

# Info-Sheet: Asylum in Greece

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## Who can apply for asylum?

Any foreign person can apply for asylum in Greece. This doesn't mean you will be automatically granted asylum. Each person's case will be handled individually, depending on the person's reasons for applying. However, in general the acceptance rate differs from nationality to nationality. Access to the asylum system is free of charge. During the asylum procedure it will be important to state why and in which way you have been persecuted in your home country:

- if your life, physical integrity, personal freedom or other basic human rights are endangered,
- if you are persecuted due to personal attributes (skin color, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity), your political or religious beliefs or membership of a particular social group.

## How can I apply for asylum?

First you have to register your asylum claim with the Asylum Office. In order to do so, you need to book an appointment via Skype. You can check the Skype times online here:

[http://asylo.gov.gr/en/?page\\_id=987](http://asylo.gov.gr/en/?page_id=987)

Please be aware that the Skype timetable is changing at frequently. So check from time to time if the Skype times are still the same. Also keep in mind, that the Skype line is hard to reach and that it might take weeks or sometimes even months until you will be able to get through. There are some community centres and NGOs who provide help with Skype calls, in case you don't have the possibilities to call Skype on your own or you need assistance. This can sometimes also increase the chance of getting through.

As soon as you reach the Asylum Service via Skype, you will be given a date for your full registration (first interview where the Asylum Service is registering your asylum claim). You will then also be able to pick up your pre-registration white card at the Asylum Office which is responsible for you.

You might be provided with transport to your full registration appointment. When you know the time and date of your appointment, contact UNHCR in your camp or accommodation some days before your appointment and ask for transport. Do not miss this appointment! Each family member should have their white card with them. Some family members may have appointments on different days but this does not mean that your cases have been separated. If your children have appointments on a different day to you, remember to ask UNHCR for space on the bus yourself so you can accompany them to the Asylum Office.

You will have to answer all questions asked by the Greek Asylum Service staff with absolute sincerity. If you provide false evidence or make false claims, this might have a negative effect on the judgment of your case. You will also be given another date and time for a personal interview about the reasons why you fled your country of origin.

**If you change your address or your telephone number at any time during the process, please notify the Greek Asylum Service immediately by sending an e-mail to: [new.numbers@asylo.gov.gr](mailto:new.numbers@asylo.gov.gr). Include your name, date of birth, registration number, new phone number and/or your new address in this email, in**



**English or Greek. Please note that this email address will change your details for you but will not reply to you.**

### **Fast-Track-Procedure (for Syrians only)**

There is a fast-track procedure that applies to all Syrian nationals who wish to lodge an asylum application for the first time with the GAS. You must hold an original passport in order to be fast-tracked; it does not, however, have to be valid. National identification cards are not accepted. Under this procedure, submission of your application, the personal interview and a decision on your claim will take place within the same day. In order to apply for the Syrian-Fast-Track you need to call the Skype line of the Syrian-Fast-Track.

### **What kind of questions can I expect at the personal interview?**

Before you go to your personal interview it is really important that you contact a NGO or a lawyer and get prepared. Everyone understands that when you arrive in a new country you need to find a job in order to survive, however, during your asylum examination the priority is to explain why your life was endangered and why you were forced to leave your home country. Be prepared to state everything important as you might not get asked about everything. You can attend the interview accompanied by a lawyer or other counsellor (legal expert, doctor, psychologist or social worker).

You'll be asked about the information provided in your application, including information on your identity, on how you came to Greece, on the reasons why you left your country of origin, or the country where you used to live in case you are a stateless person, and the reasons why you cannot or do not wish to return to that country.

Also you can expect questions about your family members, to what ethnic group you belong, if you belonged to the military or any other fighting group in your home country, if you are sympathetic towards one of the fighting groups, what your religious background is, where in Europe you would like to go, what your educational background is.

You might be asked if you are willing to return to your country when the war is over, if you have any health issues and if there are any health issues in your family, if you are sending money to family members or family members send any money to you, what languages you speak, if you served in the army and - if so - if you have any documents to prove this. If you used to go to university, if you finished your studies and what your job used to be and for how long you did that job.

### **What is important to remember for the personal interview?**

It is most important to speak the truth in your personal interview and to give all relevant information about your asylum claim. Be prepared to be asked detailed questions. For example: If you were a car mechanic, you might be asked the names of specific car pieces in your mother tongue, the name of the neighbourhood where your shop was located, etc.

It is important that you do not withhold information or documents. If you do this, you will have to explain on why you didn't provide certain information and this might damage your credibility. It is your obligation to cooperate with the Asylum Service. If they get the impression that you are not cooperative towards them, they might reject your claim based on a lack of cooperation.

The coherence of your story is very important. Remember that your story will be verified with family members and other available information including the database of the Greek police, international news and information you gave in previous interviews. If your story is not consistent with any of these sources your claim will be deemed unreliable and will probably be rejected.



Relevant information is information about **why you left your country, why you can't return to your country and how you came to Europe**. Make sure you explain **in detail** your reasons for leaving your country. If you feel like your claim deserves the (Political) Asylum status, then explain clearly **why you personally fear persecution on the basis of your race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group**. If you have any proof of this, show it at the interview. If not, explain in detail the persecution you have faced.

**Tip:** Writing down your story before the interview, including all its details, can help you to memorise everything that is important for your case.

Important things to mention are:

**Dates and Times:** When things happened that made you leave your country.

**Places:** Where things happened

**People:** If you remember the names of people involved, it makes it easy for the Asylum Service to check on your claims.

Remember again, that it is not abstract answers that they ask for, but very detailed statements. If you are asked why you left your home country, try not to use general phrases like "I want to have a better future". Try to be very specific and tell your individual story: Why did YOU not have a future? Where did your life take place and what threats were you facing?

*Example: On the 22th of September I was with my cousins Abdulla Azil and Mohemmed Azil in the central square of our town Tadif when members of ISIS showed up and arrested us on the suspicion that we were Kurds. We were taken to the central administrative office where we were beaten up by a commander called Khaled who tried to make us confess that we are Kurdish.*

If you are in doubt about what topics you should cover in this interview, contact a NGO (like the Greek Council for Refugees) or the Mobile Info Team and discuss it with one of our members.

### **What happens with the information I provide in the interview?**

The information you give in the interview is confidential and will not be shared with others. The interview might be recorded. If not, a secretary will make a transcript of your interview. At the end of the interview the content of the transcript will be read to you and you can object if you think something is not recorded correctly.

### **What rights do I have when I'm granted Asylum?**

If you are granted asylum or subsidiary protection, you will get a residence permit in Greece for three years. You have the right to access education, health care and the labor market. There is a possibility for core family members of yours to get a visa and be reunified with you in Greece, but only if you are granted refugee status and not subsidiary protection. Keep in mind that this process might be complicated and lengthy.

**Please be aware that you can only receive cash assistance and accommodation for a maximum time frame of six months after you are granted asylum in Greece.**

### **Can I travel to other countries if I have Asylum?**



If you are granted refugee status, you can apply for a refugee travel document. It might take several months until you receive it. This travel document allows you to travel anywhere – except for your home country – for three out of every six months. If you are granted the subsidiary protection, you can keep your passport from your country of origin. You are entitled to apply for a refugee travel document if you are unable to obtain a passport from the authorities of your home country.

Please note that a refugee travel document is not the same as a passport. It does not give you citizenship of the country which issues it, so it does not give you all the same rights to free movement in Europe which a passport would give. A refugee travel document does not allow you to move to another European country permanently or to work there. If you move to another European country, you will struggle to access any services and may be returned back to Greece.

### **What can I do if my Asylum claim is rejected?**

If your application is rejected, you have the right to submit an appeal to the Greek Appeals Authority. It is important to submit your appeal within the deadline provided to you. You have the right to ask for the support of a lawyer or any other counsellor of your choice. You have the right to get free legal aid through the Greek legal aid system or a NGO. If your appeal is rejected, you can apply to the Greek court.

If you do not submit an appeal and you do not have a document permitting you to stay in the country, the process for the return/deportation to your country of origin will begin. Furthermore, you will be given information on the possibility of voluntary return to your country of origin.

**To access this information online please visit our Facebook page: Mobile Info Team for refugees in Greece**  
<https://www.facebook.com/mobileinfoteam>

