If not too clichéd then I'd start with *carpe diem!* Given the recent accelerated (if belated) emergence of statelessness as an issue of major international concern, now is a real window of opportunity to become involved and make an impact. Put simply, a lot has not yet been done and initiatives such as UNHCR's [#ibelong campaign](#) provide an important momentum and framework for such efforts. My other piece of advice is not to underestimate what can be achieved with relatively limited resources if initiatives are taken forward in a collaborative and strategic manner. In its first year of operation ENS relied on less than \$12,000 seed funding. It's also clearly important to be creative in identifying common ground with potential new partners and in seeking suitable entry points for statelessness work such as gender equality, child rights, development, political participation, human security and trafficking, etc. Previously stateless populations or constituencies too often have not identified statelessness as their binding characteristic with regard to problems they confront.

What do you hope to accomplish through your work?

Without wishing to sound unduly pious (or overly optimistic), I suppose my ultimate goal is to help ENS make a meaningful contribution to successful efforts to eradicate statelessness in Europe by 2024 ie. to work myself out of a job! While ambitious, nowhere is this goal more [achievable](#) than in Europe. But along the way I also hope that ENS can play a role in inspiring and supporting the development of similar civil society alliances in other regions. We have already witnessed last November's launch of the [Americas Network on Statelessness and Nationality](#) and hopefully other regions will soon follow. There is obvious benefit in regional coalitions supporting one another and sharing experience, particularly where parallels already exist - for example both Europe and the Americas have near universal accession to the 1954 Statelessness Convention but few established statelessness determination procedures. Through such collaboration, including with the recently established Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, there is real potential to develop an effective and enduring global civil society coalition committed to tackling the statelessness issue.

[ENS report *Still Stateless, Still Suffering*](#)

[Selection of short films by ENS and its members](#)

[Sign up for the ENS weekly blog](#)

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