

# Preparing for your Asylum Interview

## Before the interview:

- **Documents to Bring.** Gather the following documents to bring to the interview:
  - The notice for your interview that you received from USCIS
  - Copy of your Form I-589 application for asylum, and a copy of any documents you previously submitted to the USCIS asylum office
  - Each passport that you have had (even if expired)
  - Your work permit (if you have it)
  - Any visa that you have used to enter the United States (for example, your “MICA” or “BCC,” an I-94, AND document I-512, “Advance Parole,” if applicable)
  - Other type of valid photo ID document (for example, valid passport or driver’s license)
  - Original or certified copy of YOUR birth certificate, if available
  - Original or certified copies of YOUR marriage certificate, if applicable
  - Original or certified copies of your CHILDREN’s birth certificates, if applicable
  - Afghan tazkera, if available
- **Changes or additions to the Application:** if your phone number, address, OR your employment have changed, or if you need to make additions to corrections to your application, bring this information.
- **Interpreter to be provided by USCIS due to COVID-19 temporary rule:** if you cannot speak English, the Asylum Office will provide you with an interpreter for your interview at no cost.

## The day of the interview:

- **Arriving to the Interview:** arrive to the immigration offices at the address listed on your appointment notice 30 minutes before your scheduled interview time. Once arrived, check-in with officials inside. Note that the interview may take anywhere from 1.5 to 5 hours. Please bring plenty of water and snacks to sustain you as you may be at this office for a long time.
- **Accompaniment to the Interview:** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in general, you are no longer able to bring other people to your interview. Please wear a face mask and bring your COVID-19 vaccination card if you have one.
  - If your spouse and/or children are also applying for asylum based on your application: immigration requires that your derivative spouse applicant and your derivative children applicants come with you and participate in the interview. Please tell these individuals to bring valid photo identification to the interview and any of the above-listed documents, as relevant.

## During the Interview:

- **The Oath:** at the beginning of the interview, the asylum officer will ask you to raise your hand and put you under oath to tell the truth. They will also review your IDs and other documents. Please remember that lying to an immigration official can be a crime, so it is very important that you respond honestly to each question.
- **Use of an interpreter:** it is VERY important that you use short phrases and make frequent pauses, so that the interpreter can correctly interpret everything you’re saying. It’s important that you WAIT for the interpreter to complete their interpretation, and that you ONLY speak in your native language during the interview. If you DO realize that the interpreter has made an error, make sure to tell the asylum officer.
- **Credibility:** in every asylum case, it is very important that the asylum officer believes that you are being honest and truthful, and that you are not trying to make your case seem stronger than it really is. If the asylum officer believes that you are not being honest, they can deny your case on that basis alone. If you give testimony that is DIFFERENT than what put in your asylum application, or if you give dates, names, or other information that is INCORRECT or DIFFERENT than what’s in your asylum application, this can make the

asylum officer decide that you are not being honest. Please ensure you have read through your application several times and feel very familiar with all your answers in the asylum application.

- **General advice for testifying during an immigration interview:** because it is so important to be honest and consistent in your testimony, please keep the following advice in mind when answering the asylum officer's questions:
  - **"I don't UNDERSTAND":** if you did not understand the question OR the interpreter, tell the official!
  - **"I don't KNOW":** if you do not know the answer to a question or if you're not absolutely positive of the answer, tell the official! It is better to say "I don't know" than to guess.
  - **"I don't REMEMBER":** If you do not remember the answer to a, tell the official that you do not remember or that you are giving an approximate answer. If the information was included in your application or in the documents that you already submitted, ask if you can look at your application to help you remember.
  - **Only answer the question asked!** It is very important that you respond ONLY to the exact question that was asked by the official. Do not give more information than was asked for.
- **The format of the interview:** your asylum interview will primarily be a conversation with a series of questions and answers between you and the asylum officer.
  - **Part 1: Review of Form I-589.** The asylum officer will first review your Form I-589. If you need to correct, add, or explain any of the information included, please advise the officer.
  - **Part 2: Details of WHAT happened to you and WHY and your fear of return.** The asylum officer will next ask you a series of questions about what happened to you in your home country, and why you are afraid to return there. This information should be consistent with what you've already explained in your application.
  - **Part 3: Yes/No Security Questions.** The asylum officer will also ask you a LONG series of mostly yes/no questions to make sure that you do not pose a security risk to the United States. For Afghans, this questions may focus on whether you or your family members have EVER given financial or other support to the Taliban or any other armed group in Afghanistan, and whether you or your family members have EVER received weapons or military training, and related issues.
- **Signing your application:** the officer will ask you to sign your application, including any changes made during the interview. Your signature signifies your promise that everything that appears in your application is the truth to the best of your memory and understanding.
- **Derivative Spouse/Child applicants:** if your spouse or children are included in your asylum application as derivative applicants, they too will have to meet with the asylum officer and the format will be basically identical. The officer may also ask your spouse questions about your relationship, and they may also ask your children questions. These questions are intended to confirm that the qualifying relationship is real.
- **Be calm and ask for rest, bathroom, and water breaks!** It is difficult to do well in your asylum interview if you are nervous. The interview can take several hours. Please try to remain calm and let the asylum officer know when you need a rest, bathroom, or water break.

#### **At the end & after the interview:**

- The asylum officer will NOT tell you the decision on your asylum application the same day. Instead, the officer will tell you that they will review your file and issue you a written decision in the mail.
- If the official needs more information and/or documents to decide your case, he/she will give you a list of what they need OR send you the list by mail after the interview.