



**Stateless People in Bangladesh Inc.  
Houston, Texas, U.S.A.**

**Welcome and Thanks  
For coming to hear our story**








# We Salute and Thank

- All those who came before us:
- Absent & Present, Young & Old
- Men & Women, Famous & Unknown
- Individuals & Groups

## Who Served

The Stranded Pakistanis or Stateless  
To the best of their ability and resources

**ONE MINUTE OF SILENCE**  
**IN HONOR OF ALL WHO LOST THEIR LIVES**  
**DURING THE VIOLENCE OF THAT ERA**

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## **Introduction**

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**Many violations of national, international and humanitarian law were committed by Pakistan and Bangladesh both**

**This is one of the longest running human rights violations by Bangladesh and Pakistan.**

**Non-Bengali Pakistanis were left in internment camps  
in Bangladesh.**

**34 years later, 250,000 still live a life of utter poverty  
and destitution in the camps.**

**Another large number lives in Pakistan without  
recognition of their basic human right of Nationality**

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## Who we are?


- We are a non-profit, non-political human rights organization to provide legal advocacy to the stateless people in Bangladesh and Pakistan.
- We are registered under the laws of the State of Texas, USA as a non-profit corporation.
- Directors of the organization receive no financial or material compensation for their work.
- We believe in non-violent struggle, peaceful co-existence and respect of law.

## Mission:

- Inform world about the victims of arbitrary denial of nationality in Bangladesh and Pakistan.
- Assist them in gaining their basic human rights.
- Keep abreast of developments around the world as it effects stateless people in the two countries.
- Give voice to the Stateless.
- Advocacy on behalf of victims.
- Create repository of historical information and legal evidence about persecution of this minority.

## Projects:

- Create a world class web site as a virtual meeting point for all those interested in the welfare of this population (completed).
- Lodge a legal petition in Pakistan for the restoration of the rights of this group.
- Create a documentary for public education and fund raising purposes.

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## Group Identification

- Bihari

Used mostly in Bangladesh for non-Bengali speakers ( Term has no current relevance)

- Stranded Pakistani

Identity preferred by the Pakistanis left in Bangladesh

- Urdu-Speaking

Ethnic Identity of the group

- Mehsoreen

“The Besieged” term used by Urdu language mass media



- Undocumented Pakistanis

Members of the group who migrated to Pakistan on their own

- Legal Status: Effectively Stateless

## Size & Location of the Group

- 250,000 - 300,000 Individuals in Bangladesh whose nationality is being denied by Bangladesh & Pakistan both
- An undetermined number in Pakistan whose Nationality is currently being denied.

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# Importance of Nationality



1972:  
Camps of Bangladesh

*ICRC Picture*



## Nationality is a Basic Human Right

- Persons without a nationality can not avail themselves of numerous amenities of citizenship.
- Those without it cannot obtain it themselves.
- This is the first tool of empowerment and justice. Those lacking nationality can not get protection of law.

# Importance of Nationality

## Why is it necessary to have a Nationality

- No one can never become prosperous with the hand outs of others. One becomes prosperous by use one own skills, knowledge or labor.
- People without a Nationality are routinely discriminated in matter of employment, wages and benefits.
- Persons with out a nationality can not avail themselves of educational opportunities, go to university or schools.
- Those without a nationality end up being poor and uneducated.

# Importance of Nationality



1972:  
Camp Residents

*ICRC Picture*

# Importance of Nationality

## Some Characteristics of Nationality

- All are equal before law; Regardless of occupation, religion, language, color, race or residence in a particular region of country, regardless of the basis of their citizenship.
- Once obtained Nationality can not be taken away except for specific kinds of offenses and by a specific procedure.
- Return of Citizens to their own country is not subject to any numerical limitations nor is the total number of citizens limited to a given number.
- Nationality has no expiry date.
- Nationality clings to the citizens even if they renounce it.
- The citizens may relinquish the nationality of a State at any time for any reason but the State may not do so.

## Nationality in Pakistan

- **Most widely accepted proof of nationality in this country is the Computerized National Identity Card.**
- **Not having it is not just an inconvenience, it is the first step toward becoming part of a permanent underclass.**
- **Every day there are more and more things where an identity card is required.**

## Violations of International Conventions (continued)

- Pakistan is a signatory to the following:
  - Universal Declaration of Human Rights
  - Convention on the Rights of the Child
  - Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
  - International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
  - International Convention on Elimination of Racial Discrimination

## Violations of International Conventions (continued)

- Both countries are in violation of many clauses of the above conventions on account of their treatment of this population.\*
- All international human rights conventions prohibit arbitrary denial of nationality.

\* Visit our website to see all conventions referred to in previous 2 slides.



## Other International Norms of Behavior for State Parties:\*

Following are additional conventions:

- Convention relating to Status of Stateless Persons
- Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness
- Right of Return of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons

\* All of the above conventions with identification of violations by both countries can be found at our website.



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# Consequences of Deprivation of Nationality



## Denial of Nationality

- Can not enter or leave any country (no passports)
- No Amenities of Citizenship (education, medical care, employment, housing)
- No effective protection of law
- Open to exploitation

# Consequences of Deprivation of Nationality

## A Recent Development in Bangladesh

- Dhaka High Court decision accepted camp residents as Bangladeshi citizens.
- Bangladesh Government has not taken any administrative, restorative, or rehabilitative steps that might make a difference in the lives of the those Stranded Pakistanis who want to become Bangladeshis.
- 3 years later, suffering of this group continues.

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# Where Do We Start?

## PAST:

- It is unalterable.
- We can record it truthfully.
- We can learn from it by preserving it.

## FUTURE:

- Our actions will determine the future.
- What happens to us and those around us is our responsibility.

# Consequences of Inaction

- Pain and suffering of 350,000 victims in Bangladesh and Pakistan will continue unabated.
- The future generations of this population are condemned to a sub-human life before they are even born.

(This problem will not go away in either country on its own, if we do not help the Stateless obtain the tools with which they may change their lives. Namely the citizenship of a State.)

# What are we to do?

- As educated and moral citizens of the world what is our obligation?
- What is the difference between us and the destitute of the camps?
- What would we have wanted if we were trapped in such circumstances?

# Points to Consider

- Governments will do nothing even if we could devise a way to show them the right thing to do.
- No one among us is powerful or wealthy enough to create the change we desire to see.
- We have no choice but to work together.
- The change we desire will take longer than any of us can imagine.
- If we work together there will be differences of opinion.
- Collective action can never comply absolutely with the ideas of any one of us. It will be necessary for us all to cooperate and compromise to accomplish our goal.



## Conclusions

- We believe this population has a strong legal case to obtain citizenship of a State based on self-determination.
- Bangladesh must grant her citizenship to all in her borders who want to become Bangladeshis.
- Pakistan must grant her citizenship to all those who still want to return to Pakistan, and recognize nationality of all within her borders.



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**Help Us**

## Call For Action

- Learn more about the issue
- Visit our web site
- Talk to or e-mail everyone in your address book to learn more about this tragedy
- Volunteer your time and talent
- Help us accomplish our mission by donating money.

We are a 501(c)3, tax exempt organization, your donations are tax deductible in the US.

## Contact Information

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Houston, Texas 77082 U.S.A.
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- Cell: 832-884-9473
- Fax: 443-581-2332
- Toll Free: 877-454-6914



**Your questions are welcome.**

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