

BOOK IV

What to expect

MY ASYLUM APPLICATION



WELCOME!



This story is about four young people — just like you.

They have arrived safely in Europe after a long journey.
Some of the young people arrived alone. Some of them arrived with family.
They have lots of questions — and they are helped by the people who work where they live.



This story can help you too!

You will learn:

- what **the asylum procedure** means
- what to expect
- why it is necessary for you to participate and work with the officers
- who can help you
- about your rights

You can read this story:




- alone
- with a friend
- with someone who works here




Take your time. It's OK to stop and come back to it later.

If something is hard to understand, **ask for someone to explain it to you.**
Your guardian, social worker or lawyer can help you.

AT THE END, YOU WILL FIND:

-  a page with local information
-  a fun quiz
-  space to write your own questions and add useful contacts



For people **below 18 arriving alone**, a guardian will be appointed. In some countries, the guardian is also called a representative.

Also, in some countries, **asking for asylum** is called **asking for international protection**.



Lastly, be aware that all services offered at the reception facilities where you are staying are free. If a staff member asks you for money, talk to an officer you trust or your guardian.

MEET THE CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY

Mohamed

I am 17 years old. I am happy most of the time. I like helping my friends and family whenever I can. I arrived alone some weeks ago and I am looking for my grandfather. I am eager to start working.



Ahmed

I am 15 years old. I arrived with my older sister Jasmine, who has been taking care of me since our mother died. I like to hang out and make new friends. I really want to go back to school as soon as I can. At the moment, I am learning the local language here.

Jasmine

I am 24 years old. I arrived together with my brother, Ahmed, who I take care of as best I can. We arrived recently and are trying to join our uncle who has been living in Europe for some time. I love sports and I am very good at playing football.



Adam

I am 9 years old. I am here on my own.
For now, I have decided not to speak.
I experienced many bad things before arriving here. I need some time before I will talk again.
But I am smart and I understand everything. I am a very good listener and want to go to school.
I like all the new friends I have made so far.



Ms Ines

I am a guardian working in this reception centre. I try to support all children and young people seeking asylum as best I can. I love cooking and it makes me happy when everyone is busy and active. Exercise keeps us all physically and mentally healthy.



Mr Fred

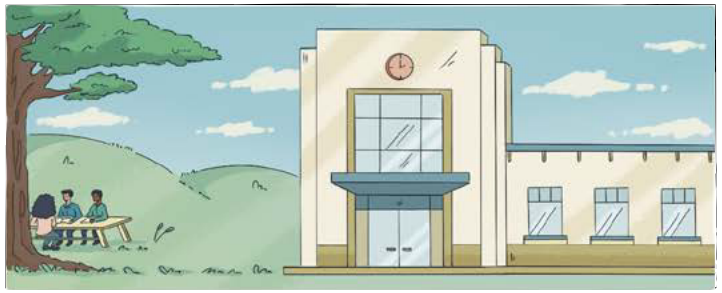
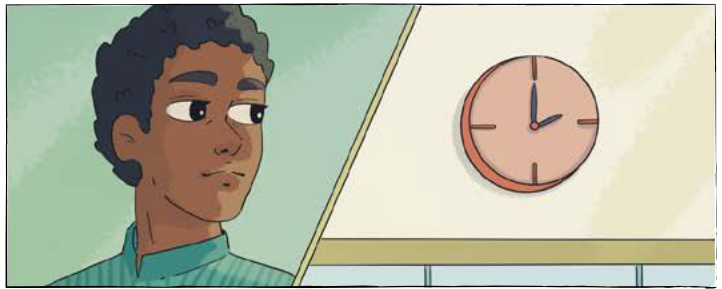
I am a legal counsellor, which is a type of lawyer. I work here together with many well-trained colleagues.
I give information and support to all asylum seekers on legal matters and on their asylum applications. I love wearing colourful t-shirts with a message.



A big thank you goes to all the young asylum seekers who read this story before it was published and helped to finish it so nicely.

They also helped choose the names of the main characters.

Thanks also goes to the authorities in Malta and the Netherlands who supported the discussions with the teenagers.



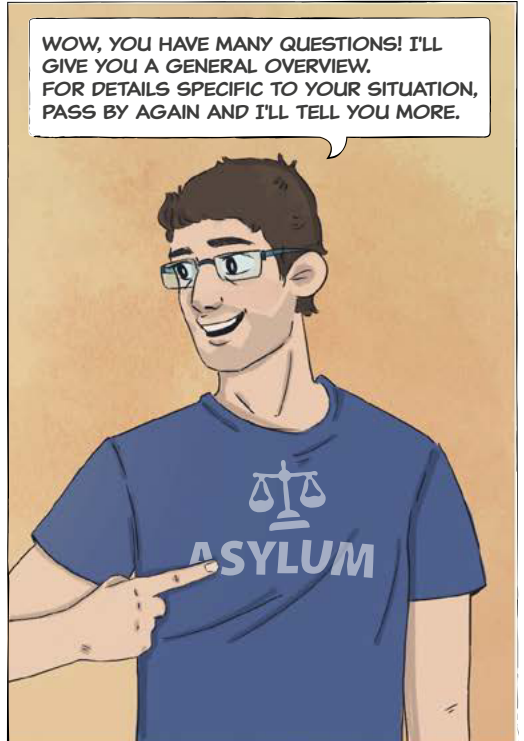
HI MR FRED, WE WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ASYLUM PROCEDURE!



... AND WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE PERSONAL ASYLUM INTERVIEW...



WOW, YOU HAVE MANY QUESTIONS! I'LL GIVE YOU A GENERAL OVERVIEW. FOR DETAILS SPECIFIC TO YOUR SITUATION, PASS BY AGAIN AND I'LL TELL YOU MORE.



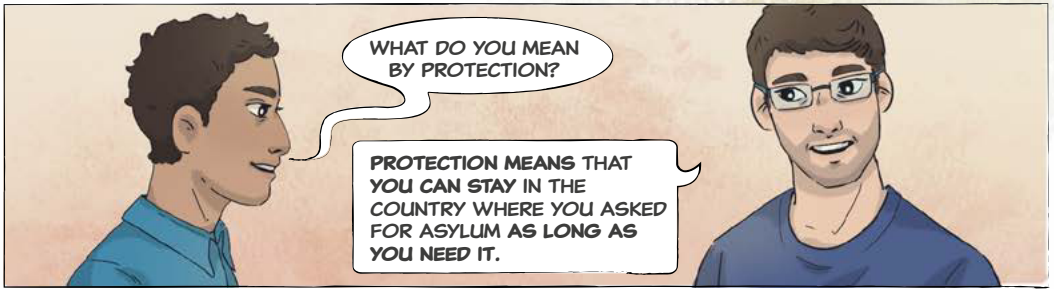
... AND ONCE YOU RECEIVE A DECISION...





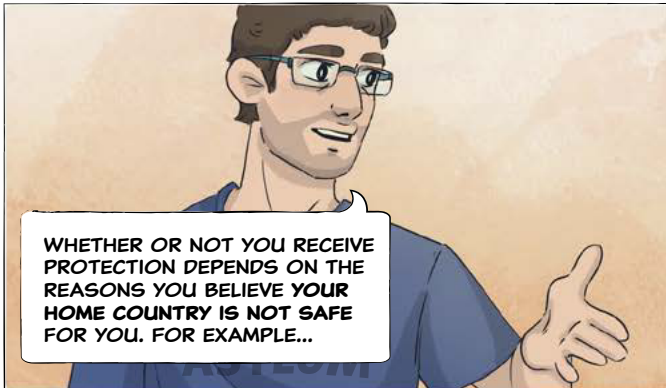
IF YOU CANNOT GO BACK TO YOUR COUNTRY BECAUSE IT IS UNSAFE FOR YOU, YOU CAN ASK FOR ASYLUM.

WHILE EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO ASK FOR ASYLUM, NOT EVERYONE WILL RECEIVE PROTECTION.



WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY PROTECTION?

PROTECTION MEANS THAT YOU CAN STAY IN THE COUNTRY WHERE YOU ASKED FOR ASYLUM AS LONG AS YOU NEED IT.



WHETHER OR NOT YOU RECEIVE PROTECTION DEPENDS ON THE REASONS YOU BELIEVE YOUR HOME COUNTRY IS NOT SAFE FOR YOU. FOR EXAMPLE...

- If you are afraid to return because of:
- your skin colour
 - your religion, culture or the traditions you practice
 - your ethnic group
 - your political views or those of your family
 - the person you love and want to be with
 - a group you belong to that is not accepted



... MOREOVER, YOU MAY ALSO RECEIVE PROTECTION IF THERE IS WAR IN YOUR COUNTRY OR YOU WOULD FACE OTHER VIOLENT TREATMENT IF YOU RETURN.



THESE ARE SOME SITUATIONS THAT CAUSE PEOPLE FLEE THEIR COUNTRIES.



SO, IF I'M NOT SAFE AND MY COUNTRY WON'T OR CAN'T PROTECT ME, I CAN ASK FOR ASYLUM?



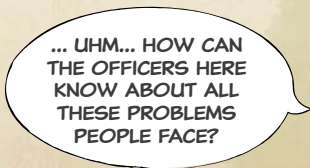
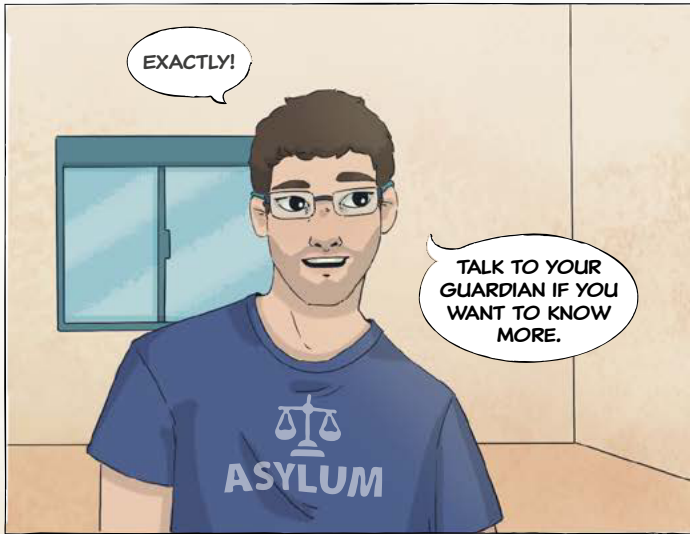
EXACTLY!

IN SOME COUNTRIES, BEING A GIRL CAN BE RISKY AS GIRLS CAN'T MOVE FREELY, MAY BE BANNED FROM SCHOOL OR ARE FORCED INTO MARRIAGE, WHILE...



... IN OTHER COUNTRIES, PEOPLE MIGHT BE AT RISK DUE TO A HEALTH CONDITION OR A DISABILITY THEY HAVE.

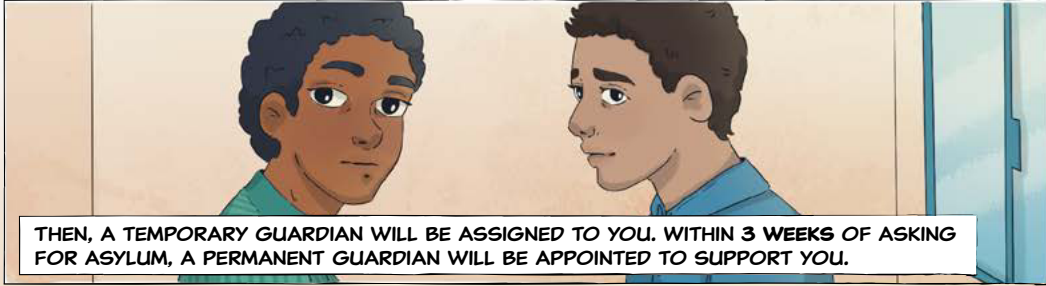




THE OFFICERS WILL ASK YOU MANY QUESTIONS TO LEARN AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE ABOUT YOU. SHARE YOUR STORY.



ALSO, ANYONE UNDER 18 AND ARRIVING ALONE SHOULD TELL THE OFFICERS IMMEDIATELY SINCE CHILDREN NEED MORE SUPPORT THAN ADULTS.

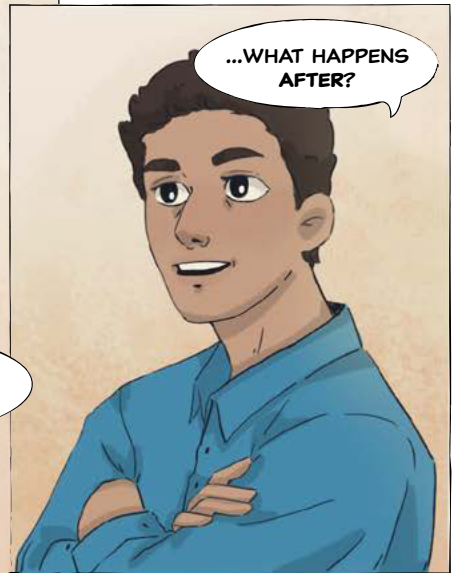
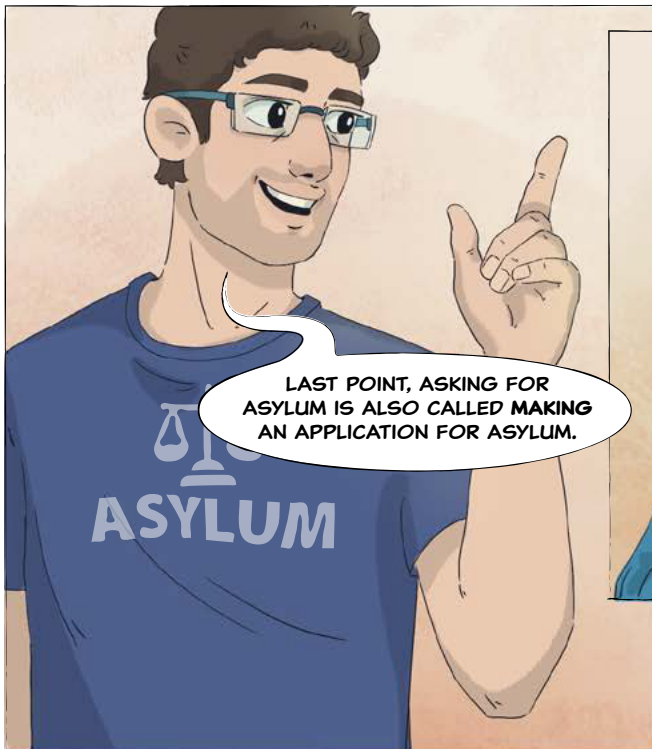


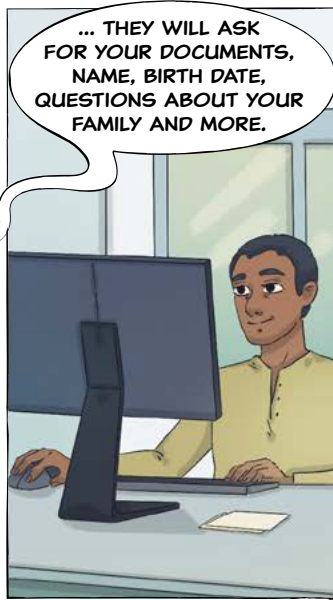
THEN, A TEMPORARY GUARDIAN WILL BE ASSIGNED TO YOU. WITHIN 3 WEEKS OF ASKING FOR ASYLUM, A PERMANENT GUARDIAN WILL BE APPOINTED TO SUPPORT YOU.

THE OFFICERS TALKING TO YOU ARE TRAINED AND WILL TRY THEIR BEST TO COMFORT YOU.

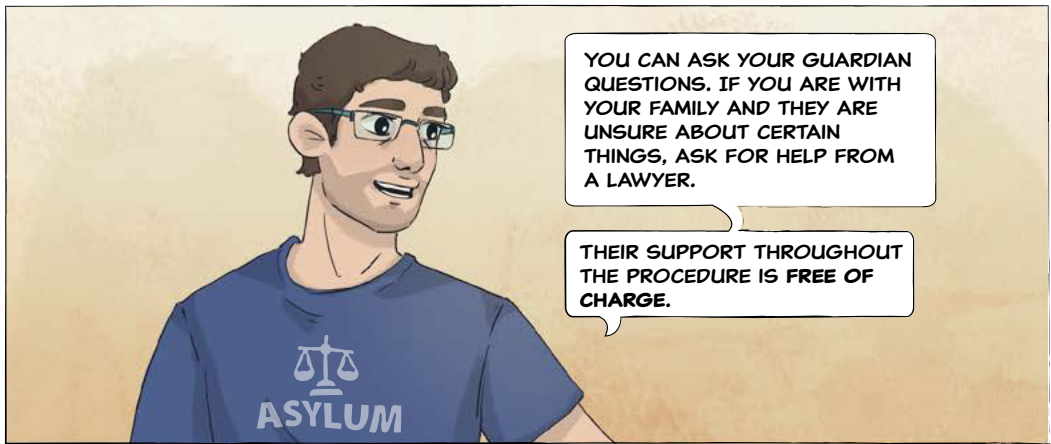
THEY TRY TO CONSIDER YOUR WISHES, NEEDS AND CONCERNS BEFORE MAKING IMPORTANT DECISIONS. THEY ALSO READ ABOUT YOUR COUNTRY TO BETTER UNDERSTAND YOUR SITUATION.











YOU CAN ASK YOUR GUARDIAN QUESTIONS. IF YOU ARE WITH YOUR FAMILY AND THEY ARE UNSURE ABOUT CERTAIN THINGS, ASK FOR HELP FROM A LAWYER.

THEIR SUPPORT THROUGHOUT THE PROCEDURE IS FREE OF CHARGE.



AFTER I WAS REGISTERED, I WAS GIVEN A DOCUMENT SAYING I AM AN APPLICANT.



YES. THIS DOCUMENT SHOWS THAT YOU APPLIED FOR ASYLUM. IT IS IMPORTANT. KEEP IT SAFE.




I TOOK A PHOTO OF MINE AND SAVED IT ON MY PHONE...



WELL DONE!




MR FRED, MY GRANDFATHER IS HERE IN EUROPE. NOW THAT I'M AN APPLICANT, CAN I TRAVEL TO JOIN HIM?



NOT YET. STAY WHERE YOU'RE REGISTERED. THE AUTHORITIES, TOGETHER WITH YOU AND YOUR GUARDIAN, WILL DECIDE IF AND HOW TO REUNITE YOU WITH HIM.




BEFORE MAKING A BIG DECISION TO LEAVE ONE COUNTRY FOR ANOTHER, TALK TO YOUR GUARDIAN OR A LAWYER TO UNDERSTAND THE CONSEQUENCES.




...ALSO, TRAVELLING ALONE CAN BE DANGEROUS!



I UNDERSTAND I HAVE TO STAY HERE.



WHILE WAITING FOR THEIR ASYLUM INTERVIEW, WHERE DO PEOPLE SLEEP AND EAT?



THE AUTHORITIES MUST GIVE YOU A SAFE AND SUITABLE PLACE TO STAY CALLED RECEPTION. THEY'LL EXPLAIN HOW YOU GET FOOD AND ESSENTIALS.

NORMALLY, CHILDREN WITH FAMILIES STAY IN FAMILY HOUSING.



CHILDREN ON THEIR OWN MAY BE PLACED WITH OTHER CHILDREN IN A SIMILAR SITUATION AND DEPENDING ON THEIR NEEDS.

THE OFFICERS WILL INFORM YOU WHERE YOU CAN LEARN THE LOCAL LANGUAGES...



... ATTEND SCHOOL, FIND WORK OR SEE A DOCTOR IF NEEDED.



STAY BUSY WHILE WAITING FOR YOUR INTERVIEW AND ASK A LAWYER OR GUARDIAN FOR HELP TO PREPARE FOR IT.



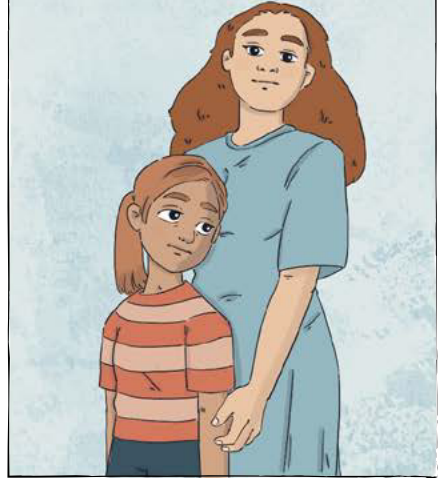
IF YOU FEEL WORRIED, STRESSED OR SCARED, TELL SOMEONE YOU TRUST. THE OFFICERS CAN ONLY HELP IF THEY KNOW WHAT WORRIES YOU.



YOU, YOUR GUARDIAN OR CAREGIVER WILL RECEIVE A WRITTEN INVITATION FOR THE INTERVIEW WITH THE DATE, TIME AND PLACE, BY EMAIL OR POST.



CHILDREN MUST BE INTERVIEWED WITH AN ADULT RESPONSIBLE FOR THEM, LIKE A PARENT OR GUARDIAN.



WHAT HAPPENS IF I'M SICK ON THAT DAY?

YOU OR YOUR GUARDIAN HAVE TO INFORM THE AUTHORITIES IMMEDIATELY.



UHM... WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE ASYLUM INTERVIEW?

DURING THE INTERVIEW, A PERSON CALLED A 'CASE OFFICER'...

WILL ASK YOU QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR FAMILY, LIFE AT HOME, THE SECURITY SITUATION THERE, WHY YOU LEFT AND YOUR JOURNEY. EVERYTHING YOU SAY IS CONFIDENTIAL, MEANING IT IS NOT SHARED WITH ANYONE.





UHM...
IT'S NOT EASY TO
REMEMBER OR
THINK ABOUT ALL
THESE THINGS...



I KNOW, IT'S DIFFICULT, BUT THE
OFFICERS ARE TRAINED AND WILL
HELP YOU.



SOMEONE TOLD ME IT
FELT A BIT LIKE AN EXAM.



TRY TO PREPARE FOR IT
WITH YOUR GUARDIAN OR
A LAWYER.

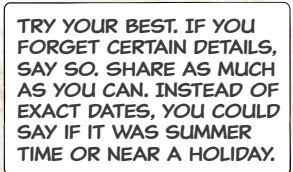
I WILL. HOW
LONG DOES THE
INTERVIEW LAST?



IT MAY TAKE A WHILE,
ESPECIALLY IF AN INTERPRETER
IS PRESENT. IF YOU'RE TIRED,
YOU CAN ASK FOR A BREAK.

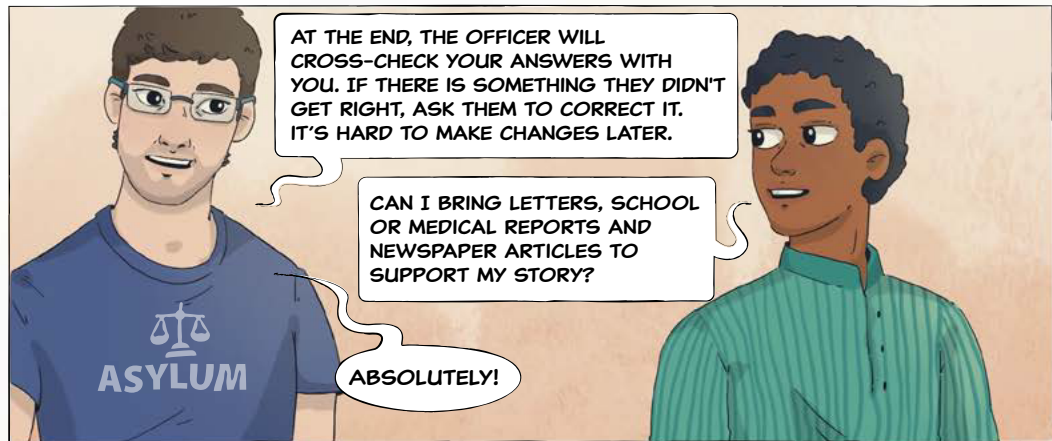


WHAT IF I CANNOT
ANSWER A QUESTION?



TRY YOUR BEST. IF YOU
FORGET CERTAIN DETAILS,
SAY SO. SHARE AS MUCH
AS YOU CAN. INSTEAD OF
EXACT DATES, YOU COULD
SAY IF IT WAS SUMMER
TIME OR NEAR A HOLIDAY.

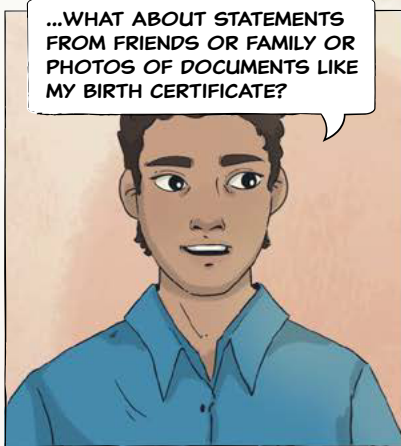
JUST DON'T MAKE
THINGS UP.



AT THE END, THE OFFICER WILL CROSS-CHECK YOUR ANSWERS WITH YOU. IF THERE IS SOMETHING THEY DIDN'T GET RIGHT, ASK THEM TO CORRECT IT. IT'S HARD TO MAKE CHANGES LATER.

CAN I BRING LETTERS, SCHOOL OR MEDICAL REPORTS AND NEWSPAPER ARTICLES TO SUPPORT MY STORY?

ABSOLUTELY!



...WHAT ABOUT STATEMENTS FROM FRIENDS OR FAMILY OR PHOTOS OF DOCUMENTS LIKE MY BIRTH CERTIFICATE?

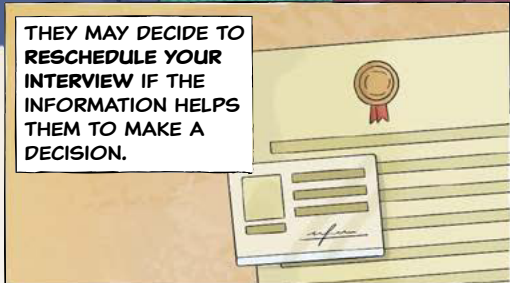


YES, AS LONG AS IT IS RELEVANT TO EXPLAIN YOUR STORY AND WHY YOU HAD TO LEAVE.

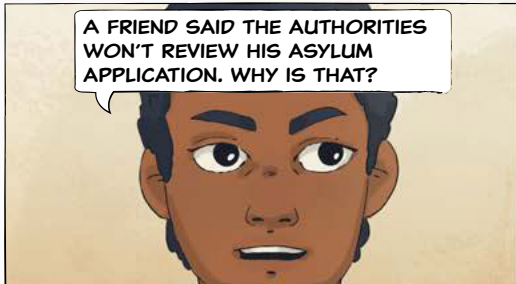
FRIENDS AND FAMILY CAN HELP ME FIND THIS INFORMATION.



YES, BUT THEY SHOULD NOT PUT THEMSELVES AT RISK. TELL THE OFFICERS IF YOU NEED MORE TIME.



THEY MAY DECIDE TO RESCHEDULE YOUR INTERVIEW IF THE INFORMATION HELPS THEM TO MAKE A DECISION.



A FRIEND SAID THE AUTHORITIES WON'T REVIEW HIS ASYLUM APPLICATION. WHY IS THAT?



THE AUTHORITIES FIRST CHECK IF THEY NEED TO EXAMINE AN ASYLUM APPLICATION OR NOT.



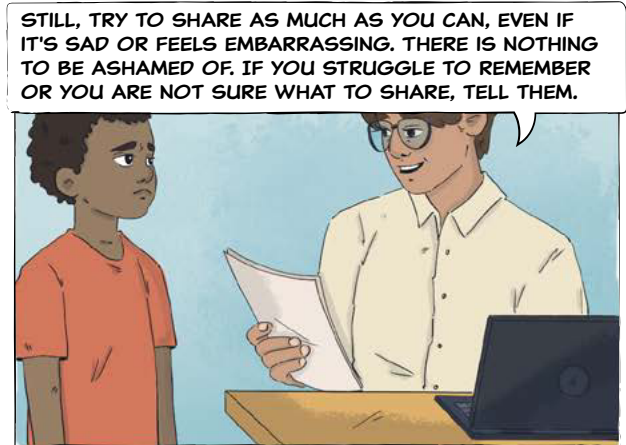
THEY MIGHT NOT DO SO IF YOU HAVE ALREADY RECEIVED PROTECTION IN ANOTHER COUNTRY OR IF YOU COME FROM A COUNTRY THAT THEY CONSIDER SAFE.



MR FRED, WHAT IF SOMEONE WANTS TO ANSWER BUT CAN'T—MAYBE BECAUSE THEY'RE SCARED OR THE QUESTIONS ARE TOO PERSONAL?



THAT'S DIFFERENT. PEOPLE FLEE BECAUSE OF VERY BAD EXPERIENCES. IT'S NATURAL TO NOT WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT.



STILL, TRY TO SHARE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN, EVEN IF IT'S SAD OR FEELS EMBARRASSING. THERE IS NOTHING TO BE ASHAMED OF. IF YOU STRUGGLE TO REMEMBER OR YOU ARE NOT SURE WHAT TO SHARE, TELL THEM.

WHAT YOU EXPERIENCED CAN BE IMPORTANT INFORMATION. THE OFFICERS WILL TRY TO COMFORT YOU. THEY MIGHT PAUSE OR ASK SOMEONE TO JOIN TO SUPPORT YOU IF THEY SEE YOU'RE STRUGGLING.



EVERYONE WORKING HERE MUST TREAT YOU WITH RESPECT. IF THEY DON'T, YOU CAN OFFICIALLY COMPLAIN—ASK SOMEONE YOU TRUST TO HELP YOU.



A FRIEND'S PERSONAL ASYLUM INTERVIEW WAS STOPPED AND HE WAS ASKED TO SEE A DOCTOR. WHY?



UHM... I DON'T KNOW THE DETAILS...

SOMETIMES, SOMEONE MAY BE ASKED TO HAVE A MEDICAL EXAM, IF THE OFFICER THINKS THAT THE RESULTS MIGHT SUPPORT THE APPLICATION FOR ASYLUM.



MAYBE THE PERSON HAS A HEALTH OR MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM THAT WASN'T NOTED BEFORE AND NEEDS TREATMENT. DEPENDING ON THE RESULTS, THE NEXT STEPS WILL BE DECIDED.



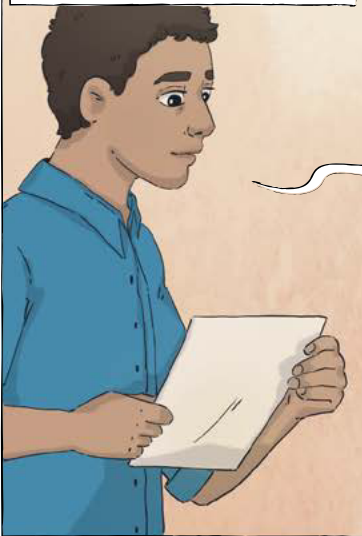
THE OFFICERS WILL ASK IF YOU AGREE TO DO THE EXAM. AS A CHILD, YOUR PARENTS OR THE GUARDIAN WILL BE INVOLVED.



UHM... HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM GIVEN ASYLUM OR NOT?



AFTER THE INTERVIEW, THE OFFICERS WILL REVIEW ALL THE INFORMATION AND REACH A DECISION ON YOUR APPLICATION. IT CAN TAKE TIME BEFORE YOU GET A LETTER EXPLAINING THE DECISION.



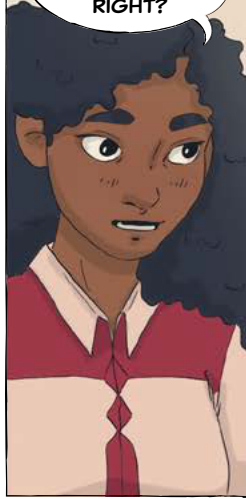
UNDERSTOOD. THAT'S WHY THEY WANTED MY UPDATED PHONE NUMBER AND ADDRESS, SO THEY CAN REACH ME.



YES! IF THE DECISION IS POSITIVE, PEOPLE CAN STAY AND RECEIVE A FORM OF PROTECTION.



THIS CAN BE REFUGEE STATUS, RIGHT?



YES! ...OR SUBSIDIARY PROTECTION.



IN BOTH CASES, YOU GET A RESIDENCE PERMIT TO STAY HERE AS LONG AS YOU NEED PROTECTION. A LAWYER CAN EXPLAIN THE DETAILS TO YOU.

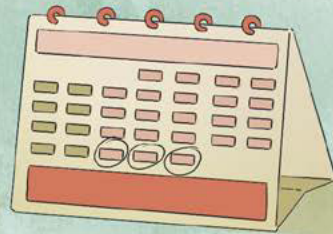
IF YOU RECEIVE A NEGATIVE DECISION, YOU CANNOT STAY BECAUSE IT WAS DECIDED THAT IT'S SAFE FOR YOU TO GO BACK TO YOUR HOME COUNTRY OR TO THE COUNTRY WHERE YOU LIVED BEFORE.



IF YOU DISAGREE, YOU CAN APPEAL, WHICH MEANS ASKING FOR YOUR CASE TO BE LOOKED AT AGAIN.



YOU WILL HAVE TO FILL IN THE FORMS RIGHT AWAY. ASK FOR HELP. REMEMBER, AN APPEAL IS ONLY A REVIEW, NOT A GUARANTEE FOR PROTECTION.





THE RETURN PROCEDURE IS FOR THOSE WHO MUST GO BACK SINCE THEIR COUNTRY IS CONSIDERED SAFE.



SOME PEOPLE MIGHT ALSO CHOOSE TO RETURN VOLUNTARILY. INFORM THE OFFICERS TO GET SUPPORT.



THE BORDER PROCEDURE MEANS THAT YOUR ASYLUM APPLICATION IS EXAMINED WHERE YOU ARRIVED BY AIR, LAND OR SEA.



YOU MAY HAVE TO STAY THERE UNTIL YOUR CASE IS DECIDED AND YOU CAN'T MOVE FREELY.




CHILDREN ARRIVING WITH FAMILY MAY STAY IN THE BORDER PROCEDURE, WHICH LASTS 3 TO 4 MONTHS.




CHILDREN ARRIVING ALONE DON'T GO INTO THE BORDER PROCEDURE, HOWEVER, THERE ARE A FEW EXCEPTIONS.

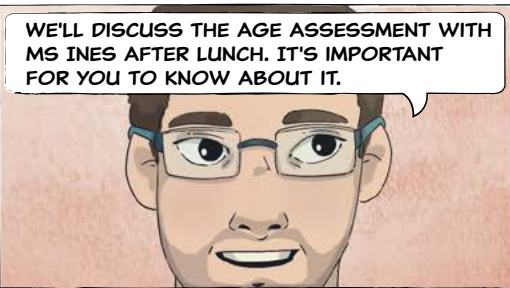
TALK TO YOUR GUARDIAN TO LEARN MORE.



ONE LAST QUESTION... WHAT IF A CHILD LIES ABOUT THEIR AGE TO APPEAR YOUNGER OR OLDER?



ALWAYS TELL THE OFFICERS YOUR REAL AGE. IF THEY HAVE DOUBTS, THEY MAY REQUEST AN AGE ASSESSMENT.



WE'LL DISCUSS THE AGE ASSESSMENT WITH MS INES AFTER LUNCH. IT'S IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO KNOW ABOUT IT.



YES, LET'S EAT, MY TUMMY IS GRUMBLING!



THANK YOU!



YOU'RE WELCOME!
SEE YOU ALL AFTER LUNCH AT THE TABLE UNDER THE TREE.

IMPORTANT

In this country ...

The authority responsible to register me and to organise my personal asylum interview is called:

My guardian's name is: _____

I can contact a lawyer free of charge to learn more about the asylum procedure and to prepare for my interview.

For this, I can contact: _____

If I disagree with the decision on my application for asylum, I can contact my guardian and a lawyer for advice on how to appeal.

To appeal the following information can be useful: _____

If anyone working here, like the officers, legal counsellors, social workers or my guardian treat me badly, I can make a complaint and contact: _____

In case of an emergency, I can contact the ambulance at _____
or the police at _____



If I want to voluntarily return to my home country, my guardian will help me to contact the International Organization for Migration (IOM):



The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), can also provide support to me or my family when we have legal questions. UNHCR can be contacted:

Other important information: _____

QUIZ

I am checking my knowledge on what I have learnt about the best interests assessment.

☑ Tick the correct answers.

1 People ask for international protection or asylum because they are scared to return home, where they or their family would not be safe. a. True
b. False

2 The authorities need to register me within 5 to 8 days of I asked for asylum. In exceptional circumstances, it might take up to 2 weeks. a. True
b. False

3 I can travel to any country I want after I asked for asylum. a. True
b. False

4 It is important to work together with the officers who ask me questions during my personal asylum interview. If I don't remember something, I can tell them that. a. True
b. False

5 Children arriving alone do not go into the border procedure. a. True
b. False

6 If I have questions about the personal asylum interview, I can ask my guardian or a lawyer. Their support is free. a. True
b. False

7 Officers will confirm with me the information they collect during the personal asylum interview so I can correct any mistakes. a. True
b. False

8 If I cannot keep the appointment for my personal asylum interview, it does not matter. a. True
b. False

QUIZ

- 9 It is good to share with the officers all the documents I have, even if it is only photos of the documents on my phone. a. True
b. False
-
- 10 After the personal asylum interview, the officers will look at all the information and will decide whether I need protection or not. a. True
b. False
-
- 11 If I disagree with their decision, I can talk to my guardian or a lawyer and appeal the decision. a. True
b. False

Answers to the quiz

Question 1 : a; Question 2 : a; Question 3 : b; Question 4 : a; Question 5 : a; Question 6 : a; Question 7 : a; Question 8 : b; Question 9 : a; Question 10 : a; Question 11 : a.

NOTES

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