



Brown Bag Seminars of POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Voluntary Statelessness

Rebecca Buxton

University of Cambridge

Chair

Gloria Zuccarelli

NASP - University of Milan

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Seminar room (Passione -2nd floor)
Department of Social and Political Sciences
Via Conservatorio, 7 - Milan
and on ZOOM

In 2015 The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees announced their goal to end statelessness by 2024. The exact number of stateless people is unknown, but it's thought that around 10 million people across the world have no legally recognized citizenship in any country. This goal to end statelessness sets a clear normative standard: that statelessness is a problem that must be resolved at all costs. Political theorists have taken a similar position on statelessness. Hannah Arendt famously drew an equivalence between statelessness and total rightlessness. She wrote: "Almost every right... is violated when one is stateless". Michael Walzer later echoed this worry, positioning statelessness as essentially the worst possible condition for an individual to find themselves in. In his chapter on 'Membership' in Spheres of Justice, he argues that the stateless person is in a condition of "infinite danger."

This paper considers the question of 'voluntary statelessness' people who voluntarily renounce their only citizenship and choose to lack a legal personality in any state. I seek to discuss two research questions arising from this phenomenon. First, how can voluntary statelessness help us to understand the plight of stateless people more generally. And second, should people have a right to make themselves stateless?

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