

## How to Write a Personal Declaration

### Q&A

#### **What is a Personal Declaration?**

A Personal Declaration is a statement that explains in detail why you fled your home country and/or why you now fear returning to your home country. It consists of a list of numbered paragraphs. It is perhaps the most important part of an application for asylum.

#### **Why is the Personal Declaration important?**

The Personal Declaration is your chance to tell the Asylum Officer what happened to you in your own words. You may also use the Personal Declaration to correct any inconsistencies in your official documents.

#### **I don't speak English! Can I write my Personal Declaration in my native language?**

The Personal Declaration must be written in English. You may write it in your native language, and then have it translated by someone who is **completely** fluent in English and your native language. You should carefully go over the translation **word for word** with the translator to ensure that everything is correct. Once the Declaration is translated and you are satisfied that it is correct, you will need to attach a Certificate of Translation to the copy you send to USCIS. Please see Appendix F on page 43 of the Asylum Manual for an example of a Certificate of Translation.

#### **How long should my Personal Declaration be?**

There is no page limit for a Personal Declaration. Most Personal Declarations are approximately five to twenty pages. Each Personal Declaration is different and requires a different length. Use your best judgment!

#### **What information should I include in my Personal Declaration?**

The information in your Personal Declaration should be relevant to your application for asylum. Think about the requirements for asylum when you write your Personal Declaration. Generally, you should include information about your personal background and upbringing, the conditions in your country, the harm you suffered (if any) in your home country, the harm you fear suffering if you return to your home country, and how you came to the United States. Be sure to explain why you believe you were harmed or will be harmed – and by whom.

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<b>Requirements for Asylum</b>	<b>How to Structure Your Personal Declaration</b>
<p>In order to be granted asylum in the United States, you must meet the following requirements. Knowing these requirements may help you decide what information to include your Personal Declaration.</p> <p>You may be eligible for asylum in the United States if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• You are physically present in the United States.</li><li>• You apply for asylum <i>within one-year</i> of your entry into U.S.</li><li>• You suffered harm in your home country and/or you fear you could be harmed if you return to your home country.</li><li>• The harm you either suffered or fear is because of your race, religion, national origin (nationality), membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.</li><li>• The person or people who harmed you (and/or whom you fear could harm you in the future) either work for or are otherwise controlled by your country's government, or they are a person or group of people that your country's government cannot or will not control.</li><li>• These are the general requirements for asylum. There are also several bars to asylum. See page 9 of the Asylum Manual for more information about the requirements for and bars to asylum.</li></ul>	<p>There is no "right" or "wrong" way to structure your Personal Declaration. You should strive to ensure that your Personal Declaration is clear and easy for the Asylum Officer to understand.</p> <p>Here are a few tips for structuring your Personal Declaration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Be honest!</b></li><li>• NEVER guess about important details! If you do not remember something, say so.</li><li>• Write your Declaration in chronological order.</li><li>• Consider writing your Personal Declaration so that it has a beginning, a middle, and an end. The beginning is your personal background, the middle is an explanation of the harm you suffered or fear suffering in the future (as well as why you suffered or will suffer that harm, and who caused or will cause the harm), and the end is your escape from your home country and your arrival in the United States.</li><li>• Assume that the Asylum Officer knows nothing about you or your country, and your job is to educate them in your Declaration.</li><li>• Number your paragraphs!</li></ul>

**For more information review:** The Guide to Applying for Asylum "Asylum: How to Apply for Asylum in the United States", and How to Apply for Asylum Video Series, available at: [ilapmaine.org/asylum-self-help](http://ilapmaine.org/asylum-self-help)