

The asylum interview: know your rights!

- To be granted refugee status, you must show your fear of persecution is "well-founded", meaning there is real basis for your fear.
- The asylum, or substantive, interview is when the Home Office interviewer will ask you in detail about your reasons for claiming asylum.
- You need to explain why you had to leave your country, and why it is not safe for you to return (even to another part of your country).
- The interview may last several hours and you will be asked lots of questions. You may be asked the same questions several times in different ways.
- It can be a very long, difficult and traumatic interview, and could be the most important part of your asylum application.
- You are going to be asked questions about things that may be very difficult to talk about.
- Be prepared for not being believed. It is common for the Home Office interviewer to explicitly say they do not believe you.
- You need to be very clear, give as much detail as possible, and try to remember to include all the important information.
- You may find it helpful to practice in advance of the interview, using the guidance in the Right to Remain Toolkit about questions you may be asked. Is there someone you trust you can do a "mock interview" with?
- Request that your asylum interview is audio recorded. Make the request in writing, and more than 24 hours before the interview (or three days before, if you are in detention). Make sure you are given a copy of the audio recording and the written transcript at the end of the interview.
- You have the right to request a male or female interviewer, and a male or female interpreter. Make this request as far in advance as possible.
- If you are not feeling well, are tired, or upset because of having to think about what has happened to you, tell the interviewer this.
- If you need a break during the interview, ask for one – this is your right, do not be afraid to ask.
- If you think there is a problem with interpretation, say so as soon as possible, and ask for this to be noted on the interview record.
- You may find it helpful to talk to a friend, neighbour immediately after the interview – about how you are feeling, and about whether anything went wrong. Write a list of things you think went wrong, or that you forgot to say.
- If you have a lawyer, you should meet with them very soon after the interview. Tell them if anything went wrong. They may write a statement about this which they will submit to the Home Office.