

**LHR & Abba joint press statement for immediate release (26 March 2019)**

**ABANDONED CHILDREN FINALLY REGISTERED BY HOME AFFAIRS**

Lawyers for Human Rights and Abba Specialist Adoption and Social Services welcome the Department of Home Affairs' decision to register 33 abandoned children with birth certificates, after LHR approached the Pretoria High Court on behalf of Abba Specialist Adoption and Social Services, for an urgent order compelling Home Affairs to register the births of all the children within 30 days.

Thirty-three abandoned children had been on a waiting list to get birth certificates for the last 18 months. A Department of Home Affairs policy allowing only two children to be registered by social workers per month caused a backlog of 33 unregistered children in child and youth care centres across Gauteng.

"As a result of this policy, these children, and many like them, were left in limbo and unable to be adopted", said Liesl Muller, head of the LHR Statelessness Project.

The risks to such children are significant. "Any delay in the birth registration process significantly decreases the child's chances of being adopted and forming a healthy bond with a primary care taker, which can cause significant developmental problems for the child in the future", said Rene Ferreira, of Abba Specialist Adoption and Social Services, a designated child protection organisation. "It also increases the child's chance of becoming stateless, or left without a nationality".

As a result of the case brought by LHR and Abba, the Department of Home Affairs agreed to register all the children and to discontinue the practice which caused the delay. Today, each child at issue in the case had obtained a birth certificate and can now be placed according to his or her unique permanency needs.

This significant success for each child will mean the difference between a safe home and secure family environment and a lifetime of difficulties and emotional distress.

"LHR and Abba welcome this outcome as it promotes the best interest of the child in line with the Constitution", said Muller. "We urge the Department of Home Affairs to prioritise vulnerable children in all provinces to ensure that they are safe and do not endure any further trauma".

For more information please contact:

LHR: Liesl Muller at 011 339 1960 or [liesl@lhr.org.za](mailto:liesl@lhr.org.za)

Abba: Rene Ferreira at 012 342 6145 or [rene@abbaadoptions.co.za](mailto:rene@abbaadoptions.co.za)

*This litigation was funded by crowd funding. If you would like to contribute or become a monthly donor towards legal representation for vulnerable stateless children follow this link:*

<https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/save-50-children-from-statelessness-in-southafrica/#menu>



*Children placed at Door of Hope*