

## Finding a Pro Bono Attorney

### STEP TWO: Guide to Your Intake Call

Your intake call could last 10 to 20 minutes. During that time, you will have to provide as much clear and organized information as you can about you and your claim for asylum.

**Make a timeline** that starts with the first instance of persecution up until you arrived in the US. Think of each event as a separate building block that can be described as a picture or a short video. This will help you organize your story and your answers to the detailed questions listed under point 3 below.

During your intake call, you will most likely have to answer the following questions:

1. **Your identity and status in the US:**

- Your name
- Your date of birth
- Your country
- The date and point of your arrival in the US
- The type of visa you have and its expiration date (past or future)
- Your current address in the US
- Your family status (spouse and children) and their location (in the US or not)
- Whether you want to include your dependents in your asylum application
- Other countries where you are a citizen or stayed in when coming to the US
- Whether you have been in the US before (if yes, when, on which visa)
- Example: "I am <NAME> from <COUNTRY>. I arrived in the US via <JFK AIRPORT> on <DATE>. I traveled through <CASABLANCA> but did not leave the airport. I am here on a <TOURIST VISA> which <expires in TWO MONTHS>. I am here in the US with <MY HUSBAND AND TWO CHILDREN>. I want to include them in my asylum application. I have another child in my home country."*

2. **Your basis/ground for applying for asylum:**

Explain in one sentence why you are applying for asylum - you have been persecuted because of your:

- Race
- Religion
- Nationality
- Political opinion OR
- Membership in a special group (*This is a large category that includes sexual orientation, membership in an ethnic minority, female circumcision (FGM) and/or forced marriage, HIV positive status, disability, etc.*)

**If you have already filed anything with USCIS (for ex. USCIS form I-589), have the document(s) available at the time of the intake call.**

3. **A description of your past persecution events:**

You will be asked to describe your past persecution starting with the **most recent instance** (for example, you will start with an event that happened in 2020, then in 2019, 2018, etc). If you have a timeline organized and ready, you will be able to answer this question easily. For each instance of persecution, be sure you can explain:

- Who was persecuted - you, a family member, a person associated to you
- The date (approximately if you are not sure)
- The place
- What happened - you or the person were:
  - Threatened (physically or psychologically)
  - Arrested
  - Jailed
  - Tortured
  - Kidnapped
  - Killed
  - Other (explain)
    - Give some details about what happened - example: "I was arrested and jailed for three days in a small cell with many people, we had no food or water"/"I was beaten with clubs on my back and legs"/
- Who persecuted you:
  - The government
  - The police
  - The militia
  - Non-governmental forces
  - Family members
  - Other (explain)
- What happened afterwards:
  - Did you tell anyone?
  - Did you look for protection?
  - Was someone able to help you?
  - If you did not tell anyone and/or did not look for protection, why?
    - **Do not hesitate to address this question.** The answer can be very logical. For example you could have not told family members to avoid putting them in danger; you could have not gone to the police because they were the ones persecuting you

In some cases you will not be able to remember or explain everything. You can just say that you don't know or you don't remember - that's okay.

4. **Examples of description of past persecution:**

- *"I was arrested two times. The first time was in February 2019, during a peaceful religious demonstration in the capital of my country. I was arrested by armed uniformed majority party members, jailed for 24 hours in a dark cell with no window, no food, no water and no toilet with approximately 10 other people. I was released the next day without an explanation. The second time*

*was on May 5th, 2019, during an evening meeting of my religious group. Five armed uniformed majority party members broke into my home and arrested me and the four other persons in the meeting. My wife and two children heard the commotion and witnessed the arrest. We were forced into the back of a pickup truck and driven approximately 30 minutes away outside town, dragged off the truck, beaten on our backs with bats and kicked in the stomach with boots. We were left there in the night and had to walk back to our homes. The eldest of us later died from his injuries and exhaustion. I did not report these events to the police as they are also majority party members in my country and I was afraid of further persecution.”*

- *“When I turned 15 in May 2017, my two paternal uncles told me that they had arranged for me to marry XXX, a man 50 years older than me. I said I did not want to, so we argued. They yelled at me and slapped my face and locked me in the cellar. I could not leave the house and go to school. I was very afraid and unhappy. In June 2017, my uncles sent me to live with a relative called YYY in a small village about 100 km away from home, and told me to prepare for marriage. I could not study and had to work in the fields. My uncles came to the village with XXX later that month, I refused to see him and ran away. When I returned to the village, XXX had gone but my uncles were waiting for me. This time they whipped me with dry branches all over my body, I was bleeding from the wounds. They told me this marriage was my only option as the family would not continue to provide for me. There was no one I could turn to - I was an orphan and the police were not interested in sorting out family troubles. I had to leave the country. YYY could not help me but wrote a testimony about what happened in the village in June 2017.*

5. **A description of the evidence you already have or you can access** to support your claim. This could include:

- Letters from witnesses to the instances of persecution you have described
- Membership card of a political party or organization targeted for persecution
- Medical and or psychological report related to torture
- Police report
- Other (explain)

If you do not have any evidence you should explain why: did you leave in a hurry and could not gather any evidence? Can you try to get some evidence in the future? You can ask the person who is interviewing you to give you suggestions of the kind of evidence that will help your case

6. **An explanation of your fear of future persecution:** Say what you think will happen to you (and/or your family members) if you were to return to your country - do you fear being arrested, jailed or killed, do you fear not being able to get medical treatment, would it put other family members in danger, other (explain).

7. **Other things to consider:**

- During each intake call, you will be asked the same (or very similar) questions. It could be difficult for you to repeat the same traumatic information over and over. Make sure you are ready for the conversation and feel free to let the interviewer know if you have trouble remembering all instances of your persecution or if you are uncomfortable talking about them.
- During your intake call, you may not be asked to answer all these questions or to provide so much detail. Also, you may be asked to answer questions in a different order. You should be ready in case it happens. Be flexible.
- There is a lot of preparation needed for your intake call, but 1) it will be the same for each intake call, and 2) it will help you write/work on your personal statement in the future.

8. **What can happen at the end of your intake call?** You won't be told right away if the organization is ready to represent you. Three options are likely:

- 1) The organization will call you back at a later date with their answer
- 2) You could be asked for a second phone interview
- 3) You could be asked to provide evidence to support your case