ALL EARS TO THE GROUND: RESISTING MASS CITIZENSHIP STRIPPING AND CITIZENSHIP VIOLENCE

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This article explores ground-level collective modes of resistance that highlight state practices associated with mass citizenship stripping. In doing so, it identifies challenges in anti-statelessness work and suggests that these and other forms of resistance can be important in informing and shaping more responsive international interventions. The study focuses on situations in which state authorities have weaponised their citizenship laws and ID systems to exclude, segregate and expel people based on their membership of a group. Specifically, it focuses on Rohingya, Kurdish and Palestinian experiences of citizenship violence. Through these case studies and broader literature review, it identifies specific modes of citizenship violence within the broader processes of group persecution. It then explores five non-exhaustive modes of collective resistance that have been organised by affected communities. These are: countering re-categorisation through collective refusals; countering document stripping through the collection and exhibition of documents; countering erasure through community-centred knowledge production and arts; countering conflict-associated statelessness through self-registration; and countering conditionalities of IDs through strategic compliance. People affected by statelessness and survivors of state crime are active agents in seeking social justice, despite the structural factors that limit the effectiveness of many forms of resistance. As such, the power dynamics between affected communities, states and international actors are explored to identify the constraints to these modes of resistance. The study concludes by considering some of the implications of these forms of resistance for the international anti-statelessness sector.

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I   INTRODUCTION

This article[1] takes as a starting point the understanding that people affected by statelessness are active agents in seeking social justice, but that structural factors and power relations limit the effectiveness of many forms of action and resistance. At the root of all forms of statelessness are the practices of state authorities. These practices emerge from a multitude of intersecting factors, ranging from administrative oversight to discriminatory laws to group persecution. When a lack of administrative efficiency or legal flaws are factors, interventions at the international level can seek to address statelessness through capacity building and technical support. Common examples include upgrading civil registries or supporting amendments to states citizenship rules.[2] At the other end of the spectrum, when statelessness results primarily from the misuse of state power, it has proved more challenging for international organisations to develop appropriate interventions. In such circumstances, it is important to look at how communities of resistance respond on the ground.

Recent statelessness scholarship has given more attention to situations in which citizenship rules and ID systems have been weaponised by states.[3] There is also a groundswell of scholarship critiquing the promotion of universal legal identities in international development work, including important case studies revealing the potential for digitisation of ID systems to exacerbate the problems of citizenship violence in the Dominican Republic, Kenya, the Ivory Coast, India and Myanmar

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[1]   This article was first drafted in October 2024 based on the information available at the time. Events in Palestine, Myanmar and Syria have been in intense flux. It is beyond the scope of this article to account for the monumental changes that have taken place in Palestinian, Rohingya and Kurdish homelands since that time.

[2]   See United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees ('UNHCR'), *Global Action Plan to End Statelessness 2014–2024* (Report, 2017) 4–5 <https://www.unhcr.org/au/media/global-action-plan-end-statelessness-2014-2024>, archived at <perma.cc/6NTA-5NK3>.

[3]   See, eg, Lindsey N Kingston, 'The Weaponisation of Citizenship: Punishment, Erasure, and Social Control', in Tendayi Bloom and Lindsey N Kingston (eds), *Statelessness, Governance, and the Problem of Citizenship* (Manchester University Press 2021); Michelle Foster and Jade Roberts, 'Manufacturing Foreigners: the Law and Politics of Transforming Citizens into Migrants' in Catherine Dauvergne (ed), *Research Handbook on the Law and Politics of Migration* (Edward Elgar Publishing 2021); Neha Jain, 'Manufacturing Statelessness' (2022) 116(2) *American Journal of International Law* 237.

among many other contexts.[4] Ground level resistance strategies that respond specifically to citizenship violence, however, are yet to be explored in depth. This article aims to contribute to statelessness and citizenship scholarship by outlining a framework to explore resistance.

The responses to statelessness by affected people and communities vary and adapt according to the actions of state authorities and the perceived intentions of state actors. International actors often develop programming according to national level priorities. To a lesser extent, they also respond to the actions and forms of resistance of affected communities on the ground. Both national and ground level actions can then influence the development of interventions to combat statelessness by international organisations and non-governmental organisations ('NGOs'). In the past decade, there has been increased participation of people affected by statelessness in shaping international interventions, and more emphasis within the sector on these interventions being responsive and accountable to affected communities.[5] Better understanding of how communities respond when their citizenship and rights are under threat can further efforts towards responsive and accountable international programming.

Taking a socio-legal approach, this article contributes to this knowledge base, focusing on the collective and organised modes of resistance to citizenship stripping and violence by directly affected communities. Not all forms of statelessness can be attributed to state abuses of power. This article specifically examines situations where communities of resistance seek to highlight the misuse of state power and call for social justice. It considers situations in which state authorities have weaponised their citizenship laws, ID systems and administrative systems to exclude, segregate or expel people based on their membership of a group. The three case studies explore Rohingya, Kurdish and Palestinian experiences of citizenship violence. In each of these contexts, state authorities have practiced mass citizenship stripping and violence and affected communities have developed diverse strategies of collective resistance.

The article is divided into two Parts: Mass Citizenship Stripping and Citizenship Violence; and Resistance. In the first, it identifies five key methods through which states weaponise their citizenship regimes: re-categorisation of

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4   See, eg, Eve Hayes De Kalaf, *Legal Identity, Race and Belonging in the Dominican Republic* (Anthem Press 2021); Bronwen Manby, 'The Sustainable Development Goals and "legal identity for all": "First, do no harm"' (2021) 139 *World Development* 105343; Keren Weitzberg, Margie Cheesman, Aaron Martin and Emrys Schoemaker, 'Between Surveillance and Recognition: Rethinking Digital Identity in Aid' (2021) 8 *Big Data & Society* 1; Mizue Aizeki, Matt Mahmoudi and Coline Schupfer, *Resisting Borders and Technologies of Violence* (Haymarket Books 2024); Richard Banégas and Armando Cutolo, *ID Wars in Côte d'Ivoire: A Political Ethnography of Identification and Citizenship* (Oxford University Press 2024); Natalie Brinham, *Citizenship and Genocide Cards: IDs, Statelessness and Rohingya Resistance in Myanmar* (Routledge 2024) ('*Citizenship and Genocide Cards*'); Elizabeth L Rhoads and Ritanjan Das, 'The Specter of Potential Foreigners: Revisiting the Postcolonial Citizenship Regimes of Myanmar and India' (2024) 56(2) *Critical Asian Studies* 155; Silvia Masiero, *Unfair ID* (SAGE Publications 2024).

5   One example of this change is the European Network on Statelessness' ('ENS') community-led policy for external organisations, which is available here: ENS, 'External Community Speaker Policy' (Policy, 13 June 2022) <https://www.statelessness.eu/updates/publications/ens-external-community-speaker-policy>, archived at <perma.cc/QT9Y-NT7A> ('External Community'). Another example is the establishment of the Global Statelessness Fund which aims to make funding cycles more responsive and accountable to people affected by statelessness: *Global Statelessness Fund* (Web Page, October 2024) <https://statelessnessfund.org/>, archived at <perma.cc/4K7W-JTZX> ('Global Statelessness Fund').

people as foreigners, second class citizens, or outsiders; the systematic removal, destruction or nullification of identity and other documents (or document stripping); erasure of history, culture, language and identity of the targeted community; preventing access to civil registration; and conditionalities placed on ID issuance, naturalisation and citizenship acquisition procedures. In the second Part, the article identifies five modes of collective resistance to these forms of citizenship violence. These are: countering re-categorisation through collective refusals; countering document stripping through the collection and exhibition of documents; countering erasure through community-centred knowledge production and arts; countering statelessness through self-registration; and countering the conditionality of IDs through strategic compliance.

In considering each mode of resistance, the article also reflects on the ways in which unequal power relations constrain the effectiveness of these actions. These relations can result in limited political clout for those omitted from national statistics, community-level backlash such as counter protest and boycott, other forms of administrative violence and military crackdowns, as well as the use of censorship and surveillance to quell dissent. Meanwhile, international political structures promote administrative state entities as the only viable channel to establish one's legal identity. International criminal law remains limited in holding perpetrators of citizenship violence to account.[6] This examination of the national and international structures that limit the effectiveness of resistance strategies is rooted in postcolonial critiques of human rights discourses and frameworks, for example, those relating to anti-trafficking, liberal feminism and nationalism. Such critiques hold that normative international rights frameworks can lend legitimacy to statist approaches to human rights, sometimes at the expense of human freedoms.[7]

These modes of citizenship violence, resistance and structural constraints are by no means exhaustive lists, but rather the beginnings of a framework. The analysis draws on interviews and focus groups conducted amongst stateless Rohingya refugees from Myanmar between 2016 and 2019,[8] and is supplemented by literature relating to the other two contexts of mass citizenship stripping.

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[6]   This limitation relates both to the domains traditionally reserved for states to determine their own membership through citizenship laws, as well as the frameworks relating to international criminal law which focus on specific acts such as frameworks on Crimes Against Humanity and Genocide. For more discussion see Cóman Kenny, 'Legislated Out of Existence: Mass Arbitrary Deprivation of Nationality Resulting in Statelessness as an International Crime' (2020) 20(6) *International Criminal Law Review* 1026 ('Legislated Out of Existence').

[7]   See, eg, Ratna Kapur, 'On Gender, Alterity and Human Rights: Freedom in a Fishbowl' (2019) 122 (July) *Feminist Review* 167.

[8]   Brinham, *Citizenship and Genocide Cards* (n 4).

II   Mass Citizenship Stripping and Citizenship Violence

A   *Conceptualising Mass Citizenship Stripping and Citizenship Violence*[9]

Citizenship stripping is the layperson's term for what is known in international law as the arbitrary deprivation of nationality.[10] The two terms can be used interchangeably.[11] Deprivation of nationality is defined as:

> any loss, withdrawal or denial of nationality that was not voluntarily requested by the individual, including where a state precludes a person or group from obtaining or retaining a nationality, where nationality is automatically lost by operation of the law, and where acts taken by administrative authorities result in a person being deprived of a nationality.[12]

It therefore covers a wide range of administrative and legal measures through which people are denied citizenship. 'Arbitrary' refers to loss or deprivation of nationality that 'does not serve a legitimate aim or is not proportionate',[13] covering situations in which domestic citizenship rules have been weaponised in ways that are not compliant with the principles of international law.

  Citizenship stripping impacts individuals and groups of people. Citizenship stripping of individuals on national security grounds has been on the rise globally. Comprehensive studies have examined this trend, finding it in breach of multiple standards of international law.[14] This article, however, focuses on group or mass citizenship stripping or situations in which citizenship laws and administrative processes have been weaponised against people on the basis of their membership of a group, for example, ethnic, racial, religious, linguistic or social group. The distinction between individual and group forms of citizenship stripping is useful for the purpose of delineating collective forms of resistance. The reality on the ground, however, is far messier, with many overlapping and intersecting factors leading to the deprivation of citizenship. For example, ethnic identities and political allegiances often overlap, and individuals may find themselves excluded or labelled as disloyal to the state due to multiple factors. Further, just as official charges often obscure the political motivations behind the arrest of political dissidents, so too the reasons that state authorities deny a person citizenship are often obscured behind a wide range of legal and administrative practices. Lack of legal clarity, indefinite delays in registration processes, excessive requests for

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9   For more on citizenship stripping, see generally, Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion ('ISI') and Open Society Justice Initiative, 'UK Resources on Citizenship Stripping', *Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion* (Web Page, 2019) <https://www.institutesi.org/events/uk-seminar-series-citizenship-stripping>, archived at <perma.cc/7QPX-ML63>.

10   *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, GA Res 217A (III), UN Doc A/810 (10 December 1948) art 15.

11   Fionnula Ní Aoláin, *Position of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights Consequences of Citizenship Stripping in the Context of Counter Terrorism with a Partial Application to North East Syria* (Position Paper, UNHCR, February 2022) 3.

12   ISI, *Principles on the Deprivation of Nationality as a Security Measure* (Legal Policy & Guidance, 2020) 8 ('*Principles on the Deprivation of Nationality as a Security Measure*').

13   *Report of the United Nations Secretary General on Human Rights and the Arbitrary Deprivation of Nationality*, UN Doc A/HRC/25/28 (19 December 2013) 16.

14   Luuk van der Baaren et al, *Instrumentalising Citizenship in the Fight Against Terrorism: A Global Comparative Analysis of Legislation on Deprivation of Nationality as a Security Measure* (Report, ISI and Global Citizenship Observatory ('GLOBALCIT'), March 2022) 5, 16, 33–8; *Principles on the Deprivation of Nationality as a Security Measure* (n 12) 1–3.

paperwork, as well as the negative use of discretion by decision-makers, amongst other means, can mask forms of political persecution and systemic discrimination that result in loss or depletion of citizenship.[15] In outlining five modes of citizenship violence, this article explores some of the state-led practices that both mask and accompany the broader processes of citizenship stripping and citizenship violence.

The definition of citizenship stripping used previously refers to loss of citizenship 'not voluntarily requested.' In situations where communities of resistance challenge the legitimacy of the document-issuing state and/or where communities aspire to their own statehood, the '(in)voluntariness' of citizenship loss can be ambiguous and difficult to untangle.[16] Further, citizenship violence can play out not only in the removal of citizenship, but also in the weaponising of citizenship acquisition, for example, conditions placed on naturalisation processes as noted in Part IIB. Nonetheless, in these situations, the modes of resistance are both similar and important. In acknowledgement of the ambiguity of voluntariness and the breath of citizenship violence, this article refers to citizenship violence alongside citizenship stripping.

Mass citizenship stripping is often part of a broader spectrum of persecution. Those without citizenship status can more easily be denied access to vital services, deported, or subjected to segregation and discriminatory policies.[17] There are strong correlations between statelessness and mass atrocities.[18] Mass citizenship stripping can be a form of collective punishment.[19] It can also enable apartheid, genocide and other crimes.[20] From a socio-legal perspective, citizenship stripping is not simply a discrete event in which a person moves across a legal binary from citizen to stateless person. Rather it is a set of interlinked state-led practices and sociological processes that produce the condition of statelessness. An emphasis on the practices and processes of citizenship stripping enables analysis of organisational behaviours (including criminality) of state authorities, as well as the responses of affected people. Resistance in this framework is understood within a relational context, in which affected people collectively respond to

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[15] Amal de Chickera et al, *Navigating with a Faulty Map: Access to Citizenship Documents and Citizenship in Myanmar* (ISI, 2021) 24–36 <https://www.institutesi.org/resources/access-to-citizenship-in-myanmar-report>, archived at <perma.cc/E22J-DW53>.

[16] See, eg, Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 'On the Threshold of Statelessness: Palestinian Narratives of Loss and Erasure' in Joanna Story and Iain Walker (eds), *The Impact of Diasporas* (Routledge 2017) 181.

[17] ibid.

[18] Priya Pillai, 'Taking Statelessness Seriously: Linkages to Mass Atrocities', *OpinioJuris* (Blog Post, 28 January 2019) <https://opiniojuris.org/2019/01/28/taking-statelessness-seriously-linkages-to-mass-atrocities/>, archived at <perma.cc/RDU7-92V8>; Natalie Brinham, *Statelessness and Genocide* (Research Brief, International Association of Genocide Scholars, 2025) <https://genocidescholars.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Brinham-June-2025.pdf>, archived at <perma.cc/C79J-LL6B>.

[19] Kenny, 'Legislated Out of Existence' (n 6) 1057.

[20] See also Penny Green, Thomas Macmanus and Alicia de la Cour Venning, *Genocide Achieved, Genocide Continues: Myanmar's Annihilation of the Rohingya* (Report, International State Crime Initiative, 2018); Fortify Rights, '*Tools of Genocide': National Verification Cards and the Denial of Citizenship of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar* (Report, September 2019) 10, 43–67 <https://www.fortifyrights.org/mya-bgd-rep-2019-09-03/>, archived at <perma.cc/7Y7Q-QZ2J>.

state-led practices. These responses highlight abuses of state power requiring redress.[21]

B   *Modes of Citizenship Violence in Palestinian, Kurdish and Rohingya*

Homelands

This section considers modes of citizenship violence that reach beyond the citizenship rules themselves and extend to other bureaucratic and military means. First, it considers the bureaucratic colonial structures that facilitate contemporary forms of citizenship stripping. It then identifies five key modes through which states weaponise their citizenship regimes against groups in contemporary contexts, providing examples from Rohingya, Palestinian and Kurdish contexts. Citizenship stripping is inextricably linked to broader state-driven bureaucratic processes associated with state-building, development, efficiency and governance. State enumeration and identification technologies are tools of modernity, efficiency and development. Yet they can also be weaponised alongside citizenship and immigration rules to target particular populations and dispossess them of their lands, rights and identities. [22] This dual function of state bureaucracies as vehicles for the efficient simultaneous delivery of welfare on the one hand and oppression on the other has roots in colonial techniques of control.[23]

Colonial administrations used strategies such as census-making, mapping, race and caste classifications, and identification technologies with the dual purposes of efficient governance and the domination of populations who resisted colonial rule. Many of these techniques continue to be used in contemporary contexts.[24] The British established administrative borders and hierarchical administrative structures at the village and regional levels in their colonies, which were used in tandem with military operations to control and pacify populations. [25] These colonial bureaucratic structures and techniques formed some of the foundations of

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[21]   For more on state crime as a social construct and the role of resistance and social audience in seeking sanction where international law fails, see Kristian Lasslett, 'Power, Struggle and State Crime: Researching Through Resistance' (2012) 1(1) *State Crime* 126, 137–9.

[22]   David Lyon, 'Identification, Colonialism, and Control: Surveillant Sorting in Israel/Palestine' in Elia Zureik, David Lyon and Yasmeen Abu-Laban (eds), *Surveillance and Control in Israel/Palestine: Population, Territory and Power* (Routledge 2011) 49 ('Identification, Colonialism and Control').

[23]   David Lyon, *Identifying Citizens: ID cards as Surveillance* (Polity Press 2009).

[24]   Charles Haukes Todd Crosthwaite, *The Pacification of Burma* (Edward Arnold 1912). On mapping, see Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-body of a Nation* (University of Hawaii Press 1997); Rachel Hewitt, *Map of a Nation: A Biography of the Ordnance Survey* (Granta Publications 2011). On census, see Anat E Leibler, '"You Must Know your Stock": Census as Surveillance Practice in 1948 and 1967' in Elia Zureik, David Lyon and Yasmeen Abu-Laban (eds), *Surveillance and Control in Israel/Palestine: Population, Territory and Power* (Routledge 2011) 239; Jane M Ferguson, 'Who's Counting?: Ethnicity, Belonging, and the National Census in Burma/Myanmar' (2015) 171(1) *Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia* 1. On race and caste classifications, see Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton University Press 2018); Sunil S Amrith, 'The Pursuit of Citizenship' in *Crossing the Bay of Bengal: The Furies of Nature and the Fortunes of Migrants* (Harvard University Press 2013) 212–250. On identification technologies, see John C Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship, and the State* (Cambridge University Press 2000); Radhika Singha, 'The Great War and a "Proper" Passport for the Colony: Border-Crossing in British India, c. 1882–1922' (2013) 50(3) *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 289; Radhika Viyas Mongia, 'Race, Nationality, Mobility: A History of the Passport' (1999) 11(3) *Public Culture* 527.

[25]   Crosthwaite (n 24) 3.

contemporary modes of bureaucratic violence including citizenship stripping. Data gathering practices, including censuses, land registration and policing records in Palestine during the British Mandate and afterwards, provided the foundations of Israel's contemporary surveillance and citizenship infrastructures and facilitated the dispossession of Palestinian lands and legal status. [26] In Myanmar, movement restrictions were implemented on the basis of the British Empire's *1864 Foreigners Act* that remained in place in Myanmar after independence, forming one of the legal foundations for restricting movement and segregating Rohingyas.[27] The Act mandates a strict system of licensing for travel within Myanmar and the residence of non-nationals and forms one of the foundations of the discriminatory system that contains Rohingyas in pockets of northern Rakhine State and requires them to apply for permission to travel between village tracts and beyond.[28] This law was also weaponised by the British in British India in the 1920s and 1930s by restricting the movement of dissidents in an attempt to contain revolts against colonial rule.[29] In the 1980s, the stripping of citizenship rights accorded to the Rohingya following Myanmar's independence from British rule was justified on the basis of wildly inaccurate colonial taxonomies of race and ethnicity in the region. [30] During the interwar years, Kurdish homelands were split between the four countries of Syria, Iran, Iraq and Turkey based on colonial mapping projects that sought to contain and curtail the power of other European colonial powers, rendering Kurdish communities 'minorities' within broader state structures.[31]

This article asserts that citizenship stripping in authoritarian or militarised postcolonial contexts is often delivered in part through citizenship and immigration rules, in part through broader bureaucratic and legal means, and in part through military assaults. There are many of examples of this. Israel's citizenship rules, that denied or demoted Palestinians' legal status, were partially implemented on the basis of census data that was collected during and immediately after war and mass forced displacement.[32] Hierarchical identification systems held in place systems of segregation that provided different rights to Palestinians based on their locations during war-time.[33] Restrictions tied to identity card hierarchies

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[26]   Michelle Spektor, 'From Documents to Data: The Emergence of National Biometric Identification Systems in the 20th and 21st Centuries' (PhD Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2023) <https://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/150683>, archived at <perma.cc/3973-RXVT>; Leibler (n 24) 243–4; Lyon, Identification, Colonialism, and Control (n 22) 49.

[27]   *The Foreigner Act, 'India Act III'* (1864) (Burma) <https://www.myanmar-law-library.org/law-library/laws-and-regulations/laws/british-burma-1824-1942-1945-1948/the-foreigners-act-india-act-iii-1864-12th-february-1864.html>, archived at <perma.cc/U2KF-WF32> ('*Foreigners Act*'). For analysis of the *Foreigners Act*'s use in the Rohingya context, see William Schabas, Nancie Prudhomme and Joseph Powderly, *Crimes against Humanity in Western Burma: The Situation of the Rohingyas* (Iris Centre for Human Rights, 2010) 99.

[28]   *Foreigners Act* (n 28) ss 3, 10.

[29]   Amrith (n 24); Singha (n 24) 311.

[30]   Nyi Nyi Kyaw, 'Unpacking the Presumed Statelessness of Rohingyas' (2017) 15(3) *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 269.

[31]   Haqqi Bahram, 'Statelessness Beyond Citizenship: Kurds of Syria and the Struggle for Identity Between Home and Exile' (Doctoral Thesis, Linköping University, 2024) 20, 36–8, 42, 83, 188 ('Between Home and Exile').

[32]   Leibler (n 24) 252.

[33]   Helga Tawil-Souri, 'Orange, green and blue: Color-coded paperwork for Palestinian population control' in Elia Zureik, David Lyon and Yasmeen Abu-Laban (eds), *Surveillance and Control in Israel/Palestine: Population, Territory and Power* (Routledge 2011) 219.

increased over decades alongside land dispossession, the systematic dismantlement of Palestinian political structures and the erasure or disciplining of Palestinian history and identity.[34] Kurdish populations in Syria are often described as having been stripped of their citizenship primarily through the 1962 census.[35] This was accompanied by land dispossession, administrative and physical violence. The differentiated registration categories of belonging originating from the census institutionalised exclusion, further enabling systematic discrimination and administrative erasure.[36] The Rohingya of Myanmar are generally understood to have been rendered stateless by the *1982 Burma Citizenship Law* ('*1982 Citizenship Law*'),[37] which made full citizenship rights dependent on membership of an ethnic group considered to be 'national' by the state. Rohingya collective claims to status as a national group were denied.[38] These legal tools were used alongside mass expulsions to Bangladesh, land confiscation and dispossession, economic exclusion and a travel permit system that held in place the architecture of segregation.[39] Looking to these processes or sets of broader practices in the context of citizenship stripping is important in considering different modes of resistance. This is because communities of resistance respond in ways that highlight the state use of different practices, whilst simultaneously reasserting and rejuvenating their own identities of belonging. This Part now identifies and contextualises five non-exhaustive contemporary modes of citizenship violence within these broader processes.

The first mode is the re-categorisation of people as foreigners, second class citizens or outsiders through administrative and legal means. Following Myanmar's independence from Britain, Rohingyas were provided with the same national identification cards as all other citizens. In the 1990s, after a new ID system was implemented based on the *1982 Citizenship Law*, Rohingyas were gradually re-categorised as non-citizens. Over time, they were labelled as 'Bengalis' or foreigners in other documentation such as temporary registration cards and family registration documents. Similarly, Kurdish people in Syria were also re-categorised as foreigners after the 1962 census.[40] They were divided into two categories of non-citizens – *ajanib* ('aliens' or 'foreigners') for those who were registered in the census and re-categorised as foreigners with red identity cards, and *maktoumeen* ('unregistered', 'concealed' or 'hidden') for those who

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34   Tamir Sorek, 'The Changing Patterns of Disciplining Palestinian National Memory in Israel' in Elia Zureik, David Lyon and Yasmeen Abu-Laban (eds), *Surveillance and Control in Israel/Palestine: Population, Territory and Power* (Routledge 2011) 114; Rashid Khalidi, *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonialism and Resistance, 1917–2017* (Metropolitan Books 2020).

35   Haqqi Bahram, 'Too Little Too Late?: Naturalisation of Stateless Kurds and Transitional Justice in Syria' in Tendayi Bloom and Lindsey N Kingston (eds), *Statelessness, Governance, and the Problem of Citizenship* (Manchester University Press 2021) 264, 264 ('Too Little Too Late?').

36   Thomas McGee, 'Implications of Legal Identity Documentation Issued by the Kurdish-led Self Administration in Northern Syria: Competition and Compromise with the Central State' (2023) 27(7) *Citizenship Studies* 835; Bahram, 'Too Little Too Late?' (n 35) 268.

37   *Burma Citizenship Law 1982* (Myanmar). See Kyaw (n 30) 14, 23–44; Elizabeth L Rhoads, 'Citizenship denied, deferred and assumed: a legal history of racialized citizenship in Myanmar' (2023) 27(1) *Citizenship Studies* 38, 38.

38   See generally, Brinham, *Citizenship and Genocide Cards* (n 4).

39   Natalie Brinham, 'Looking Beyond Invisibility: Rohingyas' Dangerous Encounters with Papers and Cards' (2019) 24(2) *Tilburg Law Review* 156 ('Looking Beyond Invisibility').

40   Bahram, 'Too Little Too Late?' (n 35) 264.

were not registered in the census and were treated as undocumented 'illegal'.[41] Palestinians have been re-categorised over time from citizens of Palestine into a hierarchy of subjecthood based on Israel's control over and securitisation of the population registers. Different ID cards assign different restrictions relating to movement and work based on the location of Palestinians at the time of registration in the West Bank, East Jerusalem or Gaza.[42]

The second mode of citizenship violence is document stripping, by which I mean the systematic removal, destruction, or nullification of identity and other evidentiary documents. Rohingyas' national registration cards that were the mode of identification in the 1950s–1980s, and which remain the primary evidence of citizenship and residence, were removed through legal, administrative and violent means in Myanmar.[43] In Syria, Kurdish identification documents were removed before new documents were issued in the aftermath of the 1962 census.[44] In all three contexts, destruction of property during war and military assaults have resulted in the loss of documents.

The third mode of citizenship violence is the erasure of history, culture, language and identity of the targeted community. This is achieved through state control of school curricula, media, popular culture and policy spaces. Palestinian scholarship has meticulously documented how Israel recast Palestine as 'a land without people', and Palestinians as a people without an historic national identity.[45] Kurdish scholarship has shown how the processes of 'Arabisation' in Syria and elsewhere in the region denied people the use of their language, their names, their cultural practices and other aspects of their group identity. [46] Meanwhile in Myanmar, Rohingya were accused of 'making up' their ethnic identity and history in the country and denied the right to self-identify as Rohingya.[47]

The fourth mode of citizenship violence is the prevention of access to civil registration during conflict, including the suspension and destruction of civil registries and the implementation of movement restrictions that prevent registration. A lack of civil registration can lead to long-term difficulties in proving citizenship, family relations, place of origin, and land and property rights, and can exacerbate problems in navigating refugee registration in contexts of forced displacement.[48] It is important to note that this is generally a by-product of war and conflict rather than a targeted attack on a particular group. Nonetheless, in some situations civil registration becomes a mode of warfare in itself. In

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[41] ibid.

[42] Yasmeen Abu-Laban and Abigail B Bakan, 'The "Israelisation" of Social Sorting and the "Palestinianisation" of the Racial Contract: Reframing Israel/Palestine and the War on Terror' in Elia Zureik, David Lyon and Yasmeen Abu-Laban (eds), *Surveillance and Control in Israel/Palestine: Population, Territory and Power* (Routledge 2011) 300; Tawil-Souri (n 33).

[43] Brinham, Looking Beyond Invisibility (n 39).

[44] Bahram, Between Home and Exile (n 31); Bahram, Too Little Too Late? (n 35).

[45] Khalidi (n 34).

[46] Bahram, Between Home and Exile (n 31); Barzoo Eliassi, *Narratives of Statelessness and Political Otherness: Kurdish and Palestinian Experiences* (Springer 2021) 40–1, 44, 109.

[47] For evidence of both these accusations and examples of how Rohingyas have challenged these accusations through scholarship, see Aman Ullah, *A History of Rohingyas to 1948* (Blurb 2024); Nurul Islam, 'Rohingya and Nationality status in Myanmar' in Ashley South and Marie Lall (eds), *Citizenship in Myanmar: Ways of Being in and from Burma* (ISEAS Singapore 2018) 264.

[48] For examples of the impact of statelessness on refugees, see ENS, 'Stateless Journeys', *The Issue* <https://statelessjourneys.org/the-issues/>, archived at <perma.cc/FC3F-8MWF> ('Stateless Journeys').

Rakhine State Myanmar, special registration procedures put in place while township offices were shut due to conflict, were only made available to non-Muslims, denying Rohingyas access.[49] In Syria, non-recognition of registration procedures conducted by different state and non-state entities was used to deny legitimacy to associated administrations and armed groups, affecting specific groups. As such civil registration can be integral to conflicts.[50]

The fifth mode of citizenship violence relates to the conditionalities placed on ID issuance, naturalisation and citizenship acquisition. Naturalisation in some circumstances is offered to a limited number of individuals affected by statelessness. In some cases, it can mean the denial of one's group identity or denial of one's belonging to a particular territory. This can create intra-group hierarchies, divisions and split loyalties. Syria's move to naturalise some stateless Kurds in 2011 was only extended to *ajanib* or red identity card holders, and required them to assume an Arab name and identity.[51] Myanmar's National Verification Cards ('NVCs') were provided ostensibly as a step towards naturalisation for Rohingyas with documentary proof of their ties to the country.[52] The cards, which were mandatory, labelled the vast majority of Rohingyas as foreigners who needed to apply for citizenship. The application process required Rohingyas to deny their group identity in order to be considered for a second-class form of citizenship.[53] The issuance of passports and identity documents in Palestine followed a different path, but one that was also paved with state violence. Following on from the Oslo Accords in 1993, Palestinian Authorities were able to issue passports from 1995 onwards. Nonetheless, Israel maintained control over the population registries and was able to assert dominance over the ID systems, borders and surveillance.[54] With power structures remaining firmly entrenched, Palestinian Authorities were widely viewed as having been coopted to entrench

[49] Kathy Win and Natalie Brinham, *Dangerous Journeys through Myanmar: Insecurities and Immobilities for Rohingya Women in Post-Coup Myanmar* (Briefing Paper, ISI, 2022) 6 <https://research-portal.uea.ac.uk/en/publications/dangerous-journeys-through-myanmar-insecurities-and-immobility-fo>, archived at <perma.cc/VMG8-FFQ5>.

[50] William Grant-Brook, 'Documenting life amidst the Syrian War: Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham's Performance of Statehood through Identity Documents' (2023) 27(7) *Citizenship Studies* 850; Sarah Adamczyk and Jessica Doumit, 'Legal identity in Limbo: Humanitarian Challenges and Responses to Civil Documentation Issued by De Facto Authorities in Northwest Syria' (2023) 27(7) *Citizenship Studies* 866; McGee (n 36).

[51] Bahram, Between Home and Exile (n 31)

[52] Brinham, *Citizenship and Genocide Cards* (n 4) 194.

[53] Fortify Rights (n 20); Richard Potter and Kyaw Win, 'National Verification Cards: A Barrier to Rohingya Repatriation' (Report, Burma Human Rights Network, 2019) <https://bhrn.org.uk/report/1090-national-verification-cards-a-barrier-to-rohingya-repatriation-full-report.html>, archived at <perma.cc/6Q34-RQTE>.

[54] Neve Gordon, 'Israel's Emergence as a Homeland Security Capital' in Ella Zureik, David Lyoin and Yasmeen Abu-Laban (eds), *Surveillance and Control in Israel/Palestine: Population, Territory and Power* (Routledge 2011); Lyon, Identification, Colonialism and Control (n 22).

Israel's control over Palestinian populations.[55] Such practices were sometimes perceived as legitimising Israel's apartheid system.[56]

Having outlined five modes of citizenship violence, Part III considers how communities collectively resist these state practices.

III   RESISTANCE

A   *Conceptualising Resistance and Agency in Statelessness Studies*

There are longstanding debates within the statelessness studies field as to the limits of agency of those deprived of nationality, with stateless people often conceptualised as cast outside of legal, political and social spheres and thus lacking full human agency.[57] Hannah Arendt's work on statelessness is often the starting point of conceptualisations of the stateless person within legal and political theory.[58] The human rights framework, which was developed in the aftermath of the Second World War, marked a shift in the focus of international law from an inter-state to an individual rights perspective. Arendt's critique of this framework showed that although individuals are entitled to rights by virtue of their humanity, without access to the right to nationality they are effectively unable to realise those rights.[59] Within the international political order, states have been consolidated over time as the 'sole legitimate organising units of global politics'.[60] Stateless humans who fall outside of the state system, or do not have membership of any state, are understood as having no means through which they can directly claim their rights or seek justice and restitution. Partially drawing on Arendt's theories of statelessness, Agamben developed the concept of 'bare life'.[61] In this concept, stateless people cast out of legal, political and social spheres and stripped of their human agency. They are reduced to a survival existence, able only to meet their bodily needs. Thus, their agency is reduced to the bare minimum.

Critiques of both Arendt's and Agamben's work often focus on how stateless people maintain and assert their agency outside of the statist structures that

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[55]   Nigel Parsons, 'The Palestinian Authority Security Apparatus: Biopolitics, Surveillance, and Resistance in the Occupied Palestinian Territories' in Elia Zureik, David Lyon and Yasmeen Abu-Laban (eds), *Surveillance and Control in Israel/Palestine: Population, Territory and Power* (Routledge 2011) 355;

[56]   For authoritative characterisations of these systems as apartheid, see: 'Summary of the Advisory Opinion of 19 July 2024', *Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem* (International Court of Justice, General List No 18619 July 2024); Amnesty International, 'Israel's apartheid against Palestinians: a cruel system of domination and a crime against humanity' (Report, 2022) <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/02/israels-apartheid-against-palestinians-a-cruel-system-of-domination-and-a-crime-against-humanity/>, archived at <perma.cc/K8CP-8MFQ>; S Michael Lynk, 'Israel's 55-year occupation of Palestinian Territory is apartheid – UN human rights expert', *Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights* (Web Page, 25 March 2022) <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/03/israels-55-year-occupation-palestinian-territory-apartheid-un-human-rights>, archived at <perma.cc/Q5VV-TJWP>.

[57]   See Lindsey N Kingston, *Fully Human: Personhood, Citizenship, and Rights* (Oxford University Press 2019).

[58]   Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Allen and Unwin, 2nd ed, 1958).

[59]   ibid.

[60]   Mira L Siegelberg, *Statelessness: A Modern History* (Harvard University Press 2020) 6.

[61]   Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford University Press 1998).

constrain them.[62] The debates on agency within statelessness studies speak to broader sociological framings relating to the balance between structural constraints and individual agencies.[63] Law and legal identity do not determine the parameters of our humanness, but they do define the parameters of state power which profoundly impact social relations and human experience. Based on the contention that structures are rarely absolute but are rather diffuse and dynamic, this article understands that people affected by statelessness do have agency and can resist. It also understands that the hegemonic nature of state power means that stateless peoples' actions are restricted by quite a specific set of structural factors related to the lack of recognition of their legal status. These structural factors can severely curtail many forms of resistance and limit the effectiveness of resistance in seeking social justice. Different forms of solidarity — in this case within the anti-statelessness sector — can and do help to shift power dynamics to a greater or lesser extent. With this in mind, the following Parts on the modes of resistance highlight some of these structural limitations.

Social action is sometimes conceptualised as occurring at different levels: international, national and local. Organisations that are the 'targets' of advocacy or activism campaigns operate on and across these levels: international (eg, Inter-governmental organisations, United Nations ('UN') bodies,[64] regional blocs, international lending and development institutions, etc); national (eg, state and state-funded organisations); and local (eg, local authorities). Likewise, promotors of social change are sometimes differentiated into levels: international civil society (International non-governmental organisations ('INGOs'), public-private partnerships, think-tanks, etc), national civil society (National NGOs, private-public partnerships, think tanks, etc) and local level (community-based organisations, grassroots activists, etc). Social action is, however, perhaps better understood as a series of fluid and dynamic connections between different levels, organisations and individuals. Nonetheless, in order to understand the shifting structures of power, it is useful to draw on these units or levels.

In this article, international and national level advocacy as conducted by INGOs, NGOs and other actors is conceived as separate, but connected to the forms of resistance from below that are outlined in Part IIIB. There has always been movement and overlap between the levels. For example, activists from stateless communities in diaspora or formerly stateless activists often operate at multiple levels from local to international, while some partnerships between INGOs, national NGOs and stateless-led organisations have developed ways of collaborating and priority setting that operate on multiple levels.[65] The increasing

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[62] Samanwita Paul and Balbir Singh Butola, 'Rohingya Women as Refugees: Examining Displacement, Refugeehood and "Bare Life"' (2024) 37(3) *Journal of Refugee Studies* 680; Brad K Blitz, 'The State and the Stateless: The legacy of Hannah Arendt Reconsidered' in Tendayi Bloom, Katherine Tonkiss and Phillip Cole (eds), *Understanding Statelessness* (Routledge, 1ˢᵗ ed, 2017) 70.

[63] Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Polity Press 1984); On contexts shaped by bureaucracy, see Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cornell University Press 2000).

[64] United Nations agencies and bodies are often simultaneously involved in advocacy and the targets of advocacy.

[65] See, eg, ENS, External Community (n 5); Global Statelessness Fund (n 5); 'Meet our Members', *Global Alliance to End Statelessness* (Web Page, 2025) <https://statelessnessalliance.org/members-directory/>, archived at <perma.cc/Y75A-ZDVZ> ('*Statelessness Alliance*').

work of organisations led by people affected by statelessness is changing the configurations of regional and global advocacy.[66]

Unequal power relations between these levels, however, are a social reality that have dominated and defined anti-statelessness work, despite efforts to dismantle hierarchies. Priorities within the sector were for many years set from the top down based on donor, state and philanthropist priorities, as well as other pragmatic factors. The 'I Belong' campaign, which ran from 2014 to 2024 and was led by the UNHCR, largely shaped the funding and priorities of international advocacy activities to combat statelessness.[67] Broadly speaking, this campaign operated within a statist system that promoted universal registration and 'legal identities for all', bypassing more critical, radical and bottom-up approaches to challenging citizenship stripping.[68] The recently launched follow-up campaign of the Global Alliance to End Statelessness has a different governance structure that reflects attempts within the sector to level the playing field and engage in more meaningful forms of participation.[69] As such, many of the organisations involved in the management and priority setting for this campaign are either stateless-led or involved in frontline work with stateless people.[70] Nonetheless, the influence of groups that are directly affected by citizenship stripping and resist state violence on the ground continues to be limited by various structural constraints, as considered in the Parts that follow.

Within anti-statelessness work, ground-level paralegal services in multiple settings have supported individuals in obtaining legal identities and citizenship recognition. NGOs and networks of lawyers have also challenged discriminatory registration and administrative processes, pushing for better access to both legal identities and basic services (such as health, education and social care) for individuals at risk of statelessness.[71] These initiatives have had important impacts on the lives of those affected by statelessness. They tend to initially address the statelessness of individuals, before building momentum towards challenging discrimination in civil registration and citizenship laws, sometimes using approaches such as strategic litigation. These legal interventions are well covered

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[66]   See, eg, the diverse membership of the *Statelessness Alliance* (n 65).

[67]   Kristy A Belton, 'Ending Statelessness through Belonging: A transformative agenda?' (2016) 30(4) *Ethics & International Affairs* 419; Lindsey N Kingston, '"A Forgotten Human Rights Crisis": Statelessness and Issue (Non)Emergence' (2013) 14(2) *Human Rights Review* 73.

[68]   Hajime Akiyama, 'Critical Analysis on Ending Statelessness and UNHCR's #IBelong Campaign' in The Japan Association for United Nations Studies ('JAUNS') (ed), *Evolution of the United Nations System: An East Asian Perspective* (Routledge 2023) 163; Brinham, *Citizenship and Genocide Cards* (n 4).

[69]   'Taskforce', *Global Alliance to End Statelessness* (Web Page, 2025) <https://statelessnessalliance.org/taskforce/>, archived at <perma.cc/JGS4-87QP> ('*Statelessness Alliance Taskforce*').

[70]   See *Statelessness Alliance* (n 65).

[71]   See, eg, 'Statelessness Unit', *Lawyers for Human Rights* (Web Page) <https://www.lhr.org.za/lhr-units/statelessness-project/>, archived at <perma.cc/659H-57DJ>; 'Right to Nationality (Statelessness)', *Development of Human Resources for Rural Areas ('DHRRA') Malaysia* (Web Page, 2022) <https://dhrramalaysia.org.my/initiatives/right-to-nationality-statelessness/>, archived at <perma.cc/TC3M-FQRV>.

in other literature and are not the focus of this article, which considers collective forms of resistance.[72]

B   *Modes of Resistance*

This Part identifies five modes of collective resistance relating to the modes of citizenship violence in Part II and provides examples from the three case studies. It also explores structural factors that limit their effectiveness. The modes focus on resistance to bureaucratic and symbolic forms of state violence that are closely associated by communities of resistance with citizenship stripping or citizenship violence. Accordingly, organised resistance with more general aims, such as armed or political movements, are beyond the scope of this article.

1   *Countering re-categorisation through collective refusals*

Statelessness is not always a problem of being unregistered or undocumented by the state. Sometimes people are issued documents by state authorities that re-categorise them as foreign, stateless, or fix them into a prolonged state of liminality regarding their legal status.[73] Other registration and documentation processes are associated with forced assimilation, denying people the right to self-identify. For example, people may not be allowed to record names that signify their linguistic or religious background, or they may be assigned an alternative ethnic identity.[74] Registration procedures, censuses and other bureaucratic tools support the processes of re-categorisation. Forms of collective resistance that respond to re-categorisation violence include protests, strikes, refusal to participate in registration and data collection drives, as well as other forms of civil disobedience. This Part provides examples of collective refusals relating to data collection and the issuance of identity documents.

One of the most visible examples of this relates to Myanmar's census and ID system. Many Rohingyas in Myanmar refused to take part in the national census of 2014,[75] in which they were not allowed to self-identify as Rohingya — a term which denotes belonging to both Myanmar and the Rakhine region of the country. International development funding and technical assistance was provided for this

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[72]   Forms of resistance beyond the scope of this chapter include legal challenges and strategic litigation relating to citizenship rules and implementation. In the contexts of the on the ground resistance explored in this Part, citizenship rules and bureaucracies had been weaponised in such a way as to preclude effective action in this regard. However, reports and literature from civil society organisations explore the use of strategic litigation to combat statelessness in other contexts including Malaysia, Kenya and the Dominican Republic. See, Jamie Chai Yun Liew, 'CYM v Malaysia: Landmark Decision for Adopted Stateless Children Has Little Traction beyond Apex Court' (2023) 5(1) *Statelessness & Citizenship Review* 100; Bridget Wooding, 'Contesting discrimination and statelessness in the Dominican Republic' (2009) *Forced Migration Review* 23; Andrew Songa, 'Addressing Statelessness in Kenya Through a Confluence of Litigation, Transitional Justice, and Community Activism: Reflecting on the cases of the Nubian, Makonde and Shona communities' (2021) 5(1) *African Human Rights Yearbook* 253.

[73]   Bronwen Manby, 'Schrödinger's Citizenship: Framing Perspectives for the Resolution of Statelessness' (2024) 6(2) *Statelessness & Citizenship Review* 5.

[74]   Engin Sustam, 'Kurdish Art and Cultural Production: Rhetoric of the New Kurdish Subject' in Hamit Bozarslan, Cengiz Gunes and Veli Yadirgi (eds), *The Cambridge History of the Kurds* (Cambridge University Press 2021).

[75]   International Crisis Group ('ICG'), *Counting Costs: Myanmar's Problematic Census* (Update Briefing, Asia Briefing Nᵒ 144, 15 May 2014) <https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/icg/2014/en/99356>, archived at <perma.cc/P6M7-U8H2> ('*Counting Costs*').

census largely through the United Nations Population Fund ('UNFPA') and overseas aid including from Australia and the United Kingdom.[76] In the initial phases of designing the census, Rohingyas feared they would be wrongly registered as 'Bengali' which, in the context of Myanmar's citizenship rules denotes foreignness. Rohingya protests and other forms of activism, particularly in the camps for Internally Displaced Persons ('IDPs') in Rakhine State, drew international attention to re-categorisation as a form of state violence linked to citizenship stripping. Some proposals were put forward in census discussions to include an alternative category of 'other' under which Rohingyas could register. This was also not acceptable for many Rohingyas who understood that 'other' also designated them as different from ethnic groups that were considered by the state to belong to Myanmar. Myanmar went against the advice of their international technical advisors in refusing to allow Rohingya to self-identify. Collective Rohingya refusals to take part in the census followed. As a result, a large proportion of Rohingyas were not recorded on the national census.[77]

On the one hand, this collective refusal was important in drawing domestic and international attention to both the role of Myanmar state authorities in denying Rohingya citizenship and identity, and the role of international donors and organisations in legitimising these forms of bureaucratic and symbolic violence through the provision of technical and financial support for Myanmar's census. It highlighted the need for international organisations and governments to put more pressure on the Myanmar government in the future including through funding structures. On the other hand, it also illustrated the limits of resistance strategies for those with little influence in national and subnational politics. Not being included in national statistics can result in being excluded from national-level development projects and welfare interventions. It can also further undermine claims to belong to the country, as Rohingya historians and activists found regarding the 1973 census in which they were not included.[78] Additionally, Buddhist Rakhine groups with 'full-citizenship' counter-protested against the inclusion of the term Rohingya in the census. These protests ultimately had greater influence on census practices at the national level.[79]

A further example of Rohingya collective refusal relates to NVCs which were issued to Rohingya in Myanmar from 2015 onwards. NVCs, which replaced the Temporary Registration Cards or 'white cards' previously held by Rohingya, identified the bearers as foreigners who needed to apply for citizenship.[80] Between 2016 and 2018, many Rohingya collectively refused to accept NVCs and refused to participate in the data collection processes associated with them.[81] Consequently, with their 'white cards' invalidated, they had to function without an individual ID and were thus unable to apply for travel permits and the whole range of licenses needed for work. Multiple methods were used by civil and military authorities to force people to accept NVCs, including threats, arrests, physical abuse, denial of basic services and denial of birth registration. At the time,

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[76]   Ferguson (n 24) 1–28.
[77]   ICGG, *Counting Costs* (n 75) 24.
[78]   Islam (n 47).
[79]   ICG, *Counting Costs* (n 75).
[80]   Brinham, Looking Beyond Invisibility (n 39); Brinham, *Citizenship and Genocide Cards* (n 4).
[81]   See generally, Brinham, *Citizenship and Genocide Cards* (n 4) and more specifically ch 7 '"Genocide Cards": ID's Registration, and the Phases of the Rohingya Genocide'.

many national and international bodies were recommending an upgrade of Myanmar's civil registration and identification systems (including NVCs), and supporting 'trust-building' in registration processes between Rohingya communities and government bodies as a means to promote peace and development.[82] Collective refusals by Rohingya communities effectively drew attention to the ongoing process of citizenship stripping and identity denial in Myanmar, which continued during the (ill-fated) transition from military to hybrid civilian-military rule.[83] As a result of these forms of resistance, the issues of citizenship violence were picked up in reports by international human rights organisations, and even shaped some international recommendations.[84]

However, the negative consequences of document refusal for Rohingya communities were wide-ranging. As a result of document refusal, different forms of administrative violence were deployed against the Rohingya. Movement restrictions and other permissions which were long associated with a discriminatory system of segregation were tied to NVCs; those without suffered from lack of access to livelihoods, health care, education and food security.[85] These coercive practices slowly wore down resistance to the NVCs. Further, in Rohingya narratives, the increased tensions between Myanmar authorities and Rohingya communities related to NVC refusals were closely connected to increased militarisation of Rohingya areas in 2016 and 2017 immediately prior to the 'clearance operations' that forced more than 700,000 Rohingya to flee the country to Bangladesh.[86] The international dimension brought by Rohingya refugee movements out of Myanmar also served to undermine Rohingya resistance to Myanmar's ID schemes. From 2017 onwards, there was a strong international focus on ensuring timely repatriations to Myanmar. Documenting Rohingyas residency in Myanmar was seen as vital in securing proof of their right of return. Repatriation efforts skirted criticism of Myanmar's ID schemes, instead focusing on the technicalities of implementing large-scale repatriations.[87] Rohingyas who returned or were deported were issued with NVCs on arrival, further breaking down resistance.

Rohingya refusals are among the best documented examples of this form of resistance to citizenship stripping. There are, however, examples from other contexts.[88] Collective refusals to take part in state data collection and identification processes can have an important role in highlighting how state practices that re-categorise people can be part of a broader citizenship stripping process. They can also expose communities of resistance to other forms of state

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82 Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, *Towards a Peaceful, Fair and Prosperous Future for the People of Rakhine* (Report, Kofi Annan Foundation, 2017) 31–2 <https://www.kofiannanfoundation.org/publication/rakhine-final-report/>, archived at <perma.cc/L46E-YZBU> ('Advisory Commission on Rakhine State').

83 The period ended in February of 2021 with a military coup.

84 Their accounts were evidenced in the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar: *Detailed Findings of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar* (UN Doc A/HRC/42/CRP.5, 2019) ('IIFFMM').

85 Brinham, Looking Beyond Invisibility (n 39) 161–3; Fortify Rights (n 53) 73.

86 IIFFMM (n 84) 62; For general facts about the genocide, see Penny Green, Thomas Macmanus and Alicia de la Cour Venning, *Genocide Achieved, Genocide Continues: Myanmar's Annihilation of the Rohingya* (Report, International State Crime Initiative, 2018) <https://qmro.qmul.ac.uk/xmlui/handle/123456789/42004>, archived at <perma.cc/3U5Y-MQ3G>.

87 See, eg, Advisory Commission on Rakhine State (n 82).

88 Areej Alshammiry, 'Writing in Exile: Bidoon Resistance and Speaking Truth to Power' (2020) 12(1) *Cultural and Pedagogical Inquiry* 149.

violence, as well as undermine state recognition of citizenship and belonging over time as people find themselves without proof of legal status.

2 *Countering document stripping through the collection and exhibition of documents*

Erasure of evidence that national or ethnic groups have previously belonged to a particular territory or state is sometimes practiced by state authorities with the purpose of obscuring the practice of citizenship stripping. By asserting that group members have never had the right to citizenship in a territory, states bypass international legal norms relating to the arbitrary deprivation of citizenship. One way to achieve this is through the nullification, non-recognition, confiscation or destruction of state-issued documents belonging to people from the persecuted group. Destruction and removal of documents can be part of broader campaigns of violence and displacement. In some cases, these practices can take place either prior to incidents of mass violence and displacement, or in the aftermath to diminish access to rights after return. The impact of the loss of documents and non-recognition of documents on people's legal status and associated rights has been seen in conflict settings in Syria, Myanmar and elsewhere.[89] Beyond access to legal status and associated rights, these practices can also be part of a much broader process of reworking national histories in ways that exclude particular groups.[90]

To counter such practices of document stripping and document violence, communities have developed collections of historic IDs and other documents and/or have exhibited such documents as a form of resistance. In the Palestinian context, land registration documents, school registers, Palestine government passports and refugee documents amongst others have been used as signifiers of national existence. Feldman asserts that land documents from the British Mandate era have a national significance akin to Palestinian flags in various forms of protest and contestation of the erasure of their histories and belonging.[91] Similarly in the Rohingya context, the collection and exhibition of historic documents including ID cards and passports issued in the first decades of independence, land-tenure documents from the colonial period, clippings evidencing the state use of their ethnic name, refugee and past repatriation documents, and others were collected in refugee camp settings and shown to community members and visiting human rights actors, researchers and journalists.[92] These collections were used to counter erasures of their identity as a group belonging to Myanmar, as well as draw attention to the practices of document removal and nonrecognition as state practices closely linked to citizenship stripping.[93]

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[89] de Chickera et al (n 15); Marika Sosnowski and Bart Klem, 'Legal identity in a looking-glass world: documenting citizens of aspirant states' (2023) 27(7) *Citizenship Studies* 761.

[90] Ronan Lee and José Antonio González Zarandona, 'Heritage Destruction in Myanmar's Rakhine State: Legal and Illegal Iconoclasm' (2020) 26(5) *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 519.

[91] Ilana Feldman, 'Refusing Invisibility: Documentation and Memorialisation in Palestinian Refugee Claims' (2008) 21(4) *Journal of Refugee Studies* 498.

[92] Different Rohingya community-based organisations, including Arakan Rohingya Society for Peace and Human Rights, collected copies of community members documents, keeping them in files and displaying them to visiting foreigners, as well as their own communities. For more discussion, see Brinham, *Citizenship and Genocide Cards* (n 4), specifically ch 5 'IDs as evidence of state crime and artefacts from the early decades of independence'.

[93] Brinham, *Citizenship and Genocide Cards* (n 4).

Both Palestinian and Rohingya examples of the use of historic ID documents, as a form of resistance or counter-practice, reveal how these approaches have been effective to the extent that they have been taken up and amplified or replicated by national or international actors as a form of solidarity. Collecting and showing historic documents or copies of them to outsiders including researchers was a practice common to both Palestinians in proving their national identity, and Rohingyas in proving their right to citizenship in Myanmar to researchers. These then developed into community-level group practices, for example, in the Bangladesh refugee camps, or in Palestinian protests.[94] Tawil-Souri shows how, as acts of solidarity and protest, some Israelis who were critical of the treatment of Palestinians began to display colour-coded identity cards from Gaza to highlight citizenship hierarchies and the violence of the state borders.[95] Rohingya diasporic communities used IDs and other documents as part of museum or other exhibitions for international audiences relating to Rohingya national identity.[96] In the Rohingya context, other international projects also started up in which international allies in conjunction with Rohingyas archived or showcased Rohingya documents as signifiers of national identity. This included The Rohingya Project, which digitises documents as part of a cultural preservation project, and Greg Constantine's project, 'Ek Khaale', which provides a visual story-telling platform for Rohingya to showcase their national identity and history through photography of their documents.[97]

The strategies of collecting and exhibiting documents, then, have been drawn on by groups to counter state practices that erase group belonging through document stripping. In doing so, these groups do not only assert their right to citizenship and/or belonging, but also highlight that their statelessness is a result of state practices that breach international legal norms relating to the arbitrary deprivation of citizenship. In doing so, Rohingyas, for example, have helped shift international understandings of their statelessness, moving state persecution from backstage to centre state. This has played an important part in shifting international recommendations and approaches, with some human rights organisations no longer focusing on 'pathways to citizenship', but on 'citizenship restoration' as part of international justice initiatives.[98]

Despite these gains, the barriers to both accessing citizenship for Rohingya and preventing different forms of citizenship violence for Palestinians remain and have become further entrenched. New practices of citizenship stripping by Israel have emerged in the midst of the current conflict, including Palestinians with Israeli

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94   Feldman (n 91). On Bangladesh refugee camps, see Brinham, *Citizenship and Genocide Cards* (n 4) 118–23.

95   Tawil-Souri (n 33).

96   See, eg, Larry Luxner, 'Washington Museum of Palestine', *AramcoWorld* (online, 4 November 2019) <https://www.aramcoworld.com/Articles/November-2019/Washington-s-Museum-of-Palestine>, archived at <perma.cc/84J3-N2X6>; 'A Permanent Exhibition of Palestinian Heritage, Cultural and Daily Life', *Palestine Museum Cultural Centre* (Web Page, 2025) <https://palmuseumbristol.org/index.php>, archived at <perma.cc/QBN2-TAJJ>.

97   See 'Restoring Rohingya Identity', *The Rohingya Project* (Web Page, 2023) <https://rohingyaproject.com/>, archived at <perma.cc/FA9E-4CVA>. See also 'Ek Khaale: Once Upon a Time, The Rohingya: A Visual Restoration', *Ek Khaale* (Web Page, 2025) <https://www.ekkhaale.org/>, archived at <perma.cc/4FZ3-BWNG> ('Ek Khaale').

98   Brinham, *Citizenship and Genocide Cards* (n 4) 107.

citizenship.[99] Conflict has also engulfed Rohingya homelands in Rakhine State Myanmar, with the main Ethnic Armed Organisation ('EAO') in the area, Arakan Army, replicating state practices of group persecution. Internationally, the legal processes designed to hold Myanmar and Myanmar officials to account for the crimes against Rohingya, including the legal proceedings at the International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Court and those relating to international jurisdiction have referred to the deprivation of nationality,[100] but they have no mechanisms or procedures through which they can effectively incorporate Rohingya articulations of citizenship restitution.[101] The lack of accountability in international law extends beyond either the Rohingya or Palestine context, underlining how state-issued documents are imbued with forms of state power that, within the current international political order which gives priority to states, cannot easily be turned around by the bearers of these documents to push back.

3   *Countering erasure through community-centred knowledge production and arts*

As noted in the previous Part, mass citizenship stripping is often accompanied by state practices that attempt to re-work the histories and identities of the targeted group to erase them from nationalist histories or to legitimise exclusions. Exclusionary framings are asserted through the control over national curricula in schools and higher education settings, the curtailing of academic freedoms, the control and censorship in media and social media, and the drafting processes for discriminatory citizenship laws and constitutions. Such practices have, for example, been a feature of state approaches to Palestinian, Kurdish and Rohingya histories.[102] Strategies to counter exclusionary statist histories and discourses include community-centred knowledge production and the development of platforms and networks for dissemination. State erasures been challenged by producing literature, poetry, art, language and research articles that centre community knowledge and identity to counter nationalist histories and discourses. This can also involve linguistic renewal, and the teaching of traditional skills and knowledge.[103] Likewise, art and cultural production in the Kurdish context has been key to countering erasures in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey.[104]

Some forms of knowledge production and art explicitly explore administrative and legal erasure and the violence of national ID systems that target specific groups. For example, Palestinian poet laureate, Mahmoud Darwish, explored

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[99]   Anonymous, 'Palestinian citizens of Israel Fear Risk of Becoming Stateless amidst Rising Calls for Citizenship Revocation', *ENS* (Blog Post, 12 September 2024) <https://www.statelessness.eu/updates/blog/palestinian-citizens-israel-fear-risk-becoming-stateless-amidst-rising-calls>, archived at <perma.cc/JE95-4JYY>.

[100] On the universal jurisdiction issue, see 'Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK ('BROUK'): For the Rights of Rohingya', *Historic Decision by Argentinian Courts to Take up Genocide Case against Myanmar* (Media Release, 28 November 2021) <https://www.brouk.org.uk/historic-decision-by-argentinian-courts-to-take-up-genocide-case-against-myanmar/> , archived at <perma.cc/UN2D-9NNL>.

[101] Jade Roberts, 'Statelessness before the ICJ: The Gambia v Myanmar' (2023) 5(1) *Statelessness & Citizenship Review* 226.

[102] On Palestinian histories, see Khalidi (n 34). On Kurdish histories, see Sustam (n 74). On Rohingya histories, see Maung Zarni and Natalie Brinham, 'Reworking the Colonial-Era Indian Peril' (2017) 24 (Fall/Winter) *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 53.

[103] Areej Alshammiry's work explores novels, literature and the use of social media platforms as ways that Bidoons from Kuwait have resisted erasure: Alshammiry (n 88).

[104] Sustam (n 74).

identity, land loss and labour extraction in his poem 'Identity Card'.[105] In a similar vein, Rohingya poet, Mayyu Ali, focused on the violence of registration and citizenship denial in his poem, 'That's me, A Rohingya'.[106] Both poems were part of broader arts movements that explicitly sought to recast and reground group belonging against the prevailing discourses of erasure. Another subset of this mode of resistance is historical research produced by members of the targeted communities to counter state erasures, sometimes taking the form of biographical accounts of events or archival research.[107] Such arts and knowledge production has also been supported by international actors as a form of solidarity.[108]

Forms of resistance that seek to change discourses at the national and international level can hold a very deep symbolic significance and, through different arts and social science mediums, can forge new and important forms of connection and solidarity. The impact of such initiatives is difficult to capture within the ever-shifting dynamics of international politics and knowledge production. Constraints at the structural level for people affected by statelessness are also fluid. Such constraints include: the power of states to (partially) control information exchange through media, publishing, academia, and social media; state use of surveillance technology to monitor and silence activists, journalists, artists and academics; and barriers for stateless people in formal education settings and workplaces, which can make it difficult for them to gain broad recognition for their work.

4   *Countering conflict-associated statelessness through self-registration*

In Syria, Myanmar and beyond, conflict is understood to be a major contributing factor to statelessness, especially where civil registries have collapsed or documents have been destroyed. In such cases, other states and organisations may look for proof of identify provided by autonomous administrations.[109] Literature on rebel governance explores the central role of self-administration in state formation.[110] An associated developing body of literature relevant to statelessness and citizenship studies considers legal identities within non-state administered territories and in conflict settings.[111] In situations of conflict, organisations on opposing sides sometimes vie for legitimacy and recognition of their statehood. One of the methods of establishing legitimacy is through the registration of populations within their territories and the issuance of identity documents. These

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105   Mahmoud Darwish, 'Identity Card' [2016] (310/311: June/July) *Third World Resurgence* 56 <https://www.twn.my/title2/resurgence/2016/310-311/poetry1.htm>, archived at <perma.cc/2LXZ-M8X6>.

106   See James Byrne and Shehzar Doja, *I am a Rohingya: Poetry from the Camps and Beyond* (Arc 2019).

107   Ullah (n 47).

108   James Byrne, Shehzar Doja and Ronan Lee have supported poetry initiatives in the Rohingya camps of Bangladesh relating to identity, see Shafir Rahman, 'Rohingya Photographer', *Rohinyga Photography Competition* <https://rohingyaphoto.com/>, archived at <perma.cc/W2CW-2YYS>. See also Greg Constantine, who has supported Rohingya photography related to belonging: Ek Khaale (n 97).

109   Katharine Fortin, Bart Klem and Marika Sosnowski, 'Legal Identity and Rebel Governance: A Comparative Perspective on Lived Consequence of Contested Sovereignty' in Tendayi Bloom and Lindsey N Kingston (eds), *Statelessness, Governance, and the Problem of Citizenship* (Manchester University Press 2021) 125.

110   David Brenner and Martina Tazzioli, 'Defending Society, Building the Nation: Rebel Governance as Competing Biopolitics' (2022) 66(2) *International Studies Quarterly* 1.

111   Fortin, Klem and Sosnowski (n 109); Sosnowski and Klem (n 89) 761.

processes provide the foundations through which human movement is controlled, welfare is distributed, and authorities are recognised.[112] Scholarship and reports relating to documentation in Syrian territories under multiple state-like administrations reveals that the issuance of identity documents can also feed into conflict, with different parallel administrations refusing to recognise one another's documents with the purpose of de-legitimising other state or aspirant-state bodies. Individuals can sometimes be punished for holding or using the documentation of rival administrations.[113] In such cases, the problems associated with a lack of identity documents and statelessness can be further compounded. Efforts have been made to ensure reciprocity in the recognition of documents issued by non-state actors and autonomous administrations, but the results have been limited.[114] Notwithstanding the central role that autonomous administrations can play in conflicts where sovereignty is contested, broad recognition of a variety of documents in contexts of displacement is vital in protecting against statelessness.[115]

Recent literature points out that, sometimes (semi-)autonomous administrations function in ways that do not necessarily aspire to statehood, nor attempt to directly challenge the legitimacy of other state-like entities.[116] Thomas McGee shows that in the northern part of Syria, the Kurdish-led self-administration has provided documents to their populations that are not necessarily connected to aspirations of statehood. Included amongst the documented population are (formerly) stateless Kurds.[117] The documents do not provide proof of citizenship, but they do provide equal access to resources and services, mitigating the socio-economic barriers associated with statelessness. Self-registration and self-administration, then, can both be a source of conflict and potentially protect against it. It can also be used to reduce the socio-economic inequalities and exclusions associated with statelessness within self-administered territories. If used in tandem with broad campaigns for external and international recognition of documents issued by autonomous administrations, this mode of resistance could provide protections against long-term and intergenerational impacts of statelessness in situations of displacement or migration.

However, minoritised and stateless people are not always represented within non-state administrations, or they can be subject to the governance of multiple parallel administrations.[118] Further these administrations can have exclusionary ideologies and practices themselves. In Myanmar, following the military coup of 2021, civil conflict has intensified. Semi-autonomous administrative bodies

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[112] Torpey (n 24)*; Colin J Bennett and David Lyon, *Playing the Identity Card: Surveillance, Security and Identification in Global Perspective* (Routledge 2013).
[113] Grant-Brook (n 50); McGee (n 36).
[114] Adamczyk and Doumit (n 50); McGee (n 36).
[115] For studies on the impact of statelessness in asylum systems, see ENS, Stateless Journeys (n 48).
[116] Sosnowski and Klem (n 89) 761.
[117] McGee (n 36).
[118] Grant-Brook (n 50).

associated with EAOs have (partial) control of large swathes of territory.[119] Rohingyas in Rakhine State have fallen under the partial control of Arakan Army's administrative wing, the United League of Arakan. The Arakan Army includes factions that draw on exclusionary Buddhist and ethnic nationalist ideologies that exclude the Rohingya. For Rohingyas, this means continued and increasing taxation, labour extraction and movement restrictions without formal recognition of their citizenship or belonging.[120] As such, where stateless communities lack representation and power within the autonomous administrations that govern them, they can find themselves doubly excluded.

5   *Countering the conditionalities of IDs through strategic compliance and subversion*

Conditionalities are often imposed on those applying for citizenship or an improved legal status. ID systems and registration can be imposed in ways that require people to deny their own identity, assume a group identity by which they do not self-identify, or go against the collective strategies of resistance including document refusal. States can compel individuals to go through registration processes by imposing conditions of life on the targeted group that make functioning in society without registration almost impossible. For example, states can curtail movement within or outside of the country for people without IDs, or make access to work, markets and banking contingent on the possession of IDs. In such cases, individual pragmatism comes into conflict with group loyalties. In the case of the Rohingya in Myanmar, accepting an NVC was at times deeply controversial within the Rohingya community, as the scheme was seen as a way to split the community and weaponise the ID system through the denial of recognition of Rohingya group belonging. Nonetheless, the conditions imposed on those without NVCs had become increasingly draconian, meaning that for those Rohingyas who wished to remain within Myanmar and continue to promote the Rohingya cause, NVCs became a necessity.[121]

Activists in Myanmar sometimes accepted NVCs for the expressed reason that it enabled them to continue their activism, for example, to document and report abuses against Rohingya communities including citizenship violence, or in order to provide vital humanitarian support to members of the community within the country. All the while, they maintained their own Rohingya identity, language and cultural practices as a form of resistance.[122] Likewise, Haqqi Bahram's work provides examples of how Kurdish people in Syria subverted the meaning of the registration documents that categorised them as *ajanib* and *maktoumeen*. Instead of focusing on the systems of discrimination that they held in place, they began to use these documents as a symbol of Kurdish pride and identity.[123] He also shows how those who were forced to assume Arab names in order gain the benefits of

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119   The extent to which ethnic armed organisations in Myanmar negotiate control over the territory changes daily. However, for more on the development of this ongoing situation, see, 'Myanmar's Ethnic Armies Consolidate Strongholds as Junta Weakens, Reports Say', *Reuters* (online, 30 May 2024) <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/myanmars-ethnic-armies-consolidate-strongholds-junta-weakens-reports-say-2024-05-30/>, archived at <perma.cc/7E66-H6C3>; David Brenner, 'Rebel Politics after the Coup: Ethnic Armed Organisations and Myanmar's Spring Revolution' (2025) *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 1.

120   Win and Brinham (n 49).

121   Brinham, *Citizenship and Genocide Cards* (n 4).

122   ibid.

123   Bahram, Between Home and Exile (n 31) 105.

having a Syrian legal identity continued to resist identity destruction, by maintaining and reinvigorating 'home' identities that ran contrary to official enforced identities.[124]

Strategic compliance with ID systems and subversion have played important roles in maintaining group presence of in the home country of those affected by citizenship violence. In all three cases, maintaining a population and identity in the homelands has been vital in maintaining resistance efforts against the backdrops of ethnic cleansing and genocide. In such scenarios, forced ID systems can and do cause intra-communal fissures, which was evident in the Rohingya situations where NVC holders expressed feelings of shame in interviews, and similarly evident in Bahram's interviews with naturalised Kurds.[125] Further, the provision of identity documents and pathways to different forms of citizenship under the international 'legal identity for all' and 'end statelessness' agendas are almost universally promoted as solutions.[126] The hidden nature of strategic compliance and subversion means that the nuances of these forms of citizenship violence have made few dents in the international discourses that promote universal IDing.

IV   CONCLUSION

This article has outlined some of collective responses to citizenship stripping and citizenship violence. These ground-level modes of resistance draw attention to different state practices associated with citizenship stripping and violence. These forms of resistance can inform and influence international approaches aimed at ending statelessness. However, this requires organisations and individuals working at national and international levels in the anti-statelessness sector to look to ground-level forms of resistance and social action in seeking solutions. The real challenge within the state-centred confines of global advocacy is, how can the sector begin to address statelessness when it is a product of state violence and group persecution? There are more and more critiques of how the international 'legal identities for all' agenda can exacerbate problems associated with statelessness and state exclusions.[127] This is particularly the case where state violence and racism are factors. How then can the anti-statelessness sector approach situations in which support for ID systems and civil registration simultaneously provide progress for citizens, but also serve to legitimise violent states or exclusionary state practices? There are no easy answers. Neither is there a neat set of bullet points to serve as policy recommendations. This concluding Part of the article instead looks to the five modes of resistance to consider some of the implications, presenting them as a set of related challenges. This is with the hope of generating more reflection around responsive anti-statelessness interventions in situations where the state is a bad faith actor.

The first mode of resistance considered refusals as a way to counter re-categorisation of people as foreigners or outsiders. These collective forms of resistance drew attention to the situations in which particular modes of registration and documentation harmed people by compounding or extending exclusions.

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124 Bahram, Too Little Too Late (n 35).
125 Bahram, Too Little Too Late (n 35); Bahram, Between Home and Exile (n 31).
126 Manby (n 4).
127 ibid; Natalie Brinham and Ali Johar, 'Refugee Experiences of Identity Documents and Digitisation in India and Myanmar' (2024) *Forced Migration Review* 8.

These actions highlight the human costs associated with the 'legal identities for all' agenda. As such, they challenge the international development sector to: find ways to identify situations in which registration, census making and other processes cause harm and adapt approaches accordingly; rethink the role of identification and enumeration as foundational to the delivery of welfare and development; and focus not on national statistics for counting and identifying stateless people, but rather focus on how to effectively deliver development and humanitarian support to people who are safer when they remain uncounted or unidentified by the states in which they live.

The second mode of resistance considered how groups collect and exhibit historic documents to draw attention to state practices of document stripping and identity erasure. This practice highlights the significance of group identity and group persecution in exclusionary citizenship regimes. As such, it challenges the anti-statelessness sector to look beyond initiatives that seek to increase individual access to civil registration and documentation, and consider how to integrate anti-statelessness initiatives with those of other sectors working on group persecution, including international criminal law initiatives and conflict-sensitivity and peace-building initiatives. It also challenges those working with identification registration technologies to consider ways to ensure that digitisation can give humans more control over their data and identities vis-à-vis states.

The third mode of resistance focused on community-centred knowledge production to counter state discourses that diminish or erase their histories and identities. This challenges the anti-statelessness sector to centre the knowledge and analysis of people affected by statelessness at the same time as decolonising its own knowledge production practices and approaches to international policy. It asks the sector to fund and amplify local research initiatives and arts platforms, whilst at the same time taking steps to reduce the dominance of their own expertise. This challenge remains despite the existing efforts within the sector to level the playing field and to actively create spaces for people affected by statelessness.

The fourth mode of resistance focused on countering statelessness through self-registration. This action exposes the problems and gaps associated with state legitimacy being tied so closely to documentation and legal identities. It challenges scholars and policy actors to reach beyond the methodological nationalism inherent in our work. It asks the sector to find ways to look beyond the state in supporting local forms of registration and identity recognition, as well as promoting international recognition of a broader range of documents including reciprocity of recognition of those issued by autonomous administrations and non-recognised states. It asks other states receiving refugees and migrants to reduce the burdens of documentation, and to build escape lanes for the stateless off the super-highway of the 'legal identities for all' agenda.

The fifth mode of resistance underlines how not all forms of citizenship violence can be addressed through campaigns to end statelessness. Statelessness is one outcome of citizenship violence; there are many others, including the weaponisation of citizenship regimes and ID systems. Understanding responses on the ground as strategic compliance or subversion points to the urgent need to address citizenship violence in more holistic ways, by analysing the vast battlefields of citizenship violence that stretch far beyond statelessness.

All these challenges are, of course, not easily addressed. Not least because they sit within a much broader set of unequal power relations between states, humans and

international law that struggles to hold state actors to account for their crimes. Further, the digitisation and universalisation of ID systems and bordering practices, which further alters the international structures of capital and power, can make socio-economic bars close in faster on the excluded and the persecuted. Posing these challenges then is really an invitation to all of us who do anti-statelessness work to put all ears close to the ground and, in these turbulent times, listen harder than we have ever listened before.