



THE PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
TO THE
UNITED NATIONS AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
IN GENEVA

November 6, 2017

Imma Guerras-Delgado
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
United Nations Office at Geneva

Dear Ms. Guerras-Delgado:

Thank you for your letter dated September 5, 2017, requesting relevant information for its report on best practices and specific measures to ensure access to birth registration. Please find the U.S. response attached.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason Mack".

Jason R. Mack
U.S. Deputy Permanent
Representative to the UN Human
Rights Council

SUBJECT: U.S. Response for Relevant Information on Birth Registration

Thank you for the High Commissioner's letter dated September 5, 2017, concerning his planned report on best practices and specific measures to ensure access to birth registration, particularly for those children most at risk, marginalized and living in situations of conflict, poverty, emergency and vulnerability, including children belonging to minority groups, children with disabilities, indigenous children, and children of migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, and stateless persons. We appreciate the opportunity to engage constructively with the OHCHR and are grateful for your office's work to promote respect for human rights.

The United States notes that the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights affirms the importance of birth registration by providing that "Every child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have a name." (Article 24(2))

The United States also believes that birth registration is an important means of preventing statelessness and human trafficking, providing protection to vulnerable populations, and finding durable solutions for refugees. It often serves as a vital document in a child's development as a gateway to accessing health care (such as immunizations) and enrolling in school. For migrant and displaced children, birth registration serves as a key record of a child's family links and can help separated children reunite with their families.

The United States advocates publicly and through bilateral and multilateral diplomacy to improve birth registration around the world. The State Department's annual Country Reports on Human Rights detail whether children enjoy universal birth registration, and we have supported resolutions on birth registration at the Human Rights Council and in other multilateral fora.

Domestically, birth registration practices are covered by state and local, not federal, law, thus the United States has no federally established set of best practices regarding birth registration. However, when a child is born abroad to a U.S. citizen parent or parents, that child may acquire U.S. citizenship at birth if certain statutory requirements are met. The child's parents can contact the nearest U.S.

embassy or consulate to apply for a Consular Report of Birth Abroad of a Citizen of the United States of America (CRBA) to document that the child is a U.S. citizen. Although the CRBA is not a birth certificate, according to U.S. law, it is proof of U.S. citizenship and may be used to obtain a U.S. passport and register for school, among other purposes.

Finally, the United States supports the efforts of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to ensure birth registration for populations of concern, and encourages partnerships with national authorities, as well as UNICEF and nongovernmental organizations, to conduct birth registration and increase capacity. For example, the United States supports UNHCR's work with authorities in Lebanon and Jordan to provide birth registration to Syrian refugee children. UNHCR's efforts to inform refugees of birth registration procedures are showing some signs of progress in Lebanon, where according to surveys conducted by UNHCR in 2016, 93 percent of refugees had a birth certificate from the Mukhtar, compared to 78 percent in 2015.

Once again, we appreciate the opportunity to engage constructively with your office and we hope that our input will prove helpful.