

**United Nations Human Rights Council, 60th Session  
8 September to 8 October 2025**

**Item 3: Interactive Dialogue – HC report on the panel discussion on economic,  
social and cultural rights held at HRC57**

**Speaker: Humanists UK representative: Ella Edwards<sup>1</sup>**

We thank the High Commissioner for his report, and echo Dr Manby's concerns about discrimination in nationality laws, particularly on the basis of religion, as a driver of statelessness and its resultant human rights violations.<sup>2</sup>

We would like to highlight the omission of the non-religious and religious minorities as protected groups under recommendation 40(e) of the report. This is despite this Council's resolution 7/10 on the arbitrary deprivation of nationality that calls on States to enact or maintain legislation to protect against discrimination on grounds of religion or belief.<sup>3</sup>

The prevalence of discriminatory nationality laws that undermine the rights of the non-religious and of religious minorities is well-documented.<sup>4</sup> In Mauritania and the Maldives, converting away from Islam can result in the loss of citizenship rights. In Pakistan, religious affiliation is mandatory on national identification documents, but there is no option to declare 'no religion'. In Afghanistan, non-religious citizens report lying on identity documents to avoid persecution. In each of these countries, either blasphemy or apostasy – and in some cases both – are capital offences.

Together, these laws force the non-religious to conceal their beliefs to avoid detection and persecution. This results in significant underreporting, and underestimates the true scale of the discrimination they face.

Will the High Commissioner confirm that Member States must enshrine the principles of equality and non-discrimination on grounds of religion or belief – inclusive of the non-religious – in national constitutions?

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<sup>1</sup> Humanists UK is the operating name of the British Humanist Association.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Human Rights Council, *Expert workshop on best practices in the promotion of equal nationality rights in law and practice*, A/HRC/60/42, 14 July 2025, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/60/42>

<sup>3</sup> UNHRC, *Resolution 7/10 Human rights and arbitrary deprivation of nationality*, 27 March 2008, [https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/E/HRC/resolutions/A\\_HRC\\_RES\\_7\\_10.pdf](https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/E/HRC/resolutions/A_HRC_RES_7_10.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Humanists International, *Freedom of Thought Report*, <https://fot.humanists.international/>. See entries for Afghanistan (31 October 2024), Mauritania (25 September 2020), Maldives (8 October 2020), and Pakistan (6 October 2022).