

HOUSTON IMMIGRATION LEGAL SERVICES COLLABORATIVE

FACT SHEET FOR REFUGEES AND ASYLEES: INTERVIEWS WITH THE FBI OR DHS

What do I do if the FBI or DHS request interview with me?

- **Contact a Lawyer before you speak with DHS or the FBI!**
- You have the right to a lawyer before you meet with anyone from DHS or the FBI.
- You can decline the interview, but this may be viewed as suspicious in some cases.

Note: If you receive *any* document from the FBI/DHS, we recommend you contact an attorney.

Where can I find more information?

- Speak to someone at your resettlement agency
- Call the Council on American Islamic Relations Houston (CAIR) at 713-838-2247
- Visit the Houston Immigration Legal Services Collaborative website at www.houstonimmigration.org

Free legal assistance available at:

Tahirih Justice Center
Houston@Tahirih.org
www.tahirih.org/locations/houston/

Human Rights First
TXProbono@humanrightsfirst.org

YMCA International Services
Free walk-in legal clinic every
Wednesday, 9am - 3pm at 6300 Westpark
Dr., Suite 600

Catholic Charities
Call 713-874-6570 for the dates of free
informational sessions (*charlas*) at 2900
Louisiana St.

Who are the FBI/DHS and why do they want to interview me?

- The **Department of Homeland Security (DHS, www.dhs.gov)** is a government agency that is responsible for enforcing U.S. immigration laws and keeping the borders secure. DHS tries to keep communities safe by identifying people who are doing things that the U.S. government does not support, such as supporting organizations or people by sending money to groups overseas that the U.S. government does not support.
- The **Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI, www.fbi.gov)** is a government agency that monitors internal U.S. security and fights domestic and international terrorism.
- The FBI or DHS may interview asylum seekers or refugees with regard to general community engagement or something potentially concerning in your history before you came to the U.S. or since you came to U.S., and they need additional information.
- The FBI or DHS may ask you for one or multiple interviews; neither of these is necessarily a bad indication.

If I agree to the interview, what are my rights?

- You have the right to have an attorney present. There are legal organizations in Houston that may be able to provide you a free attorney.
- You have the right to set the time and place for the interview.
- You have the right to find out the questions they will ask beforehand.
- You have the right to have an interpreter present. There are legal organizations in Houston that may be able to provide you a free interpreter.

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What should I do during the interview?

- Ask to see a badge or business card at the beginning of the interview.
- Ask the person for their name, title, agency, phone number, and email address. Write it down, and keep a record.
- Write down what was asked or discussed during the interview. You may also record the interview on your phone instead of keeping written notes.
- **You have a right to refuse to hand over documents**
- If you do not understand the question, seek clarification before answering.
- You have the right to answer only the questions you feel comfortable answering. No matter what, assume that everything you say is on the record.
- **You can end the interview at any point if it becomes combative, you feel uncomfortable, or you want to speak to an attorney.**

Remember: There is NO automatic deportation – you have many due process and procedural rights, such as the right to attorney (not at government expense), the right to hearing, and more.

Remember: It is a criminal offense to knowingly lie to an officer.

Can I give to a charity organization without becoming a terror suspect?

- It depends. You may continue to give money to the causes you believe in, but you should be careful in choosing which charities to support. You should not support charities that are on the State Department's list of terrorist organizations.¹ Providing financial or other support to groups that the U.S. views as suspect may impact your immigration status and may cause other legal problems for you and your family members.

Is it safe for me to practice my religion in religious institutions or public places?

- You have a constitutional right to practice your religion. You have the right to go to a place of worship, attend and hear sermons and religious lectures, participate in community activities, and pray in public. Remember, the law is on your side to protect you.
- If you experience any acts of hatred, contact the police, a refugee resettlement organization, and/or a free legal services organization.

What should I do if I feel unsafe?

- If someone threatens you or makes you feel your life is in danger, try to get away from them, and call 911 for the police.
- Inform your resettlement agency for additional support.
- If your child is bullied at school, inform your child's school and your resettlement agency.

¹ For a list of organizations designated as terrorist by the U.S. government, see <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm>