BRILL
NIJHOFF

TILBURG LAW REVIEW 19 (2014) 171-181

Tilburg
Law Review

brill.com/tilr

The Stateless Kurds of Syria

Ethnic Identity and National I.D.

Thomas McGee
University of Exeter, UK
tem202@exeter.ac.uk

Abstract

Kurds constitute a trans-border population and the world's largest non-state nation. Conceptually, as well as empirically, they have long challenged the boundaries of the Middle East's nation-state system. Due to recent developments in Syria, the country's (stateless) Kurds find themselves at a double historic juncture. Firstly, some non-citizen Kurds have 'benefitted' from the exceptional naturalization brought in as a reconciliatory reform by the current regime during the Revolution's early stages. Secondly, the transformation of state identity, which is presently being negotiated between Islamists, secularists and Arab nationalists etc, not only impacts upon citizen-state relations, but also determines the position of both stateless and citizen Kurds. Drawing on fieldwork conducted with stateless Kurds, both in Syria and displaced in neighbouring countries, this paper argues that not only is access to citizenship being transformed, but so too is the very definition of being a citizen. The paper concludes that enjoyment of citizenship for Kurds of Syria cannot be understood from a quantitative statistical analysis alone.

Keywords

stateless – Kurds – Syria – citizenship – ajanib – maktumin – nationality

1 Introduction

> *'In the political discourse of modernity, statelessness is conceived as a humanitarian issue, evoking compassion and mercy, on a par with famine, hunger and homelessness. This is because a consideration of statelessness as politics and the stateless as a 'political subject' immediately invokes the thorny issues of rights, which, in the political discourse of modernity, is*

 | DOI 10.1163/22112596-01902017

> *intrinsically linked with the institution of the nation-state and national sovereignty.*[1]

Itself a global problem, it has been widely acknowledged that statelessness can lead to or aggravate 'associated' secondary problems.[2] In accepting this general understanding, the present paper seeks to challenge the corollary that acquisition of nationality necessarily brings a definitive end to the core and associated problems of statelessness. In doing so, it will address two alternative theoretical conceptions of statelessness, concisely manifest in the semantic distinction between a 'stateless person' and 'stateless people', and examine their empirical intersection in the case of Kurds in Syria.[3]

The first conception of statelessness emanates from the standard legalistic definition of a 'stateless person,' as expressed in international law and reiterated by UN literature and advocacy. Article 1 of the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons establishes a stateless individual as 'a person who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law.'[4]

The second though sometimes overlapping notion of statelessness has been developed within the field of political science. While there is less scholarly consensus on the definition of a 'stateless people', Wolff's explanation that it is 'distinguished from other peoples in that it does not have its own state' will be taken as the essence of this concept.[5]

---

1 Abbas Vali, 'The Kurds and their "Others": Fragmented Identity and Fragmented Politics' (1998) 18 (2) Identity Politics and Global Economics 82.

2 The global nature of statelessness is noted by Laura Van Waas, 'Nationality Matters: Statelessness Under International Law' (2008) 29 School of Human Rights Research Series, 10 <http://arno.uvt.nl/show.cgi?fid=113179> accessed 17 July 2013; UNHCR, 'Resolving Statelessness' in The State of the World's Refugees: In Search of Solidarity: A Synthesis' (2012) 14 <www.unhcr.org/4fc5ceca9.html> accessed 13 September 2013. Further information on the problems 'associated' with statelessness is available via UNHCR *Note on UNHCR and Statelessness Activities* (EC/47/SC/CRP.31, 30 May 1997) <www.refworld.org/docid/3dd3a7627.html> accessed 9 September 2013; UNHCR *Nationality and Statelessness: A Handbook for Parliamentarians* (2005).

3 In accordance with the explanation below, the plural form for each conception is 'stateless persons' and 'stateless peoples' respectively.

4 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons (1954) <www2.ohchr.org/english/law/stateless.htm> accessed 15 August 2013.

5 The literature frequently employs the synonyms 'non-state nation' and 'non-state people.' Stefan Wolff, 'The relationships between states and non-state peoples: a comparative view of the Kurds in Iraq' in Gareth Stansfield and Robert Lowe (eds), *Kurdish Policy Imperative* (Chatham House 2010).

Since Kurds missed out during the period of nation-state building in the Middle East, they can generally be considered as a 'People without a Country.'[6] Moreover, there are categories of Kurds in Syria who were deprived of Syrian citizenship because of a discriminatory census in 1962 which targeted the majority-Kurdish governorate of Hassaka. The result was that some 120,000 became stateless overnight. The statuses of *ajanib*[7] and *maktumin*[8] were inherited by subsequent generations bringing the estimated total at the start of 2011 close to 300,000. These sub-groups of 'stateless persons' are collectively referred to in Kurdish as '*bê nifûs*,' literally 'without an identity card.'[9]

As such, the *ajanib* and *maktumin* Kurds of Syria suffered the double injustice of being not only without a country of their own, but without nationality papers and corresponding civil rights in their country of residence. They, prior to the introduction of a 2011 decree granting some of the *ajanib* Kurds Syrian nationality, were one of the world's largest groups of 'stateless persons.'

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate this naturalization in the context of the dual conception of statelessness mentioned above. The material and identity-based implications of the newly acquired status will be considered for the naturalised population, as well as for Syrian Kurds in general. Given that the legalistic and normative dimensions of this question, including Syria's obligations under international law and its own nationality legislation, have been examined elsewhere,[10] this paper seeks to contribute a mostly social sciences contribution to what is both a legal and political issue.

Considering the quantitative extent of inclusion in the naturalization process, the paper also draws on qualitative material acquired through semi-structured interviews and ethnographic observation in Syria during 2009–2011

6 Gerard Chaliand, *People without a Country: The Kurds and Kurdistan* (Zed Press 1982).

7 The term *ajanib* (sing. *ajnabi*, fem. *ajnabiyya*) means 'foreigners' and such individuals were issued with irregular identity documents that allowed limited corresponding rights.

8 *Maktumin* (sing. *maktum*, fem. *maktuma*) refers to those who are completely undocumented and enjoy even fewer civil rights than the *ajanib.* For further details on the relative experiences and hardships of *ajanib* and *maktumin* in Syria, see Human Rights Watch, *Syria The Silenced Kurds* (October 1996) <www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/SYRIA96.pdf> accessed 26 August 2013.

9 cf. the *Bidoon* (Arabic for 'without') in the Arabian Gulf: Abass Shiblak, 'Arabia's Bidoon' in Brad Blizt and Maureen Lynch (eds), *Statelessness and the benefits of Citizenship: A comparative Study* (Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, International Observatory on Statelessness, 2009) 85–93.

10 Most recently, Zahra Albarazi, 'The Stateless Syrians' (2013) Tilburg Law School Legal Studies Research Paper Series <https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2269700> accessed 12 August 2013.

and in the Kurdistan Region (KR) of Iraq and Turkey thereafter.[11] As such, analysis will go beyond identifying the presence of the legal bond between the individual (newly naturalised) citizen and the state, referred to in the title of this paper as 'I.D.' Attention will also be given to the conceptions of 'identity' that qualify their enjoyment of citizenship. 'I.D.' and 'identity' are related notions of belonging, the first being absolute and limited, while the second is constructed upon perceived and emotional attachments based on social interaction.[12] The two terms are connected in conceptions of state-individual relations, and sometimes provision of I.D. is conditional upon demonstration and/or appreciation of a strong sentiment of national identity.[13]

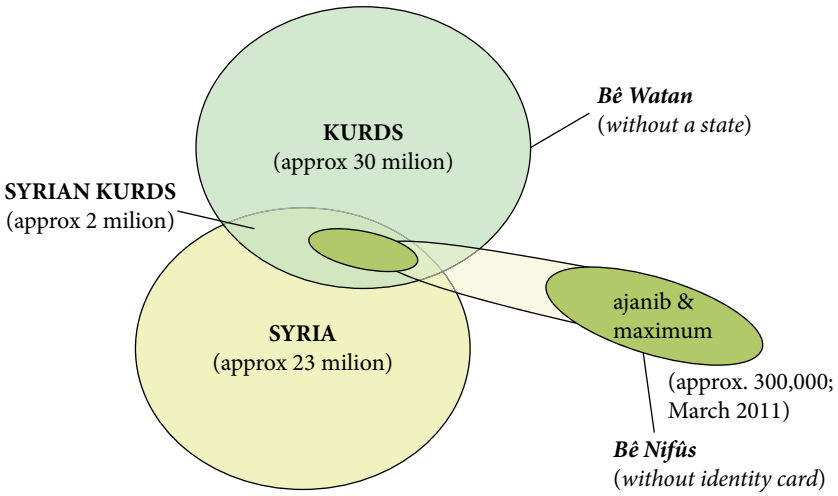

FIGURE 1 *Visualization of Kurdish-Syrian-Statelessness Intersections.*

11 Field research was conducted in the Kurdistan Region during June-August 2012, and in Turkey during February-September 2013. Many of the research participants in these locations had left Syria as a consequence of the conflict that developed following the popular uprising in March 2011. Due to the dispersed nature of the relevant research subjects and challenges to identify stateless Kurds within the host community, research relies heavily on individual narratives to reveal more about a generally under-researched population.

12 cf. Judith Bulter's analysis of the sex-gender distinction, referred to in Thomas McGee, 'Stateless Identity and National I.D.: Kurds of Syria' (MA thesis, University of Exeter 2012) 66–74.

13 Examples include integration procedures for immigrants such as an oath of allegiance, covered by in the Eastern European context by Eva Mrekajova, 'Naturalization of Stateless Persons: Solution of Statelessness?' (MA dissertation, University of Tilburg, 2012) 40.

2 Quantitative Evaluation - Acquisition of I.D.

Firstly, the access to citizenship will be assessed in light of Decree 49 from April 2011, which introduces the naturalization process.[14] Since a more extensive analysis of this specific measure is available elsewhere,[15] present focus will be limited to a consideration of the number of its 'beneficiaries.' Based on survey questions asked of Syrian Kurdish refugees in Domiz camp (KR) by UNHCR Iraq during 2013, 92 percent of those claiming to have ever been registered as *ajanib* were now Syrian nationals.[16] 94 percent of *ajanib* had attempted to benefit from the provisions of Decree 49, with an impressive success rate of 98 percent. There was much lower incidence of *maktumin*, only 7 percent of those surveyed, and of these, 77 percent considered themselves still to hold no Syrian or other nationality.[17]

A priori there is no reason to assume that statelessness would be more or less prevalent among Syrian Kurds outside the camp in the rest of the Kurdistan Region. This implies that while most *maktumin* (though surprisingly few in number were surveyed)[18] continue to be excluded, Syrian nationality for *ajanib* had become remarkably accessible. Nonetheless, it is necessary also to consider the impact Decree 49 and its related naturalization have on perceptions of national identity for Syrian (stateless) Kurds, and to evaluate newly acquired citizenship within the present Syrian context of civil war.

---

14 Article 1 of presidential Decree 49 issued on April 7 2011 'grants Syrian Arab citizenship to registered "foreigners" in Hassaka.' The decree contains no criteria for how the process would be carried out.

15 Albarazi (n 10) 18–22; McGee (n 11) 95–104.

16 Given the political sensitivities in contacting stateless Kurds in Syria, and their scattered distribution in Turkey and the Kurdistan Region, it was not possible to approach the large number of subjects that would be necessary to gain meaningful statistical data. Since this is beyond the scope of work for a single researcher, I am particularly grateful to UNHCR Iraq for sharing its quantitative data on the subject. This data was collected through a mobile survey conducted by UNHCR partners with 1974 individual Syrian Kurds over a period of 5 days. Of these, 579 individuals had at some point been registered as *ajanib* (29% of the sample). Only 51 of these still held *ajnabi* status at the point of questioning.

17 Of the 1974 individuals surveyed, only 132 responded to having ever been *maktumin*, of which 101 remained so by the time the survey was implemented.

18 The figure is surprisingly low given previous estimates for the prevalence of *maktumin* in Kurdish society in Syria: Kurdwatch, *Stateless Kurds in Syria: Illegal Invaders or Victims of a Nationalistic Policy?* (Report 5, Kurdwatch, 2010): <www.kurdwatch.org/pdf/kurdwatch_staatenlose_en.pdf> accessed 13 August 2013. Evaluating this result, however, is beyond the scope of the present study.

3 Qualitative Evaluation - Benefits & Identity

From a qualitative perspective, the impacts of naturalization upon the enjoyment of 'the practical benefits of citizenship' will be examined in the following section.[19] The fact that 94 percent reportedly applied to take citizenship shows that it is considered as an attractive and/or beneficial prospect for most *ajnabi* Kurds. Indeed, in interviews it was often mentioned that people were prepared to pay large bribes in order to secure or expedite their and their family's naturalization.

I.D. cards for naturalised Kurds appear, and function, like those of all other citizens of the Syrian Arab Republic. Though not always easy and sometimes requiring bribes, interviewees reported being able to register property in their names. A case that demonstrates the radically new opportunities for some involves an individual being able to regularise a job that he had been doing illegally for almost four years.[20] Critically given the conflict situation, citizenship has provided its beneficiaries greater security to move freely around the streets without the same level of risk of imprisonment/victimization if stopped by police without valid papers.[21]

However, respondents also reported that in many ways acquisition of citizenship does not end the suffering they have experienced for decades. 'For the young,' says one interviewee, 'maybe they can seize the new opportunities, yet for those of us who are older, we have internalised the position of inferiority.'[22] In addition to this, many of the theoretically newly acquired rights remain limited or untestable due to the disruption of normalcy by Syria's present conflict situation. Public institutions are no longer operating ordinarily, but in many

19 Brad Blitz and Maureen Lynch, 'Statelessness: The Global Problem, Relevant Literature and Research Rationale' in Brad Blizt and Maureen Lynch (eds), *Statelessness and the Benefits of Citizenship: A Comparative Study* (Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, International Observatory on Statelessness, 2009) 4–17.

20 Newly naturalized citizens are not entitled to all the employment benefits of other nationals since some public sector jobs require one to have been a citizen for 5 years.

21 In interviews, stateless Kurds often reported having problems with the police in Syria or neighbouring countries, where checkpoints and police raids can be part of the daily reality. Anne Dekkar records the following example: 'I am maktoum. This means my life is worth nothing. If the police sees us talking I will have a big problem. But what can they do? What can they take from me? I have nothing, I am a maktoum. My life can't get worse.'" 'Consequences of statelessness: Ajanib and Maktoum in Syria' (MA thesis, Amsterdam Free University 2011) 56.

22 Names of all respondents except public figures have been concealed in order to protect their anonymity.

areas have been replaced by *ad hoc* field hospitals and schools, and state directorates are often no longer regularly issuing documents.[23]

While acquiring citizenship is generally considered to give naturalised Kurds an important stake in the future of the country, interviewees frequently stated that their Syrian nationality is not yet 'activated.' Others went beyond this and claimed that the notion of citizenship in general is presently dead - or, as some stated, 'has been killed' - in Syria. One naturalised Kurd, now a refugee in the Kurdistan Region, asked rhetorically, 'what is the value of citizenship in a time when up to a thousand citizens can be killed in a day? When you kill citizens, you kill citizenship.' The lack of basic civil rights and suspension of rule of law since the start of the Revolution constitutes a 'state of exception' that undermines the very notion of citizenship.

The transition from stateless person to refugee in neighbouring countries also extends the experience of hardship and perceived injustice. A woman from Qamishli explains 'we were stateless in Syria, living in a house we could not register, and our children could not hope to inherit. Now we are citizens of Syria, but we are also refugees here in Kurdistan. Now there is no house to be in our name, only a tent in a camp. This is what our children have to look forward to as Syrian citizens (…)' Another adds, 'we must sell our homes [in Hassaka], to save our lives (…) everywhere we are "foreigners."'

Participants frequently brought up during the course of interviews that perhaps the only benefit relevant for many naturalised Kurds was the possibility of acquiring a passport in order to escape the state with which they had just established a legal tie.[24] While interviewees tended to make such statements with a sense of bitter irony, the importance of the right to leave one's country of residence should not be under-estimated, especially in the present context.

3.1 *The Politics of Naturalization*

Perceptions of the naturalization process are not simply based on the actual access to benefits, but also influenced by political associations. Given that the problem of the *ajanib* and, arguably also, the *maktumin*,[25] originates from discrimination against a minority group, many naturalised Kurds still feel severely aggrieved. As one put it, 'I felt as if it was an attack on my person. But at the

23 Respondents noted that registration of property is now extremely difficult. Even though *ajanib* ought now to be able to legally register houses in their names, many have not been able to benefit from such a procedure.

24 Receiving a passport has, however, been difficult for some due to lack of money and connections, long delays, shutting down of public offices and limited mobility.

25 McGee (n 12) 56–62.

same time it was an injustice against my culture.' Another added that 'stripping us of nationality was no accident, it was part of a comprehensive strategy to disadvantage Kurds, and must be understood in this context.'[26] This, as well as the false hope generated by the regime's previously broken promises to resolve the problem,[27] led to widespread suspicion of the motivations behind the April 2011 decree.[28]

'They would not give us citizenship,' commented one *ajnabiyya* woman in late 2011, 'unless they knew we wouldn't be able to benefit from it.' Similarly, the Kurdish street generally considered that the measure was not well-intentioned, but simply an attempt to distance Kurds from the developing protest movement of the Syrian Revolution. An evaluation of the naturalization decree as an attempt to discourage, and detract from, Kurdish participation in the Revolution has been covered in this author's previous work.[29]

The fact that the decree was clearly a calculated reaction to the popular protests taking place in Syria at the time,[30] and not a response to the years of Kurdish mobilization on the subject was also a source of disappointment among a number of interviewees. The measure cannot be considered as a success for the Kurdish movements and their activists. Here it is necessary to recognise that statelessness, in the sense of being *bê nifûs* (without I.D.), had been a significant campaigning issue of Kurdish society in general, and the parties and other groups often mobilised in the name of those who were stateless. In many cases, statelessness became an emotive short-hand for the situation of all Kurds in Syria: oppressed, alienated and right-less. Statelessness was not an issue for the *ajanib* and *maktumin* alone, but for Kurdish society in general. When a sample of 20 stateless (or recently naturalised) Kurds were asked about an image in which a man holds up a protest sign that reads 'we do not want

26 The systematic and far-reaching nature of discrimination against Kurds in Syria since the 1960s is covered at length in Harriet Montgomery, *The Kurds of Syria: An Existence Denied* (Europäisches Zentrum für Kurdische Studien, 2005).

27 e.g. Katherine Zoepf, 'After Decades as Nonpersons, Syrian Kurds May Soon Be Recognized' New York Times (New York, 28 April 2005) <www.nytimes.com/2005/04/28/international/middleeast/28syria.html> accessed 18 June 2013.

28 For a detailed study of the context surrounding the implementation of the 1962 census, and assessment of the Syrian government's rhetoric on the subject prior to the 2011 decree, see Kurdwatch, 'Stateless Kurds in Syria: Illegal Invaders or Victims of a Nationalistic Policy?' (2010) Report 5 <www.kurdwatch.org/pdf/kurdwatch_staatenlose_en.pdf> accessed 13 August 2013.

29 McGee (n 12) 9–17.

30 Al-Arabiya, 'Syrian Kurds naturalized as reform law drawn up' (7 April 2011) <www.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/04/07/144582.html> accessed 6 June 2013.

nationality, but we want freedom,' 15 responded that the photographed man may not himself be *ajnabi* or *maktum*. Of these, all 15 supported the sentiment of the slogans and 9 considered that - even if not himself *bê nifûs* - the man is still entitled to make such statements based on his *kurdiyatî* (kurdish national sentiment).

While stateless persons were not likely to reject the chance to benefit personally form naturalization (to the extent discussed above), most saw some value in the rejectionist political discourse. The argument is that naturalization, especially in its eventual context, is insufficient to end the injustice they had experienced, both as stateless persons, and as part of the subjugated Kurdish minority. According to Perik, compensation is necessary as part of a programme of transitional justice for Syria: 'it is not only the crimes of the war that need to be dealt with, but those from before also.'[31] Some now regret that the political movement invested so heavily and emotively in the issue of Hassaka's stateless population, as this well-established discourse was significantly deflated by decree 49.

3.2 *Identity-Based Nature of I.D.*

Even once acquired, Syrian citizenship remains limited for Kurds as an unrepresentable minority within a state whose identity is prescriptively Arab.[32] This implicit ethnic identity of I.D. often disadvantages ethnic minorities where highly centralised political systems govern demographically complex societies. From this premise, White makes a convincing argument that Kurds possessing Turkish I.D. are not *as Kurds* true citizens of the Republic, concluding that 'on any sort of objective assessment of human rights, it is quite clear that the Kurds are excluded from citizenship in Turkey'.[33]

The ethnic-nationalist basis of citizenship in much of the Middle East limits its benefits to essentially the represented, majoritarian, identity. The importance of 'identity' in the struggle against statelessness is made clear by Refugees International's consultation with a Nubian community elder from Kenya.[34]

31 Author's interview with Kurdish journalist, Piroz Perik, from Serê Kaniyê in August 2013.

32 It should be noted that at the time of submission the Syrian opposition Coalition was contemplating the possibility of dropping the term 'Arab' from the title 'Syrian Arab Republic.' However, the outcome of this process was still very much unknown.

33 Paul White, 'Citizenship under the Ottomans and Kemalists: How the Kurds were excluded' (1999) 3 [1] *Citizenship Studies* 99; cf. also how the 'implicit Persian dominance in Iranian citizenship' engenders a subaltern identity for Kurds in Iran: Barzoo Eliassi, 'Kurds in the shadow of Iranian citizenship' Your Middle East (2013).

34 While geographically quite distant, the case of Nubians in Kenya is perhaps one of the closest parallels to that of Kurds in Syria in terms of population size and neglect by the

Believing that gaining citizenship is not enough, and that Nubians must be recognised as an official ethnic group in Kenya, he states 'you must maintain your identity as a people. Be proud of your culture and avoid identifying yourselves with larger groups.' Likewise, many Syrian Kurds have advocated for constitutional recognition as Syria's second ethnicity, and continue to lobby the political opposition on this point.

3.3 *Revolutionary Citizenship and the Opposition*

With a discourse of equal citizenship and slogans calling for 'Syria for all Syrians,' the Revolution that began in March 2011 sought to reconfigure citizen-state relations away from the patronizing top-down concepts of 'active citizenship' and later 'responsible citizenship' propagated by the Syrian First Lady's (GO)NGOs to a movement of real participation.[35] Against this backdrop, and as centralised governance increasingly dissolved, competing expressions of citizenship emerged as a means of articulating ideology.[36]

This process of re-defining citizenship continues to be negotiated - diplomatically as well as militarily - between new national and sub-national identities.[37] It remains to be seen how the *de facto* self-administration of some of the Kurdish areas (mostly by PYD) could impact the conception of Syrian citizenship for Kurds. Generally, the formal political opposition has failed to reassure the country's Kurds of their meaningful inclusion in the post-Assad Syria. While many doubted the 'noble' intentions of the regime in implementing Decree 49, this tragically amounts to more than what the opposition has promised on the issue. Instead of guaranteeing to complete the naturalization process and ensure the full activation of recently acquired citizenship in the new Syria in accordance with international law, former Syrian National Council leader Burhan Ghalioun lost much Kurdish trust when he reportedly compared Kurds in Syria to immigrants to

---

relevant state. Refugees International 'Kenya Voices: A Nubian Elder's Reflections on Ending Statelessness' (19 May 2008): <www.refugeesinternational.org/blog/refugee-story/refugee-voices-nubian-elder%E2%80%99s-reflections-ending-statelessness> accessed 12 September 2013.

35 Nabila Ramdani, 'Asma al-Assad is no reformer' New Statesman (May 2011): <www.newstatesman.com/middle-east/2011/05/lady-asma-syria-assad-london> accessed 17 August 2013; SANA 'Syria's wisest investment: new identity of responsible citizenship' (17 March 2011): <www.dp-news.com/en/detail.aspx?articleid=78505> accessed 13 September 2013.

36 The symbolic importance of citizenship during the transition period is dealt with in greater depth elsewhere: McGee, (n 12) 15–17.

37 National identities include revolutionary, counter-revolutionary and Arab nationalist, while sub-national and trans-national ones could be considered Sunni, Islamist, Kurdish etc.

France.[38] Sheikhmous believes that 'had the regime not been forced to naturalise the *ajanib*, the opposition would not do so in its place later.'[39]

Moreover, Nabi draws a parallel between the oppression of Kurds by the Syrian regime and the apparent intolerance from the opposition, and states of the latter: 'it is hard for them to convince us with their rhetoric words about equality, democracy and citizenship.'[40]

The fact that there have not even been verbal guarantees by leading opposition figures that the issues of the *ajanib* and *maktumin* will be regulated later is decidedly worrying. Instead, Syrian politicians frequently postpone talk of resolving the Kurdish problem (including statelessness) until after the fall of the regime.

4 Conclusion

To conclude, available quantitative data suggest that the majority of Kurds deprived of Syrian nationality may have now gained citizenship from the naturalization process since 2011. Yet, according to qualitative interview data, it appears that the present political context often limits the meaningfulness of this newly acquired citizenship. How temporary the shortcomings of such Syrian citizenship for Kurds will be very much depends on the outcome of the current conflict. We have seen how the 'identity' of Kurds and of the state has shaped their experience of gaining I.D. Therefore, if citizenship has minimised Kurdish participation in the Revolution, it is less because it was provided by the regime than because the non-Kurdish revolutionary opposition failed to define what it would mean in their proposed post-Assad scenario. As such, the spectre of statelessness remains very real for Kurds in Syria. While receiving citizenship documents is undoubtedly beneficial (even if not all benefits can presently be accessed), it will be necessary to monitor the inclusion of Kurds - both as *persons* and as *a people* - in the future Syria. Any process of post-conflict reconciliation ought to take note of Kurdish perceptions of statelessness, according to the legalistic definition, as well as that of political science.

38 Deutsche Welle 'Interview with Burhan Gahlioun' (October 2011): <www.mediacenter.dw.de/arabic/video/item/270581/%D8%B6%D9%8A%D9%81_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B3%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%B9> accessed 9 September 2013.

39 Author's interview with Kadar Sheikhmous, an independent Kurdish activist from Hassaka governorate, during August 2013.

40 Dr. Sarbest Nabi is Professor of Philosophy at University of Salahaddin in Erbil, Kurdistan Region (Iraq): 'Chauvinism of the Syrian Opposition and the Regime' Ciwanekurd.net (19 August 2013): <www.ciwanekurd.net/index.php/articles-and-opinions/652-chauvinism-of-the-syrian-opposition-and-the-regime> accessed 15 August 2013.