

Introduction – Slide 1

This statement is delivered on behalf of Rights & Security International (RSI), a London-based organisation working to eliminate human rights abuses committed in the name of national security. RSI has made two submissions to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the United Kingdom: a joint submission with the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion on the right to nationality; and a submission on the retrogression of human rights protections in Northern Ireland.

Today, I focus on three issues of concern:

1. The UK's failure to reduce statelessness;
2. The UK's use of citizenship deprivation to evade human rights obligations; and
3. The diminution of human rights protections in Northern Ireland, including access to post-conflict justice.

Issue #1 (The UK's failure to reduce statelessness) – Slide 2

Available data shows that the UK has deprived more people of nationality on national security grounds than almost any other country. It is one of only five European countries that authorise citizenship deprivation even if it results in statelessness.

In domestic law, the Home Secretary has the power to deprive a person of their British nationality if it is deemed 'conducive to the public good'. The law permits the Home Secretary to reach this conclusion on vague grounds such as 'involvement in... unacceptable behaviours.'

This criterion grants the Home Secretary extensive authority to arbitrarily deprive a person of their British nationality, even without a serious criminal conviction. Furthermore, deprivation decisions lack procedural safeguards, which enables them to become effective immediately and often while the individual is abroad or before an appeal.

More specifically, we are concerned with the discriminatory impact that nationality deprivation may have on people from minority racial and ethnic backgrounds. Media reporting indicates that people of colour in the UK are eight times more vulnerable to being deprived of their British nationality than people the government categorises as white.

Recommendation #1 – Slide 3

For these reasons, we call on reviewing States to recommend that the UK reduce potential statelessness by:

- Respecting and protecting everyone's right to nationality; and
- Reforming nationality deprivation laws to avoid potential discrimination.

Issue #2 (UK's use of citizenship deprivation to evade human rights responsibilities) – Slide 4

The second issue is the UK's use of citizenship deprivation to evade human rights responsibilities. Depriving someone of their British nationality while abroad effectively strips that person of important human rights and diplomatic protections. It can also have permanent consequences for the individual's children, who may be left stateless in the process. For example, we are aware of some women confined in camps for third-country nationals in Syria who have been deprived of their British citizenship. As a result, their rights and their children's rights have been severely compromised.

Recommendation #2 – Slide 5

Therefore, we call on reviewing States to recommend that the UK refrain from using citizenship deprivation to evade human rights responsibilities.

Issue #3 (Retrogression of human rights protections in NI) – Slide 6

Lastly, we are concerned with the retrogression of human rights protections in Northern Ireland, which risk jeopardising the peace settlement in the region.

The UK government is attempting to create a sweeping amnesty for serious violations committed during the conflict. Until now, investigations into these human rights violations have been limited by a lack of state cooperation.

The UK government is also attempting to overhaul the system of human rights protections in Northern Ireland by limiting access to the courts and to remedies for rights violations, in a manner that undermines the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement.

Recommendation #3 – Slide 7

Therefore, we call on reviewing States to recommend that the UK respect human rights by refraining from creating broad amnesties for serious human rights violations connected with the armed conflict in Northern Ireland, and by instead facilitating access to justice, such as implementing inclusive and effective transitional justice mechanisms.

Thank you - Slide 8

Closing statement (1 min)

The UK must uphold its international obligations to reduce statelessness in line with its commitments to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, and fulfil its human rights responsibilities by:

- Reforming citizenship deprivation policies to prevent discrimination and;
- Refraining from deprivation decisions that subject affected persons to further human rights violations.

Similarly, the UK must respect human rights laws by seeking justice for rights violations and strengthening protections for victims of human rights abuses committed during the conflict in Northern Ireland.