

Opening an Interview

Eligibility Officer: Good morning, Mr. Interpreter. Did you have a pleasant weekend?

Interpreter: It was great. I went to the football friendly.

Eligibility Officer: Oh yes, of course – you told me you had tickets. I heard it was good game. Now where is my file? **[Looks through briefcase to find a file]** Here it is. This morning's interview is for Farhad Tehrani. Is that you?

Applicant: No! I'm Akram Muhtadi --- from Egypt.

Eligibility Officer: Sorry about that. Tehrani is the afternoon case from Iran. Just let me get my papers organized, Mr. Muhradi. You say you are from Algeria? The file says you're Egyptian.

Applicant: Yes. I'm from Egypt. I never said I was from Algeria.

Eligibility Officer: I thought you did.

Interpreter: Maybe you are thinking about the football game – the Algerian team played our national team.

Eligibility Officer: You are right – I got confused. Well, no harm done. Mr. Muhtadi, I am going to ask you questions about your refugee application. I have to decide if you have a well-founded fear of persecution for a Convention reason. That means you can't go back to your country because of persecution but you also have to have a nexus between the persecution you fear and one of the Convention grounds. Do you understand?

Applicant: Not exactly – what is this “nexus” thing? I can't go back because I have political problems.

Eligibility Officer: You have answered your own question. You link your persecution with your politics. I am warning you that if you don't tell the truth you could lose your case. I read the file and I have to warn you that I found some of your statements inconsistent with COI.

Applicant: What statements do you mean? What is this thing called COI?

Eligibility Officer: We will get to that later in the interview. You look nervous. Am I making you nervous?

Applicant: I am very nervous.

Eligibility Officer: In my experience it is people who lie who get nervous. If you tell the truth, there is nothing to be nervous about.

Applicant: I am not going to lie, sir.

Eligibility Officer: I hope not. Let's get started. You state that you were tortured when you were in prison. Let's begin with some questions about that.