



The following notes are a rough transcription from the Afghan client's asylum interview. A consulting attorney with The Advocates for Human Rights was the attorney of record.

Every asylum case and asylum officer are different. The asylum officer may ask your client additional, and/or very different, questions from those below. These notes are only provided as an example that may help counsel prepare for your client's interview.

Previously, many attorneys/accredited representatives were not permitted to bring their own laptop into the interview for note-taking and were required to take notes on paper. During this interview, however, the attorney was permitted to use her laptop for the purposes of note-taking after signing a technology use agreement that ensured she would not access the internet nor voice/video record the interview.

The Advocates for Human Rights cannot ensure this practice will be permitted during each interview. Thus, counsel should prepare to take their interview notes on paper.



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ATTORNEY NOTES ARE IN ITALICS. CONTEXTUAL NOTES ADDED AFTERWARD ARE IN RED.

FOR THE PURPOSES OF TRANSCRIBED CONVERSATIONS:

- **ASYLUM OFFICER= [AO]:**
- **APPLICANT= [A]:**

BEGIN INTERVIEW NOTES:

Because [the client] filed online, [the asylum office is] using iPad for interview and electronic signing of forms.

NOTE: Prior to the interview, the asylum officer told counsel that because the applicant initially filed their I-589 online, the asylum office prepared for a remote interview.

If someone applies online, they are most likely to receive a remote interview with the asylum officer on a computer screen.

If an applicant submits a paper filing, they may receive an in-person interview or they may receive a remote interview, depending on the asylum office's scheduling capacities at the time of the interview.

[The asylum officer's] supervisor is on the line too, will be observing the officer only, will not affect the case.

Trying to get another interpreter monitor on the line (but having trouble finding Dari).

NOTE: When an interpreter is brought by a client to their asylum interview - which will need to be the case for all Pashto and Dari speaking applicants - the asylum office has an interpretation monitor attend the interview to ensure accurate and neutral interpretation.

[Asylum officer] put monitor and then interpreter under oath.



[Asylum officer] advised [applicant] to respond in short phrases with pauses to allow interpreter time to interpret. [Asylum officer] advised [applicant] that information [spoken about during this interview] is confidential.

[Asylum officer explained that the] purpose of interview is to gather information so decision can be made about why you [applicant] fear returning to Afghanistan. At the end of interview, attorney will have time to ask additional questions and provide statement on your [applicant's] behalf.

[Attorney is] taking notes on the conversation and the notes will remain confidential.

[Asylum officer] will place [applicant] under oath.

Then [asylum officer] will review information on application to make sure dates and addresses are correct.

Then [asylum officer and applicant will] go into detail about what happened in Afghanistan.

[Asylum officer explained that the] important part of interview is to answer questions truthfully and completely.

[Asylum officer] placed applicant under oath.

[Asylum officer] had Interpreter sign electronic form that he [interpreter] is fluent in English and Dari and will be providing interpretation.

[Interpreter had] difficulty signing interpretation form on iPad. [Interpreter] signed hard-copy form.

[Applicant] signed electronic interpretation form.

[AO]: Do you have any questions?

[A]: No.

[AO]: If I ask you a question that is confusing and you don't understand, let me know and I'll find a way to rephrase.



[AO]: I want to talk about how you filled out the application.

[A]: First, my cousin helped me fill out the application. But there were some mistakes in that application because I didn't have a lawyer. When I hired a lawyer, I told the whole story, whatever happened to me, the true story, to my lawyer and the lawyer helped me with the application.

[AO]: I'll review the application with you to make sure we can correct errors on the online application. Before I get into reviewing it in its entirety, do you know what parts need to be corrected?

[A]: Everything is correct.

[Attorney interjected to clarify] that they brought amended I-589 and can walk through redlined changes.

NOTE: "Redlined" indicates amendments to the I-589 that the client initially filed pro-se. These handwritten, red-inked amendments are visible in the sample filings in the Dropbox folder this document is located.

Some asylum officers are more amenable than others to attorney interjection, when appropriate. For this particular interview, the asylum officer permitted the attorney to interject, clarify, and ask questions prior to the end of the interview. This may not be the case for your client's interview, and counsel should be prepared to address any and all concerns at the end of the interview.

[AO]: What is your name and DOB?

[A]: [REDACTED]

[AO]: Have you ever used any other names or DOBs even if by mistake?

[A]: No.

[Attorney] started running through redlined changes.

[AO]: [REDACTED] still in Afghanistan?

[A]: Yes.

[AO]: [REDACTED] in Afghanistan?

[A]: Yes.



[AO]: [REDACTED] in U.S.?

[A]: Yes, and I'm living with him.

[AO]: [REDACTED] in Afghanistan?

[A]: Yes.

[AO]: [REDACTED] in Afghanistan?

[A]: Yes.

[Attorney] gave [asylum officer the names of] remaining [previously omitted] sisters.

NOTE: The applicant had previously omitted the names of his sisters from his initial pro-se I-589.

[AO]: You will have opportunity to review the additions for accuracy.

[Attorney] continued with redlined corrections and noted that [attorney and applicant] submitted packet of additional information.

[Asylum officer asked for] attorney's state bar numbers.

[AO]: Current address [REDACTED]?

[A]: Yes.

[AO]: Apartment [REDACTED]?

[A]: Yes.

[AO]: Is that place safe to receive mail from U.S government?

[A]: Yes.

[AO]: Is your spouse still living in [REDACTED]?

[A]: Now she's in our house in [REDACTED].

[AO]: Do you have any citizenship apart from Afghanistan?

[A]: No.

[AO]: Prior to coming to the U.S., you were working at [REDACTED]?



[A]: Yes.

[AO]: You worked in that position from [REDACTED]?

[A]: Yes.

[AO]: Have you ever served in the military or police?

[A]: Afghanistan's Police?

[AO]: Yes, Afghanistan's police or army. Have you served?

[A]: No, not me but my [REDACTED] has done service there.

[AO]: Your attorney went through additional information so now I'm going to have you read over the changes I made. There were a lot of changes.

[Asylum officer] showed the changes on the iPad, [attorney] reviewed them against the amended I589, [asylum officer] made the necessary corrections, and then had [applicant] sign it by hitting "all true" button on iPad and then signed his name.

[AO]: This affirms we went over all the changes we made together.

[AO]: Copy of redlined changes will also be uploaded into his online record so both will be in the record.

[AO]: That's all of the signing on the iPad. Thanks for your patience. New technology that we're still working through.

[AO]: Now I'd like to go into detail about what happened in Afghanistan.

[AO]: In a couple short phrases, describe reasons you fear returning to Afghanistan.

[A]: Because I was working with [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] And
because my [REDACTED] was working in the military. My [REDACTED] did job together with
foreigners and my [REDACTED] was in America. And because everyone knows we
served Americans a lot and have been serving Americans.

[AO]: When you were [REDACTED], was it the [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]?

[A]: We had contracts with [REDACTED], and Afghan [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]



████████████████████, we had contracts with them and were helping them ██████████.

[AO]: Can you explain why the Taliban would have a problem with the work you were doing ██████████?

[A]: Because we were ██████████
████████████████████ bombarding the Taliban.

[AO]: Were you ever directly threatened by members of the Taliban?

[A]: They detained me and they even hit me with a knife and my one friend got killed.

[AO]: When did they detain you?

[A]: I think it was ██████████, I went to my friend's house, on the way back, they detained me.

[AO]: What did they say to you when they stopped you?

[A]: We were on the way ██████████; I was on the way back with my friend. They stopped us and they asked us where we were going. When they stopped us, they searched us. And I had an ID card from ██████████, with that ID card I was able to go to ██████████ side and ██████████. When they found that ID card and saw it, they found out who I was, and they talked to someone on the radio about me. When the one person gave my information to the other person over the radio, they mentioned my name and my father's name. the other person said, bring them to me. When they told me to get in the car, I asked them: "why, where are you taking us?" when we refused to get in the car, we said we were not going anywhere, they started hitting us. When they started hitting us, my friend started to run away. When he started to escape, they shot him and they hit me with a knife. They hit me with guns as well. When they shot my friend, everyone's attention was on my friend. That was the time I was able to run away from them. There was my friend, he helped me to bandage the cut on my leg.

[AO]: What was the name of your friend who was killed by the Taliban?

[A]: ██████████.

[AO]: Who/where did you go after you were able to run away?



[A]: I was able to go [REDACTED]. There were [REDACTED], they had cooperation with U.S. army. [REDACTED]. With their help, I was able to [REDACTED]. When I went there, they identified me and they allowed me to [REDACTED].

[AO]: Just to make sure I understand correctly, you went directly to [REDACTED] after the attack?

[A]: Yes.

[AO]: How long were you at [REDACTED] before you [REDACTED]?

[A]: I'm not very sure about the date. I think on the [REDACTED] I was able to [REDACTED].

[AO]: Was this the only time you were threatened by members of the Taliban?

[A]: That time and on [REDACTED], they searched our house three times. Every time they were searching our house, they were different groups.

[AO]: When they found your ID badge on the street when they searched you, did they make any comments about it?

[A]: When they got my ID card, they read my info from the card to someone else over the radio. A lot of people didn't have that ID card. Only trusted people had that IDcard. With that card, we had permission to go to the [REDACTED].

[AO]: Did you ever get that ID card back from them?

[A]: No. they took my phone from me as well.

[AO]: Did the members of the Taliban use any type of insults against you or your friend when they detained you in the street?

[A]: When they read my card over the radio and the other person asked them to bring us, then they started hitting us. When we asked where they were taking us, they said they would take us to talk to us, to ask us some questions. And then they said they will take us to jail. But we knew they didn't have any jail, we knew they weren't going to take us to jail. If they take us, they will kill us.

[AO]: Did you know other people that happened to where the Taliban claimed that they were going to go to jail but they were ultimately killed?



[A]: A lot of people from [REDACTED], people working with foreigners, have been disappeared, detained and captured by them. After they have been captured or detained, nobody saw them. They have been disappeared.

[AO]: You mentioned that the Taliban searched your home. Was that before or after the Taliban detained you on the street?

[A]: [REDACTED], on [REDACTED].

[AO]: Were you at home when the Taliban came?

[A]: No, I was at work, I was trying to call [REDACTED]. I didn't have enough minutes, credit on my phone. I sent a text message to [REDACTED] and he called me and let me know what happened. [REDACTED] did call me but I didn't see his call, I missed his call, so when I saw the missed call, I used my friend's phone and called him back.

[AO]: What did he tell you about the Taliban searching your home?

[A]: [REDACTED] told me three different groups of Taliban came to our house and searched our house three times. Each group searched our house once. And every time they were searching, they were asking about me and [REDACTED]. The first time they asked about me and [REDACTED]. The second time, they asked about us both again and they took some of [REDACTED] military belongings with them. When the third group came, the third time they searched our house, they asked where is [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. When [REDACTED] said he didn't know where we were, they started hitting [REDACTED]. And then [REDACTED] called [REDACTED] and told him not to come home because Taliban had been searching our house and it wasn't safe for him to come home. [REDACTED] has called me as well but I didn't see the phone when he called. Later on I borrowed my friend's phone and called [REDACTED]. When I found the details about what happened, I texted [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] called me. [REDACTED] told me, stay where you are, don't go home, its not safe. And he told me he was in his friend's house.

[AO]: And so did [REDACTED] stay at the same friend's house that you went to or was this a different home?

[A]: No, he was in his own friend's house.

[AO]: After you received this warning from [REDACTED], why did you decide to go home?



[A]: I was super tired. And didn't sleep enough in those days. And my friend told me, let's go to my house for a couple hours, rest there a bit and then come back. When we went to his house, on the way back to the job, this happened and unfortunately I lost.

[AO]: Did your friend work in the same job you did?

[A]: No, he worked at [REDACTED]. We were both working at [REDACTED] but he was working for different company.

[AO]: When the members of the Taliban detained the two of you, who do you think was the primary target?

[A]: Both of us. When they saw my [REDACTED] ID, he started giving that info to another person right away over the radio and that other person said bring both of them to me.

[AO]: Have you had any other encounters or interactions with the Taliban that we have not talked about?

[A]: Not me, I haven't faced with them other than that.

[AO]: When you went to [REDACTED], how were you able to enter without your ID?

[A]: Because they recognized me. I have worked at [REDACTED] for so long and guards at [REDACTED] recognized me. Later on, I got my other ID cards [REDACTED] where I was from keeping them.

[AO]: After you went to [REDACTED] did the Taliban keep looking for you?

[A]: Yes, when they went to our home they were looking for me and they were looking for me outside as well [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[AO]: Since you have left Afghanistan, have they continued to search for you?

[A]: Yes, they went to a hotel after me.

[AO]: When did they search the hotel?

[A]: I don't remember the date but they were looking for me at the hotel and [REDACTED] let me know about that. [REDACTED]. He [REDACTED] of the Taliban looking for me at the hotel. They asked [REDACTED], where is [REDACTED]? I was [REDACTED], so that's why they went there looking for me.



[AO]: The injury that you received to your leg from the knife from the Taliban, how long did that take to heal?

[A]: That injury took three months or four months.

[AO]: Do you still have any sort of pain or injury from the attack?

[A]: No.

[AO]: Do you have any emotional impacts from that attack that still affect you today?

[A]: They hit me a lot with the back of the gun but I'm healed now.

[AO]: Were there any other times when you were threatened or physically harmed in Afghanistan?

[A]: No.

[AO]: What do you think would happen if you returned to Afghanistan?

[A]: They don't even have to go back to house to find me. They will just arrest me at the airport. They kill people over very small reasons but me, I'm a big deal for them because I [REDACTED]

[AO]: Why does [REDACTED] affect their reasons for wanting to hurt you?

[A]: Because we [REDACTED].

[AO]: Since you and [REDACTED] have been in the U.S., has the Taliban threatened members of your family that remained in Afghanistan?

[A]: They sent a paper to [REDACTED]. Warning him. Asked about me and [REDACTED].

[AO]: Have they sent any threats to your wife?

[A]: No.

[AO]: Is your wife living with her family or with your father?

[A]: [REDACTED].

[AO]: Other than your work [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], are there any other reasons the Taliban would want to harm you?



[A]: [REDACTED] used to work in [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and now he's living here.

[AO]: How long ago did he leave Afghanistan?

[A]: About [REDACTED] ago.

[AO]: How would the Taliban learn about your relationship to [REDACTED]?

[A]: Taliban has very strong intelligence. They know about everywhere.

[AO]: What does the Taliban believe about someone like you who worked [REDACTED] [REDACTED]?

[A]: I don't know what their comments are but it's very obvious that they will not leave those people alive who have worked with [REDACTED].

[AO]: What makes you sure they won't leave those people alive?

[A]: I talk to [REDACTED] regularly. He tells me the situation is not good. They have information about people, they go detain them, they capture them and those people get disappeared.

[AO]: When was the last time [REDACTED] told you about something like this?

[A]: [REDACTED] days ago, what day is it today, the 12th, last time he talked to me about stuff like this was [REDACTED]

[AO]: What does [REDACTED] say?

[A]: [REDACTED] tells me economy is not good and Taliban is not treating people well, women, kids, they are treating people very bad.

[AO]: How were you able to get your job at [REDACTED]?

[A]: I really wanted to work in [REDACTED]. I wasn't able to get a job there so I sent my CV to [REDACTED], I did an interview and got a job there.

[AO]: The people who worked at [REDACTED], did they primarily work with [REDACTED]?

[A]: Are you talking about [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]?

[AO]: [REDACTED], where you worked.



[A]: There was [REDACTED]. We had contracts with all of them.

[AO]: Any other reasons that Taliban would target you if you returned to Afghanistan other than what we've talked about?

[A]: No.

[AO]: Briefly describe for me your beliefs about the Taliban in Afghanistan?

[A]: They are wide group, not treating people well, they are against women, they always do cruel stuff against people of Afghanistan, schools are closed, they are not allowing girls to go to schools and universities.

[Asylum officer] gave [the attorney] the chance to ask questions.

[Attorney] asked [applicant] to clarify if [applicant] ever went back home after the Taliban came to his home on [REDACTED]. [The applicant] said no.

[AO]: I'm now going to ask you series of questions I ask everyone.

[AO]: Have you ever traveled to any other countries aside from travel through Kuwait?

[A]: No.

[AO]: Have you ever lived in any other countries?

[A]: No.

[AO]: Have you ever been offered or received any immigration status in other countries?

[A]: No.

[AO]: Have you ever been member of any type of military, police or law enforcement?

[A]: No.

[AO]: Have you ever harmed anyone for any reason?

[A]: No.

[AO]: Have you ever committed crime anywhere in world?

[A]: No.



[AO]: Other than when Taliban detained you in [REDACTED], have you ever been arrested or detained anywhere else in the world?

[A]: No.

[AO]: Have you ever been convicted of crime anywhere in world even if you didn't commit it?

[A]: No.

[AO]: Ever used firearm, explosive, any other type of weapon?

[A]: No, I had a hunting gun.

[AO]: Ever received weapons or military training?

[A]: No.

[AO]: Ever participated in terrorist activity, like hijacking, use of weapons, etc.?

[A]: No.

[AO]: Have you ever helped or encouraged someone to do those types of things?

[A]: No.

[AO]: Have you ever attempted or planned to do those things?

[A]: No.

[AO]: Have you ever been part of group that used violence to achieve its goals?

[A]: No.

[AO]: Has anyone from the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, or any other armed group tried to convince you to join them?

[A]: No.

[AO]: Do you know anyone who is a member of a violent armed group?

[A]: No.

[AO]: Even if it was against your will, have you ever provided support to violent person or violent group, such as giving food, housing, money or transportation?

[A]: No.



[AO]: Has spouse ever been involved in violent activities or violent groups?

[A]: No.

[AO]: Do you plan to do anything in the U.S that would be illegal or harmful to U.S?

[A]: No.

[Asylum officer] made a joke about no one telling her they were going to rob a bank after.

[Applicant] said no, just wants to work hard.

[AO]: Thank you for providing so much detail. I know it's hard to talk about these things.

[Asylum officer] asked if [attorney] had other questions or closing statement.

[Attorney] did not have questions, but [had] a closing statement.

Closing statement:

██████████ already suffered past persecution and several credible threats of harm, including the one serious incident when he was attacked in the street. That attack by the Taliban shows the direct connection between the persecution and his affiliation and work at ██████████ and with the ██████████ because it was when the Taliban identified him with his work badge—which showed that he worked at ██████████ and worked with ██████████—that they wanted to take him for questioning, beat him, and shot his friend when he refused to go with them. The fact that he has already been harmed and threatened numerous times, searched for BY NAME by the Taliban, searched for at the same time as ██████████ (who was strongly involved with ██████████) indicates that there is at least a 10% chance that he will be persecuted in the future on account of his anti-Taliban Political opinion, his relationship with ██████████, and his membership in the PSGs of Afghans formerly employed at ██████████, Afghans who formerly worked with ██████████, Afghans who formerly worked with ██████████. His political opinion against the Taliban is strongly intertwined with his ██████████ of working with ██████████ and his ██████████ choice to work at ██████████ with the ██████████.

[Asylum officer] said [attorney and applicant] can add documents online.

If the application was filed online, everything can live online. No physical documents need to be provided except for things they need to see originals for.



NOTE: Pro Bono Attorneys are advised to bring to the interview a complete copy of all documents submitted in support of an asylum application.

For several types of evidence, USCIS requires asylum applicants to have available the original documents, including but not limited to: Passports, Birth Certificates, Marriage Certificates, and any declaration, letter, or other document containing an original (“wet ink”) signature.

For more information, consult the I-589 instructions here:

<https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/document/forms/i-589instr.pdf>

If there is a physical file that is filed prior to online application, then [counsel and applicant] must still submit two copies of everything.

[Applicant is] going to receive asylum decision in online USCIS portal and in mail. There are two possible outcomes—approve case or sent NOID. If applicant receives NOID, it will explain reasons the office determined why the applicant is not eligible for asylum and then applicant will have opportunity to explain in writing about why they are eligible. Then final determination will be made.

NOTE: “NOID” stands for “notice of intent to deny.”

If this office can approve your case, applicant will be eligible for a green card after 1 year.

[AO]: Unfortunately, I cannot give you a timeline for when you will receive the decision. If you move or change address, you must notify our office within 10 days.

[AO]: Any questions for me?

[A]: Can I add my wife to this case?

[Asylum officer] let [attorney] answer and said [applicant] has to wait until [applicant] is hopefully approved and then [attorney and applicant] can work on wife.

[A]: I would like to let you know about the [REDACTED] in my school documents. They put the wrong [REDACTED] in my school documents.

[AO]: Can you explain this?

[A]: Some people who are working in Afghan schools are not educated and made mistakes and put [REDACTED] on my school documents.

That concludes interview process for today.