

How To Prepare for my OFPRA or CNDA Interview?

How to write my story?

- Keep it **short** (2 or 3 pages are enough, otherwise it will not be read) but **COMPLETE** (you will be able to add elements in the actual interview, but the discussion will be based on the story you wrote)
- Focus on the **origin of my problems**: why am I danger? *Because of my religion, my ethnic background, my sexuality, my political opinions, because I belong to a group that is threatened, because I come from a country at war, and so on?*
- Show clearly that **my fears are real and current**: *if I go back to my country tomorrow, who is going to be against me? What can they do to me?*
- No need to tell much about your trip from your country to France: focus on **the problems I had in my own country**
- If possible, type the story (easier to read)

How to express myself during the interview at OFPRA or CNDA

- Do not answer questions by yes or no only
- Do not make sentences that are too long otherwise the translator will not translate everything
- Give as many **personal details** as possible: Giving information that everyone can find on internet is not enough. I must give details that only I know: describe my emotions, my feelings, the actual personal circumstances I lived, and so on...
- Smile, say hello, good-bye, thank you (bonjour, au-revoir, merci) and so on...
- Shut off my mobile
- Sit up straight in my chair
- Look at the OFPRA person or the CNDA judges (and not only the translator)

What is the interview OFPRA like?

- During the interview, I will be alone in a little room with an OFPRA person (can be a man or a woman) and a translator, who speaks the language I asked for.
- I can ask to have a lawyer present or the representative of an association, if I ask for it two weeks before the interview.
- The interview is recorded (there is a microphone on the table), and the OFPRA person also writes everything I say on his computer. But everything stays secret: I can say whatever I want.
- Do not hesitate to say if I do not understand the translator, or the questions asked
- The OFPRA person will first ask me questions about my identity (to verify the informations which are in my asylum papers), then about my family, my education, my profession, if I have documents to give, about my journey from my country to France (*which countries I went through, when, who paid?*), then finally about the reasons I left my country. At the end, I can add some details if I want.
- An interview can last from 30 minutes to several hours. It usually lasts about one hour.

What is the CNDA hearing like?

- The CNDA is like a court: the room is very large and anyone can come and listen. It can be stressful at the beginning.
- If I want to be alone in the room (no other people), I may ask for the audience to be behind closed doors: Everyone outside the court people will be asked to leave and the door will be closed.
- During the hearing, I will be sitting between my lawyer and the translator. In front of me, 3 judges will ask me questions. To my right, there will be one person who will read a report, and to my left, there will be a secretary.
- At the beginning, the person on my right will read a report (for about 5 minutes), which tells my story, the reasons why OFPRA gave me a negative answer and so on... Then the translator will tell me what was said in that report.
- Then the 3 judges will ask me questions during 30 to 40 minutes. At the very end, my lawyer will speak and explain my request, for a few minutes;
- The hearing in front of the CNDA can last from 45 minutes to several hours.

What are the different possibilities of protection in France?

In France, there are two types of protection:

- **Asylum**, which gives the right to stay in France for 10 years
- **Subsidiary protection**, which gives the right to stay in France for 1 year (this will soon be changed to 3 years)

Who can get subsidiary protection?

There are 3 possible cases:

- If, in his/her country, a person risks the **death penalty or an execution**

- If, in his /her country, a person risks to be **treated in inhumane or degrading ways** (for example, if a woman is beaten or raped without being protected by the police, if she is forced or pushed to prostitute, if a person is constantly racketed and so on...)
- If a person comes from a country which is in a war, with **widespread violence**

Which regions are recognized as zones of widespread violence?

The list changes frequently. Today, the list includes:

- All of Afghanistan
- All of Iraq
- All of Lybia
- Some states of Nigeria
- The Extreme North of Cameroon
- The tribal zones of Pakistan
- Some regions of Central Africa
- Some regions of the Democratic Republic of Congo, such as North and south Kivu
- The North Darfour, South Darfour, West Darfour and the South and West of Kordofan in Sudan
- All of South Sudan
- All of Syria
- All of Somalia
- Some regions of Yemen

How can I prove I come from one of those regions?

- Either by showing some identity papers, if I have any. I must also be able to explain how I got those papers, what are the procedures to get them or to renew them and so on...
- Or by giving precise information about this region, and being able to answer such questions as :

Which village was I born and did I grow up in? Where did I go to school? What was the name of the district or the province? What is the capital of the district, or the province? What are the big cities close to my village? How much time does it take to go from my village to the closes city? How many kms or miles from my village to this city? What are the roads like?

What are the biggest cities in my country?

What ethnic groups or tribes are present in my region?

What are some well-known TV shows in my country? What are the names of the phone companies in my country? What is the country code? What are some well-known singers?

What is the national sport? How is it played?

What languages are spoken in my country? What currency is there? What are the different bills?

Did I vote at the last elections in my country? Who were the candidates? What does the voting ballot look like? What is the procedure for voting? Who is the President of my country today?

How many years of school are there?

Are there armed groups in my region? When did the last fights happen?

Who can get asylum?

Asylum is **ONLY** for people who are in a **PERSONNALLY** dangerous situation: It cannot be given to someone who comes from a region with widespread violence.

- **I must be outside of my country.** Only the problems I had in my country are important (not the ones I had on my journey to Europe). If I get asylum, I will not be allowed to go back to my country. If I do not have any documents, I will be asked the same questions as for subsidiary protection so that I can tell where I come from.
- **I must prove that my country cannot or doesn't want to protect me.** The OFPRA person might ask me if I went to the police to ask for protection. In this case, I must be able to answer those questions: *Where did I go to file my complaint? In which police station? What did I have to do to file this complaint? Did the police do an investigation? If yes, what were the results? Do I have a document that proves I really did file a complaint?*
- **I must have real, personal and current fears:** I must be able to show that if I am sent back to my country tomorrow, there is a real risk I will persecuted. So it is **VERY** important to give many personal details about my own situation (not only the situation of my family or my village): *If I was arrested a few years ago, how can I prove people are still looking*

for me? Is there a search warrant on me? Does my family have problems because of me? Am I still threatened by phone? Are the people in power who persecuted me still in power today?

- **I must be in real danger to be persecuted.** Threats are not enough. I must be able to explain what can happen to me (prison without being judged, physical violence, death and so on...). It is not necessary to have already been persecuted. The risk to be persecuted in the future is enough.
- **I must be able to explain precisely who is threatening me:** *which group? Which people? What are their names? Are they threatening other people as well? Why me?*
- The reasons that explain my fears to be persecuted must belong to one of those categories:
 - **My race** (ethnic origin)
 - **My religion**
 - **My nationality**
 - **My belonging to a specific ‘social group’**
 - **My political opinions**

What are the ‘social groups’ that can give the right to asylum?

The list changes all the time. Today, they are:

- **Homosexuals** in many countries, in particular: Algeria, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Egypt, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda.
- **Women refuse a forced marriage**, especially in: Guinea (Peulh and Diakanke tribes only), Mali, Pakistan and Turkey (East part).
- **People who refuse excision of their daughters**, especially in: Mali, Senegal (Tukolor/Toucouleur only), Somalia.
- **Women who refuse excision**, especially in: Guinea, Mali and Tchad.
- People persecuted because of their **physical appearance (albinism)**, especially in : Burkina Faso, Central Africa, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali and Nigeria.
- **Women who leave a prostitution ring**, especially in Nigeria (state of Edo only).
- **People who run away from slave status**, especially in: Mauritania

How can I prove I am persecuted because of my ethnic origin?

Examples: Hazaras in Afghanistan

Tumals in Somalia

Massalits in Darfour

You must be able to answer some of those questions:

How many people belong to this community in my country? How many in my village?

How old is this tribe/ethnic group?

In which regions of my country does my community live? What are the main cities in which the people of my group live?

What are the most important trades of my community? How do they make most of their money?

Who are the leaders of my group? What are their names?

What are some traditions of my group? What are the main holidays and celebrations?

Do we have a special dialect?

How are the relationships between my ethnic group and the neighboring ethnic groups? What about the relationships with the central power/government?

What kind of persecutions and bad treatments has my ethnic group been subjected to?

How can I prove that I am persecuted because of my religion?

Examples: Chiites in Pakistan and in Afghanistan

Ahmadis in Pakistan

Non-Muslims in Bangladesh

How many people practice my religion in my country? How many in my city?

What the most important cities/region in which my people/community live?

What is the difference between Chiite religion and Sunnite religion?

Can I give the name of several Hindhu gods? (if I am Hindhu)

What are the principal holy days of my religion? Can I describe these celebrations in detail?

Where do I practice my religion in my country? (what is the name of the mosque, the temple or the church where I go pray?)

How do I practice my religion every day? Do I pray every day? What else?

Can I recite a few prayers?

What is a religious service like? (the Friday prayer, a mass, a funeral, a wedding and so on...)

What is the name of my religious leader?

What is the name of the Holy Book of my religion? Do I know some parts of it?

What kind of persecutions are people from my religious community subjected to?

Who does this? Does the government protect you?

How can I prove that I am persecuted because of my political opinions?

Examples : People who refuse to join the Taliban in Afghanistan

People who refuse to join the army in Sudan
People who refuse to do their military service in Eritrea
People who refuse to join Boko Haram in Nigeria
People who oppose Kabila in DRC
Kurdish militants in Turkey

If I am member of an opposing political party :

Since when am I sympathetic to this political party? Since when am I a member?

What are the reason I decided to join this party? Why this one and not another one?

What is the significance of my party acronym (ex: UDPS in DRC)

What is the symbol of my party? What is the motto of my party? When was my party created?

What the political program of my party? What are its main ideas? Can you give examples of concrete measures it wants to take?

Why am I opposed to the party in power? What are the other political parties in my country?

What are the steps one must take to join my party? Is there a fee to pay? How much? Does the membership need to be renewed?

What does the party member card look like (what colour is it? What symbols or designs are there on it?)

How is my party organized at the national level? The federal level? The local level?

Who are the leaders? What are their names?

Did I have a specific role in the party? What were my responsibilities? What was I doing exactly for my party?

Was I known in my village because of my political activities?

What was the result of my party at the last elections,

Do I continue my activities with this party since I am in France? What is the name of the party representative in France? Where do the meetings and activities take place?

If I refuse to join an armed group:

Who suggested I join this group? What are their names?

How many times did they ask me to join them? Where did they ask me? How were they dressed?

How can I be really sure they were Talibans or ...?

Did I receive threat letters (if yes, where are they?), did I receive phone calls?

Did they threaten me because I refused? Did they hurt me because I refused?

Are these people very present in my region? How is their relationship with the authorities?

Can I tell about some of the attacks they did in my region?

Was I able to live normally and peacefully after I refused?

Are there other people around me who were also approached to join? What happened to them?

Is my family still in trouble because I refused?

Did I go to the police about this? What did they say or do?

How can I prove I am persecuted because I am a homosexual?

Examples: Homosexuals in many countries, including: Algeria, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Egypt, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda

How old was I when I realized I was a homosexual? How did it happen?

Did I have heterosexual relationships before that? What was it that I did not like in them?

How many homosexual relationships did I have? How long did they last?

Where did I meet my partners the first time?

Where did I go with my partner when we went out? How often?

Did my family or my neighbors know that I was a homosexual? How did they react?

Was I persecuted because of it? By whom? When? Where? How many times? Did the police protect me?

Did I meet other homosexuals in my country? Where? What kind of places were they (bars, nightclubs and so on...)?

Have I started a homosexual relationship in France?

Am I contact with LGBT associations in France? Which ones? What kind of activities do I take part in?

How can I prove I am persecuted because I refused an arranged marriage?

Examples: People in Guinea (Peulhs and Dikanka only), in Mali, Pakistan and Turkey (East part)

Who tried to get me married? What did the rest of my family think of it?

Were other members of my family also forced to be married?

Who was I supposed to marry? Who was this person? How old was he? What type of job did he have? Did he have other wives?

How much was the dowry?

What was it like when my father told me about it? Did I try to refuse?

Why didn't I want to marry this person?

Was I in another relationship?

Was there a way to simply refuse this marriage? Was I forced to flee?

How can I prove I am persecuted because I refuse excision or that of my daughters?

Examples: People who refuse excision for their daughters, particularly in Guinea, Mali, Senegal (Toucouleur tribe only), and in Somalia. Women who refuse to be excised, like in Guinea, Mali and Tchad.

*Who wants you to be excised or your daughters to be excised?
Who would perform the excision?
Are other women in your family, your neighbors or your region all excised?
In your community, from what age to what age is excision done?
Did you contact associations/NGOs who fight excision in your country?
Have you already been at an excision ceremony? What is it like? Where do they happen?
Does the family have to pay the person who performs the excision?
What do people think of women who are not excised?
Why are you against it?
Did you tell your parents you refused it? What did they say?
Do you have a medical certificate that proves that you or your children have not been excised? (you must have a real certificate written by a doctor, a simple sworn-in statement is not enough)
Do you know that excision in France is forbidden? (you can get up to 20 years in jail and have to pay 150.000 Euros)*

how can I prove I am persecuted because I want to leave a prostitution ring?

Example: Women who come from the state of Edo, in Nigeria

*Who enrolled me in a prostitution ring?
Was I told I would prostitute myself before I left Nigeria?
Who paid for my trip to Europe?
Did a djudju ceremony take place? What happened during it?
How much have I been asked to reimburse?
What was I threatened of if I refused to pay?
How much have I been able to reimburse (how many clients each day? What prices?)? How much do I have left to pay?
How did I manage to leave the ring? Was I threatened, was I beaten up when I left?
Where do I live now? What do I do?
Did the ring find me?
Did I go to the police to file a complaint? How was I received by the police? What informations did they ask me? Do I have a copy of the complaint?
If I did not file a complaint, why? (if you file a complaint against a ring, you may have the right to have a permit to stay in France)
What about my family in Nigeria? Are they in trouble with the ring,
Am I in contact with associations who help former prostitutes? What are the names of those associations?*