



Writing your Declaration

What is the “declaration?”

- Written document that explains what happened in your home country and why you are afraid to return.
- Includes specific details about the harm you suffered, and what you fear will happen if you go back.
- Your opportunity to make the connection between the harm you suffered and one of the protected characteristics: race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or particular social group.

What should my “declaration” look like?

- Handwritten on paper or typed on a computer and printed out.
- If you handwrite your declaration, it is best to use **ink**, not pencil.
- Put your name, A-number, the date, and your signature on each page.
- Must be translated into English.

Before writing the declaration, think about the following questions:

- Why did I leave my home country?
- Who am I afraid of?
- Why am I afraid of them?
- What do I think they will do to me if I return?
- How do I think they will know I am back?
- Who else are they threatening and mistreating now? Are they people like me (in terms of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or particular social group)? How do I know this?

Include specific examples of persecution:

The most effective way to explain your story to the Judge is to provide examples of what has happened to you. Think about specific experiences that you have had that are related to your claim, for example, specific times that you were attacked or threatened by a particular person or group of people. If you have had many experiences of persecution, make sure to say so in your declaration, and then describe the worst ones, or the times that you most want the Judge to know about. Now, ask yourself the following questions about your previous experiences to help you write your declaration with detailed information:

- Date and location of incident
- What happened to you?
- Who did it to you? (for example, the government, police, rebels, religious groups, etc...) How can you identify them?

- Why were they threatening or mistreating you?
- What did they say when they were threatening or hurting you?
- How do you know they were specifically targeting you?
- For which of the five reasons did they target you? (Race, religion, nationality, social group, political opinion.) How do you know?
- Who else did they threaten or mistreat, if anyone?

Important: Although details are important in your declaration, sometimes it can be useful to write facts (like numbers and dates) in general terms. You will be asked questions by the Judge and government attorney during your Individual Hearing. Any contradiction between what the declaration says and what you say at the hearing could make the Judge question your credibility.

Sample Chronology of a Declaration:

1. Start by writing about when and where you were born
2. Write about your family; write about your children and spouse applying with you
3. Describe the political, social, and military environment in your country
4. Explain how you belong in one or more of the five protected categories (race, religion, nationality, political opinion, particular social group)
5. Describe the first instance in which you were harmed or threatened
6. Describe the second, third, fourth, etc., instance where you suffered a threat or harm
7. Explain whether you reported these incidents to the authorities. If you did not, why not? If you did, what was the response from the police?
8. Is it possible to escape and move to another place in your home country? Explain why not.
9. Write about your decision to come to the United States - how and when did you decide?
10. Write about your experience while traveling to the United States. Describe any difficulties or obstacles you encountered.
11. Describe your experience after you were detained by immigration officials (such as Border Patrol), if applicable.
12. What goals and dreams do you have for you and your family if you are allowed to remain in the United States?

Signing your declaration:

At the end of your declaration, sign your declaration under penalty of perjury (that you promise that everything is true and accurate to the best of your ability and that you subject yourself to possible penalties if you lie):

Sample: “I swear under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States that the information in this declaration is true and correct to the best of my abilities and recollection.”