

GREECE GAS/EASO VULNERABILITY & ADMISSIBILITY & ELIGIBILITY INTERVIEW SCRIPT: INSTRUCTIONS BY ADVOCATES ABROAD

Advocates Abroad is a registered foreign NGO in Greece and American 501(c)3 domestic non-profit organization. Advocates field teams are local and foreign volunteers based in Greece, other European States, and the Middle East.

This project is respectfully presented to all volunteers, legal aid professionals, and asylum officials in this crisis.

The questions in this script were asked in the majority of 300 transcripts dating between March 2016 – June 2018. Advocates Abroad verified the below questions against the official GAS/EASO internal interview script.

Instructions to understanding and structuring a strong answer are in red italicized font below each question. These instructions are from Advocate Abroad and partners. It is irresponsible to remove any of the instructions. Accordingly, please copy and share this script as presented, without alteration or edit.

For questions, please contact cases@advocatesabroad.org. Good luck from all of us at Advocates Abroad.

COMMON TERMS & DEFINITIONS

Eligibility Interview: Examines if requirements are met for protection as a refugee or beneficiary of subsidiary protection. Protection is granted upon showing well-founded fear of persecution due to political opinion, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or race.

Admissibility Interview: Examines whether Greece is the appropriate State to review the applicant's claim. If there is a safe third country or first country of asylum, then the claim is inadmissible and the applicant is returned to the appropriate country to continue his/her claim.

Vulnerability Interview: Determines whether the applicant is vulnerable, as defined in Article 14(8), L. 4375/2016. It is usually shorter, and less formal than admissibility and eligibility interviews.

Internal credibility: Established by consistency and plausibility of applicant answers.

External credibility: Applicant statements are verifiable by external sources.

"CoO": "Country of origin" is the country of birth.

Shipwreck: The partial or total destruction of a ship, such as sinking.

Trauma: Emotional response to a terrible event. Denial and unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, even physical symptoms like headaches or nausea are common. PTSD is a common result of trauma.

Torture: An act of inflicting severe pain as punishment or to force someone to do or to say something.

GENERAL ADVICE

- It is advisable to organize before the interview! Bring to the interview all evidence, registration documents, medical logs, etc., received prior and during the journey.
- You have five calendar days to submit additional information after an interview to GAS/EASO offices or electronically through the regional pga.asylo email address. Include your full name and case number in every email!
- There is a 2mb cap on regional pga.asylo email addresses! Shrink documents and pictures to ensure the email is small enough to be received.
- → "No Instruction" ("N/I") follow questions that do not require instruction. ←
- → An asterisks (*) appears alongside only the questions that appear in the official GAS/EASO script. ←

PART I: CONFIRMATION OF PERSONAL DATA

*Did you understand everything I said until now?

This question is to confirm you understand the instructions on the interview procedure and your rights. Feel free always to ask for clarification.

If the interview is about admissibility (Turkey), you will hear “safe third country”. If the interview is about eligibility (refugee status), you will hear “country of origin.” If the interview is going to cover both admissibility and eligibility, then you will hear both terms. If you do not hear either, then it is advisable to ask the interviewer to clarify what type of interview he/she is conducting.

*Did you understand the interpreter?

Feel free to say “no” or to express your hesitation, if you do not fully understand him/her.

*Are you in a good condition to do the interview today?

Important question! Ideally, respond in under three sentences. Mention any trauma or medical/physical conditions in your home country and/or Turkey caused by torture, rape, etc. Your goal is to reframe the interview with your answer.

An interview originally meant to focus on admissibility or eligibility can be changed to vulnerability or only eligibility, if there is a strong, clear statement from you about medical, physical, or psychological conditions. This is your goal if you are on the islands. If you are on the mainland, your goal is to stop the interview completely and be granted protection immediately.

It is not advised to ask to reschedule, barring health or appropriate interpreter issues.

Example: “No. I have suffered from (rape/torture/similar events) in my home country/Turkey, so I am not in a good condition. I still have nightmares/panic attacks/stress from those events, but I will do the interview today.”

*Are you in good health?

Why not? Explain what happened to cause this problem?

*Explain any medical condition or vulnerability. Try not to focus on conditions that came from living in your Greek residence – vulnerability is the result of a condition existing **before** Greece. Keep the interviewer’s attention on those issues.*

*Do you have any (other) health problems? Please keep in mind that I mean both physical and mental health.

Elaborate on any other conditions and symptoms, such as asthma, stress, inability to focus, etc.

*Do your family members present in Greece suffer from any mental health problems?

Note: The word “problem” (rather than accurate, useful terms, such as: “disease”, “trauma,” “chronic illness”) may be used to downplay the severity of your medical condition. Be aware of the interviewer’s language. Use language that is accurate to your condition.

Can you confirm your personal information?

These questions cover personal information, including your name, religion, ethnicity, age, arrival

date, nationality, language, and current residence. The questions are to confirm that the right applicant is being interviewed and to assess the applicant's internal credibility.

*You will recognize some of these background as ones that you answered during registration or earlier interviews. Those questions are deliberately asked again to test **your** internal credibility and are used also to likely exhaust you. When you are tired, you are not as focused or attentive for more important questions that come at toward the end of the interview.*

Write down your background and personal details & read from your notes for any question you are asked. Explain to the interviewer why you are reading from notes, if you feel it is necessary.

If you want to change registered information, then you must show original documents with the correct information to the interviewer or other competent authorities.

Are you married/What is your marital status?

*What is the full name of your spouse?

*When/Where did you get married?

*Where is he/she located today?

Do you have any papers/documents to confirm the marriage?

If you had a traditional or religious marriage and cannot show a license or similar proof, don't panic! Be ready to name the location, those in attendance, the officiant, and the date of the marriage.

If you have any evidence of the ceremony, such as photos, then show it to the interviewer.

Do you have children?

*Names/ages/current locations of your children?

If located in Greece, what is their status?

*If recognized status for protection in Greece, what is their residence permit number?

*If also applicant, what is their case number?

Do any of the above children suffer from any mental or physical disability?

If not in Greece, where are your children located today?

Who is taking care of your children today?

N/I

*Do you have any children in your care?

*Names/ages/current locations of those children?

N/I

*Where are your parents located today?

*If located in Greece, what is their status?

*If also applicant, what is their case number?

If in Greece, do they suffer from any health problems?

*Are they dependent on you?

N/I

Do you have any brothers or sisters?

Where are they located today?

*If located in Greece, what is their status?

*If also applicant, what is their case number?

*Are they dependent on you?

These questions are also used to confuse or prove lack of credibility. If you do not know your family member's case number, be sure to consistently say so throughout the interview.

*Are you dependent on any of these relatives?

Dependency is useful for proving vulnerability and for establishing a claim for discretionary based claims for family reunification. It may be difficult to admit, but it is advisable to explain if you have needed and received help from your relatives in the past.

*Where are your other family members or relatives? / What is the status of your family member(s) in a Dublin State?

If you told the authorities that you had family in one country and that is correct information to the best of your knowledge, then remember to repeat that information or explain why you forgot to mention it before.

Do you have contact with your family?

How often do you contact this family member?

When was the last time you talked to this family member?

How is this family member doing?

N/I

*Are you in good health?

If you feel you are not in perfect health, then you are not in good health for the purposes of this interview. If you do not want to reschedule the interview, then do not ask to reschedule. Refer to the instructions offered with the above question, "Are you in a good condition to do the interview today?"

Every sickness, stomach ache, nightmare that was caused by traumatic circumstances is important to discuss. Mention to the interviewer if you have not received medical aid for ongoing physical or psychological conditions in Greece or Turkey or other country of residence or passage.

*Do you suffer from any serious medical or physical problems?

Since when do you suffer from these problems? / When were you diagnosed?

Medical conditions may be diagnosed in Greece, but the condition must exist prior to arrival.

Examples: epilepsy since childhood, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) from violence in Turkey, or rape or torture suffered in the home country.

*Do your family members present in Greece suffer from any health problems?

N/I

What is your education?

The interest or goal to continue an education or degree are not grounds for asylum.

Did you work in your country of origin ("CoO")?

A poor economy or poor work situation in your home country is not a basis for asylum.

However, if your employer abused you or prevented you from practicing your religion, then those

situations may be a good basis for why you were not safe in your CoO.

What is your telephone number?

Be careful! This question is asked both for the legitimate purpose of ensuring a means of contact but also to assess your internal credibility.

If you want to provide your number, then write it on the top of your notepad for easy access.

The question may be asked at random points throughout the interview to throw your focus off or to interrupt your otherwise compelling narrative.

*Do you have any documents that you wish to submit?

Check your residence carefully for all Greek documents and evidence beforehand – evidence that you forgot to bring along is not helpful evidence. Present your collected evidence and documents at this question or at the start of the interview.

If you cannot produce a particular document, then explain the reason why you cannot. Try to describe the document, and the reasons for why, when, and where you had had received and lost it.

PART II: VULNERABILITY

These questions may be asked at any point in the interview & in varying order. These questions assess an applicant's "vulnerability." The six categories of vulnerability are defined in Article 14(8), Law 4375/2016. If you are "vulnerable," then your case is admissible, and you should not be asked questions about Turkey.

The official GAS/EASO script contains an extensive discussion, but no formal questions, on vulnerability. There are suggested questions in the official script, which we have marked with an asterisk.

GAS/EASO officials must follow up "as soon as a vulnerability indicator or claim appears at any point throughout the interview." Therefore, be persistent if you have a vulnerability. Do not be aggressive, even if asked the same question multiple times. Do not stop explaining health or psychological issues until satisfied that you have been heard!

Were you treated for this problem in your country of origin ("CoO") or Turkey?

N/I

Are you being treated for these problems in Greece?

N/I

Have you seen a psychologist in the camp?

N/I

*What kind of symptoms do you have?

Useful question! Stand up and use the space of the room to move around as need be. Explain how your condition(s) affected walking, sitting, breathing, eating, sleeping, focusing, etc.

Also use this question to show where on your body this condition is situated or manifested. If the injuries or scars are in non-private areas, then ask if you can show these injuries or scars.

If the condition is in a private part of the body, do not show during the interview. Take photos of this part beforehand to give to the interviewer or ask the interviewer for permission to open your phone

and show this evidence. Indicate with your hand the affected area during the interview. Do not be shy!

How does this incident affect you now?

Can you sleep/eat/think/talk/walk as well as you did before developing this illness, disease, or condition? If not, in what ways has the condition made your life or behavior different?

Has your situation changed since you arrived to Greece?

N/I

*Have you sought medical aid since you arrived in Greece?

N/I

*What kind of medical aid/medication? / For what reason do you take that medication?

N/I. Bring the medicine with you and be ready to show it to the interviewer.

*Are there any daily activities you cannot do anymore? / Are you able to continue with your daily activities with this health problem?

It is advisable here to be specific and open: Clearly explain if you are unable to stand in the food line, or to play sports, or provide for your basic needs. Can you stand in the food line? Wash your clothes?

Conditions in the camp(s) of Greece are not grounds for vulnerability, so do not focus your answer on them – remember, vulnerability is based on pre-existing conditions.

Are you taking any medication?

The same question is asked above. It is often asked a second time, for the sake of assessing your credibility and assessing the actual state of your health.

Who prescribed this medication?

Do you know the name of this medication?

For what reason did they give you this medication?

Another question that should be answered by showing the interviewer any medicine boxes (even if empty), prescriptions from Greek or foreign doctors, etc.

If you had traditional medication prescribed in your home country, then describe the medicine and the effect that the medicine has had on you, and if it helped your condition or not.

Do you have documents to prove these problems?

It is advisable to have all documents collected and organized before the interview. However, if you just remembered that you have a doctor's note on your phone when this question is asked, then ask the interviewer for permission to open your phone and show this evidence.

Are you dependent on anyone?

How are they helping you?

It is advisable to give examples of how others help with your daily tasks and life, even if it's embarrassing to admit to needing or accepting help.

Dependency is useful for proving vulnerability and for establishing a claim for discretionary based claims for family reunification. It may be difficult to admit any weakness or struggle you feel, but explain

if you have needed and received help from your relatives.

Have you seen a psychologist?

Why/why not?

It is useful to mention if you have tried to see a psychologist or other mental health specialist and why you were not successful.

Have you ever been a victim of torture or other serious physical or psychological violence?

This is an important question that can help you focus the interview on vulnerability or eligibility. This question is also one of the only two questions in which “torture” is used by the interviewer. If asked, be ready to explain that torture involves “inflicting severe pain on someone as a punishment or in order to force them to do or say something” and how this applies to your situation.

Did you suffer any serious damage from it?

Be ready to show scars or marks on your body, photos of the scars in private areas, or photos of all scars if you do not wish to show any part of your body to the interviewer.

The interviewer will accept photos of your genitalia and other private areas. Ask the interviewer for permission to open your phone and show this evidence.

Did you need medical treatment afterwards?

This question assesses exaggeration or misrepresentation of medical conditions.

QUESTIONS ABOUT CROSSING THE BORDER INTO TURKEY:

Did you experience any problems crossing the border into Turkey?

This includes from border guards on both the Turkish border and exiting border. Were you arrested, detained, harassed by guards or by locals? Were the smugglers pushing you over the border or blocking your way over the border? This question is broadly asked to cover all situations, so use the question to explain as many issues as you encountered.

No entry is illegal, if it is for the sake of safety. You are not a criminal and your entry is not anything to be ashamed of, if you entered for the sake of finding protection.

During your period of detention, did the Turkish authorities mistreat you in any way?

“Mistreat” is a word that covers a range of conduct, from harassment to torture. Be clear in your language and explain as fully and for as long as necessary any mistreatment that you suffered in Turkey. You will be asked this question a number of times in the interview.

How many times were you beaten by Turkish authorities?

This question is to assess your internal credibility. Be consistent!

In which part of your body did they beat you?

Use this question to establish control of the room and interview. Stand up and move around as necessary to show where on your body you were beaten. It is advised to wear loose fitting clothes to facilitate answers to this question.

If your injuries or scars are in private areas of your body, then take photos and submit those to the interviewer. If the injuries or scars are in non-private areas, then ask the interviewer if you can show them these injuries or scars.

Standing up and moving also helps you focus and breathe more fully.

How many people beat you?

Be consistent!

Did you sustain any injuries?

Be consistent!

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BOAT CROSSING TO GREECE:

During your previous failed attempts to cross (to Greece), what happened? / Did anything important happen to you during the failed attempts?

This question examines problems you encountered when crossing, for example, shipwreck or being caught and arrested by Turkish authorities.

During your period of detention (if arrested after an attempt), did the Turkish authorities mistreat you in any way?

Shipwreck survivors and relatives of shipwreck victims are vulnerable under Greek law. EASO has recognized this vulnerability with more regularity than the other types of vulnerability, since March 2016. If asked, explain that a shipwreck is “the partial or total destruction of a ship, such as sinking.”

Be careful. The interviewer will check records of Frontex or the Hellenic/Turkish Coast Guard whether there was a shipwreck on the date you claimed that you crossed to Greece.

Even if it is painful to say out loud, inform the interviewer if you were aware that fellow passengers drowned, who or did not come out of the water at all. If you are not sure, then say so.

It is advisable to write down the answers to these questions before the interview and write your intended answers as accurately as you can remember. It is not a problem if you need to read off your answers for this section in order to maintain focus and to remain calm.

What date did you leave Turkey (for Greece)?

Avoid contradictory answers by checking your journey timeline with the dates and countries passed through from your home country to Greece.

Note that the interviewer is now asking questions of fact between questions involving emotional, traumatic memories. This ordering is deliberate and not for your benefit.

How did you cross from Turkey to Greece?

Again, this is a question of fact that is asked between questions involving traumatic memories. This order of questions is intended to throw off your focus. Stay calm and refer to your notes if need be.

Did everyone on board make the crossing safely to Greece?

If you are not sure, then say that you are not sure.

How many persons were with you on the boat?

Sometimes the interviewer may ask if the smuggler was on the boat, or questions about the driver. Be consistent and admit you don't know, if you don't know these answers.

How many attempts before you crossed successfully to Greece? / Was this your first and only attempt at crossing into Greece?

As far as Advocates Abroad has tracked, any number - even 10 attempts - has not been used against the applicant. The only situation in which the number of attempts is an issue is when the applicant gives one number during registration, another during the interview, etc. So be consistent!

*Did everyone make it to (back) to Turkey safely on the failed attempts?

This question is particularly problematic, given the large number of drownings in the Aegean Sea since 2015. It is usually acceptable to say, "I don't know" in this particular question, if you do not know. Do not exaggerate or minimize what you witnessed.

PART III: ADMISSIBILITY

*When did you leave your country of origin ("CoO") / country of habitual residence?

It is advisable to respond first by asking the interviewer to define both "country of origin" and "country of habitual residence." Specifically, how long you did you have to reside in a country for it to be your country of habitual residence?

It is advisable to also ensure you have a clear, concise response ready that is consistent to the date given in registration.

Avoid contradictory answers by checking your journey timeline with all the dates and countries, from your home country to Greece.

If you cannot recall exact dates, then explain why you cannot and give as accurate a date as possible. Advocates attorneys do not generally advise our clients to provide exact dates, as those are sometimes inaccurate. Those inaccuracies can be used against you to show you are not credible. You may also remember suddenly a different date than the one provided, later on in the interview as well.

*Which countries did you pass through before arriving in Greece?

It is advisable to bring along a map that shows all the countries you crossed through on the way to Greece, and a pencil to trace your journey from home to Greece for the interviewer.

The goal is to maintain credibility on repetitive questions, and to not overwork your memory unnecessarily. By using a map and tracing the journey, you will also bring the interviewer more into your story, which is beneficial.

If you choose to not tell the interviewer about certain countries or if you choose to present an alternative timeline of travel, then remain consistent to that alternative version of your journey.

When did you arrive in Turkey?

This question and the following three questions are intended to judge internal credibility. Refer to your journey timeline if necessary to avoid a contradictory answer.

When did you arrive in Greece?

Your registration documents contain this date. It is advised to double check your registration papers when preparing your journey timeline to avoid confusion or problems with your credibility. Refer to your journey timeline to avoid a contradictory answer.

***How did you cross the border into Turkey?**

*Remember, no entry is illegal if it is entry for the sake of asylum or safety! You are not a criminal for crossing borders without the standard required papers if you are crossing borders to seek safety. Border guards are meant to assist you and even pro-actively identify those in need of protection. However, every applicant for international protection is obliged to follow orders given by authorities
For example: Obeying geographic restrictions, EURODAC, or interviewing with EASO or GAS.*

Did you make it on the first attempt to Turkey?

Be consistent!

***Did you experience any problems crossing the border?**

This question is important to show that Turkey is not safe for you now because you encountered abuse or danger from the beginning of your time in the country when you first crossed the border.

***Did you have any documents with you when crossing the border?**

Be consistent!

During your period of detention, did the Turkish authorities mistreat you in any way?

“Beat,” “hit,” “slap,” “harassed,” are words often used to downplay the severity of mistreatment or torture that you suffered. Listen for these words and be careful in your responses! If you were tortured, then say, “I was tortured in this way.”

Note: interviewers will repeat questions at their discretion to test credibility, ensure comprehension, and other reasons. Even if you already answered a question, you must answer it again.

It is advisable to politely remind the interviewer that you had already answered the same question or one substantially similar, for the purpose of having your comment recorded in the transcript.

How many times were you beaten by Turkish authorities?

Again, note that the term “beat/beaten” is used deliberately by the interviewer. If you were tortured, then respond with the word “torture.”

In which part of the body did they beat you? / Did you sustain any injuries?

Use this question to establish control of the room and interview. Move around the room as you need to and as is permitted, in order to show where on your body you were beaten. Standing up and moving also helps you focus and breathe fully.

How many persons beat you?

Be consistent!

Did you go to the police (if the police were not the attackers)?

The above questions of mistreatment are questions and all the following questions in this section

are questions of fact.

The interviewer deliberately orders all questions in the interview in this way to throw off your focus, your memory, and to elicit traumatic memories, in order to provoke or upset you. When you are upset, you provide less useful answers that can more easily lead to exclusion and a rejection.

If you need a break, then ask for one, and take as long as you need to refocus.

What did the police tell you?

Were you given any paperwork?

Did you sign any papers?

What kind of papers?

Be consistent and specific when explaining why you lost, destroyed, or someone else lost or destroyed these papers. Show internal credibility by describing size or length or look of the documents.

How did you feel after that incident (of trauma) happened to you?

This question is assessing internal credibility, meaning if you can clearly describe your emotions and physical condition after a period of time. Be careful of exaggeration or inconsistency.

You say that you feel “traumatized” - what exactly do you mean by that?

According to the American Psychology Association, “Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape or natural disaster. Immediately after the event, shock and denial are typical. Longer term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships and even physical symptoms like headaches or nausea.”

This question is assessing if you will exaggerate or minimize your knowledge of the meaning of “trauma” AND if you (if you are not a medical professional) are willing to misuse medical terms.

PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) victims are those traumatized from experiences prior to arriving in Greece and are considered vulnerable under Greek law.

Exaggerated answers may be held against you, so it is advisable to prepare a clear, short answer before the interview.

***How much time did you spend in Turkey before coming to Greece?**

Generally, it is more persuasive to be able to show that you had stayed a reasonable, even extended time, rather than use Turkey as a country of transit to the European Union.

However, the duration of time spent in Turkey is not always crucial to showing its unsafe.

For example: The three weeks you spent in Turkey were sufficient for admissibility because you had endured significant abuse from the police or locals in that short period or had already lived in Turkey before and suffered abuse or persecution for your identity.

Refer to your journey timeline to avoid a contradictory answer on your dates of travel.

***Have you ever been in Turkey prior to your latest departure from your CoO?**

This question may be useful particularly if you spent only a short time in Turkey before leaving for Greece, IF you can show that you had suffered from abuses from the state authorities or locals during that earlier time in Turkey.

By explaining and describing those earlier abuses, you can show that there was a credible basis to continue your recent journey to Greece without availing yourself of the authorities for protection.

DOUBLE QUESTION ABOUT ADMISSIBILITY (IMPORTANT):

*Did you come into contact with Turkish authorities during your stay/on your way to Greece?

These two questions in this section are linked. Your answer in the first question will affect your answer to the second question.

If you say “no” to this question, you cannot logically say “yes” to the next question. Furthermore, “no” to this question automatically gives the interviewer strong grounds for rejecting a claim as inadmissible. The reason is that it is impossible to have applied for protection without coming into contact with authorities.

By coming into contact with authorities at the border (such as police or border guards), or within a reasonable time after arriving, you have begun the application process for international protection (“making”). So, if you came into such contact with border guards or migration officials (at airports) or police officers, then the answer to both questions is “yes.”

*Did you apply for international protection or residence in Turkey?

If you encountered state officials after entering Turkey for the purpose of seeking safety, then your answer is “yes.”

If not, why not? *If so, were you granted protection status or a residence permit?

*What documents were you given?

*Do you have those documents with you?

Do you know what happened to your application, what decision was made?

You began the application for protection when you arrived at the border. But you have not fully registered yet! Registration includes many steps, such as receiving a “kimlik” (“identity card”).

If you later also applied for resettlement through UNHCR, then describe that application and the procedure as well for the interviewer.

QUESTIONS ABOUT WORK IN TURKEY:

*Did you work in Turkey?

These questions are partly asked to determine if you are an “economic migrant” and therefore not eligible for asylum. But, do not be afraid to say “yes” because it can help if you worked in Turkey!

You can use this question to strengthen your claim of admissibility. An ideal answer describes problems suffered at, or involving, the job work. These problems may have been so significant that you felt unsafe in the whole country, which compelled you to leave for Greece.

It is important to not focus on payment or non-payment from an employer if money was not the only issue in your job. This answer should describe abuses suffered at the workplace, as a result of the work, or from an employer or co-workers.

Example: “I worked in a factory in Izmir, Turkey. I was sexually abused by my boss, the factory owner, on four occasions in December 2017. During that time, my boss prevented me from practicing my religion by telling friends to tear up my Bible or beat me up if they saw me leaving church.”

*What sort of work did you do?

*Did you have a work permit?

Do you have a copy of this documentation?

These work themed questions also can be used to your advantage.

Be sure to provide clear answers that do not focus on a salary, wages, or lack of either. Answers should emphasize that the money derived or not derived from your job was not a reason why you fled to or from Turkey. Abuses suffered at your job, or illegality encountered at your job are good topics on which to focus your answers.

*Do you have family members, relatives, friends, or acquaintances living, working in Turkey?

*What is their legal status?

*Are they working?

Be consistent!

Where did you live during your stay in Turkey?

N/I

TRIPLE QUESTION ABOUT TURKEY AS A “SAFE THIRD COUNTRY” (IMPORTANT):

For what reasons did you leave Turkey?

This question and the following two questions are three versions of the same question: what happened to make Turkey not safe for you? Try not to get frustrated when you recognize that you are hearing repeat questions.

It is advisable to prepare a clear answer and use it for these three questions. An ideal answer first briefly covers the general type of situation that made you feel unsafe. Then, describe in more detail at least two reasons or events made you leave Turkey.

Remember: Significant Event/Location/Date.

Example: “I was assaulted three times in Turkey because of my religious beliefs, so I do not believe it is safe for me. I was attacked by locals three times as I was leaving my church in Izmir, in October, November, and December 2017. They tore apart my Bible, mocked my beliefs, and try to rip my crucifix from my neck. I tried to report these attacks to the police. But the Izmir police did not help. Instead, they arrested me without telling me why, and detained me for a week in the prison each time.”

*Do you think you can return to Turkey? / *Is there anything specific and personal that you are afraid of in Turkey (apart from what you already mentioned)?

Use the same answer as above, and include a short comment on why this significant event(s) is a reason why you can't return to Turkey. It is easy to get frustrated answering the same question. Stay focused, and that these three questions are extremely important to your decision.

Don't forget the formula: Significant Event/Location/Date.

Why is it not a safe country?

Do you have documentation of this (significant event/situation)?

This is the only question that does not contain “you” and the only common non-official question on the safety of Turkey for applicants. This non-specificity is deliberate. With any general question, usually there is a general answer.

This question tends to elicit answers citing ISIS, Daesh, or the mafia as reasons for why Turkey is unsafe. Avoid mentioning them, unless you had a specific interaction with them.

*Use the same examples of persecution as in the two questions above. Don't forget: **Significant Event/Location/Date.***

Is there anything you would like to add?

Add any additional information here. If the interviewer interrupts during your answer, make a note to yourself to return later in the interview to the finish your thoughts.

QUESTIONS ABOUT IMPRISONMENT IN TURKEY PRIOR TO ENTERING GREECE:

Can you tell me why you had to go to prison?

Do they give you any documents to sign and do you still have them?

Were you in prison in the beginning, when you arrived or at the end, before you left Turkey?

Can you describe a typical day in prison in Turkey? / How did you spend your day?

Did anything memorable happened during your time in prison?

Did they interrogate you or ask you questions when you were in prison?

Do you know why they let you out (of prison)?

Is there anything you would like to add?

These questions will be likely asked more than once and at random times, be consistent!

PART IV: FAMILY REUNIFICATION FROM DUBLIN III

Where is your family located?

Do you have family in an EU Member State? Name, surname, date of birth?

*What is his/her residence permit number? / *What is his/her case number?

N/I

*Do you want to be reunited with any of your above relatives?

*If so, what is their name, DOB, family status, family relationship, address in member state, residence status, and any useful information, such as a phone number in the member state?

Are any of those family members dependent on you? / Do you have any family members/dependents with you?

Several questions here were asked in the beginning of the interview as well as during registration. Accordingly, the interviewer is likely looking for contradictory answers to these questions. Refer to your notes on the personal details of each of your family members, if you need to.

This section contains repeat questions, and is inserted between the most stressful sections of the interview deliberately. The interviewer is able to assess consistency, memory, and credibility by repeating questions that you already had answered several hours earlier.

In the official GAS/EASO script, this section is after "vulnerability" and before "admissibility." However, Advocates Abroad has rarely seen this ordering.

*Do you consent to the communication of documents you have submitted or may submit concerning medical data to the competent authorities of another EU Member State for the purposes of family reunification under the Dublin Regulation?

If you say yes, insist on a copy of any documents submitted on your behalf. Ask for the anticipated date of reunification. Ask the name and contact of the individual submitting on your behalf.

PART V: ELIGIBILITY

The official GAS/EASO script contains only 2 questions on eligibility. The interviewer is instructed to ask follow up “questions of material fact.” The official script offers no suggestions for appropriate follow-up questions.

As a result, there are many non-official, yet almost identical questions that are asked for each ground of protection. Every common question for the grounds of protection are below. Not every question will apply to your claim.

Please note: Advocates Abroad condemns in the strongest terms many of these non-official, common questions, particularly on sexual orientation and torture. The questions are intentionally abusive, deliberately re-traumatizing, and often irrelevant. Below is the most respectful version recorded of each question. It is possible your interviewer’s questions will be highly invasive and violent concerning your sexual orientation and experiences of torture. Complain about offensive questions and request the interviewer to ask a more appropriate question. Find an Advocate after your interview if you wish to file a formal complaint.

*We are now going to talk about the reasons why you left your country of origin (“CoO”) and why you seek international protection. Please tell me in your own words why you left your country of origin (“CoO”) or country of habitual residence? Be as precise as possible, use names when you talk about persons.

Begin by asking the meaning of “country of habitual residence” and how many years is required for residence to be “habitual.” You and the interviewer may have two different understandings of the term, which will make the discussion unnecessarily confusing. If you are not clear on “country of origin,” then ask the interviewer to define this term as well.

After clarifying, provide a short, clear answer on why you had to leave your country of origin and/or country of habitual residence.

Try not to ramble. You are most likely to contradict your earlier answers with information you provide in this response, so keep it short.

The interviewer will follow up with questions, and give you the opportunity to explain more, so do not feel pressured to say everything in this one response.

An ideal answer is brief and contains at least two reasons or events for why you had to leave and why the country remains unsafe for you.

*To describe events that demonstrate why and how your home became unsafe for you, AND why it remains unsafe, use the formula: **Significant Event/Location/Date**.*

Example: “An example of why I had to leave my home country was because I was arrested and torture by state agents. I was detained in a secret prison in Kinshasa, in early May 2017. In this prison, I was tortured daily for 4 months, mostly by Bana Mura. I am traumatized, and suffer from nightmares, flashbacks, and I am unable to walk properly anymore as a result. I can show you scars, and the medical records confirming those scars are from that torture.”

When did you leave your CoO?

Another example of a question of fact following a question of emotion. This question, following your explanation of traumatic events, is asked to assess credibility. Refer to your journey timeline to avoid a contradictory answer.

Where did you live in CoO?

The interviewer is looking for you to provide a home address, or close description of the area where you lived in your home country.

*What do you think could happen to you if you return to your country?

*The answer fulfilling requirements for protection is simple: **“I will face severe persecution or death.”** There is no need to explain this answer.*

Can you go to another part of your home country or country of habitual residence and live there safely?

*If you are granted international protection, it means you were unable to find safety **anywhere** in your country and unable to avail yourself of your government for protection. Accordingly, the appropriate response is: **“No.”***

QUESTIONS FOR GROUNDS OF POLITICAL OPINION:

Can you describe the political situation in your CoO?

Prepare a short answer that covers the country’s general instability/unsafe conditions and the specific conditions of violence or instability that forced you to flee.

Check online for recent news stories on your country. CNN, BBC, and The New York Times are legitimate and trusted news sources, and accordingly useful to refer to.

Example: “I am from the Democratic Republic of Congo. My country is categorized by the UN as “Level 3” humanitarian crisis. This means the DRC is equivalent to Yemen, Iraq, and Syria for instability and violence. I lived in Kinshasa, where there are frequent violent riots and arbitrary arrests.”

Who is the leader of your political party?

When did this leader come to power?

What is the ideology/main beliefs of the party?

What are the main goals of the party?

Describe the hierarchy of the political party?

These five questions assess your knowledge and dedication to the party that contributed to you needing to find protection outside the country.

Google and search generally online for basic information on your political party to clearly and correctly answer these questions.

These questions focus on your external credibility. They are useful for showing the interviewer that you are an informed political party member, which also helps your internal credibility.

These five questions are focused on the higher, sometimes national, levels of the party.

What is the procedure to become a member?

Were there social activities of your party to achieve its goals and main principles?

The answers to these questions should first focus on any local procedures to become a member

and local social activities in which you participated, such as parties, educational programs, or concerts. Your involvement with the party is the focus of these questions. Describe events you hosted, and propaganda classes or concerts attended.

What was your role in this political group?

What were your responsibilities?

When did you join this political group?

Do you have a membership card?

These four questions examine more closely your internal credibility and whether you can explain clearly your own role in this party.

It is advised to prepare a short answer to each question, as well as to the likely follow-up questions of why you had joined the party and why you chose to remain, if participation or membership was endangering you or your family.

It is not difficult to verify application procedures for membership card for some political parties. If you did not have a card, or you lost it, then be open and explain why you do not have a card or where you lost it. If you did have a card, then describe the card for the interviewer.

Example: Describe size, text on front or back, how much it cost, and why you had applied for it.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUNDS OF RELIGION:

Can you tell me more about the religion?

What is the procedure to become a member of the faith?

Could you talk to me about the symbols of this faith?

What is the name of the place where you do religious meetings?

Who is your religious leader?

For all of the above questions, the purpose is to find how much you know about your own faith. It is reasonable to expect an adherent would know most, if not all, of these answers.

Check on Google or elsewhere online beforehand to ensure your answers match what is generally known about your faith. If your answers are different than what the interviewer is expecting or has reason to expect or finds online, then be ready to explain why your answer is different.

What are some major holidays?

Example: "Christmas is a major holiday for Christians. It is on 25 December, and it is the date of birth of Jesus Christ, who is my Lord and Savior."

How do you worship in your religion?

It is recommended to use this question to stand up, lie down, kneel down, or otherwise move around to show how you worship. You will re-establish control of the environment, and get your blood flowing again after sitting for possibly several hours.

If you have a holy book, or carry a sacred item with you (such as a rosary), then be sure to bring those items to the interview with you.

Are you a religious person?

What is your favorite passage in (the holy book)?

These two questions are to probe the extent of your adherence to this religion.

If you don't want to recite a passage from memory, make sure you bring along your book of faith and have a passage marked. Explain the relevance and influence of this passage on you.

Example: "Jesus wept." It is not hard to remember and it is relevant to this crisis on many levels for many individuals.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUNDS OF MEMBERSHIP PARTICULAR SOCIAL GROUP (LGBTQI):

When did you become aware of your sexual orientation?

How did you realize you had these feelings?

What did you think about that sexual orientation when you realized you were (of that orientation)?

As difficult as it may be, it is advised to be open and clear in your responses. If you are uncomfortable with a question, ask the interviewer to reframe the question in a more appropriate way.

How did your family/friends react? / Who else knew?

Important question! The reactions of family and friends can be a strong basis for showing that you were not safe, particularly if LGBT identities are illegal in your home country.

Did you know others of your sexual identity in your home country? Who?

If you feel revealing the name of someone will put them at risk, then explain to the interviewer why you will not provide specific names.

How many relationships did you have?

How many relationships did you have, before or after the relevant relationship?

Do you currently have a relationship?

How did it affect your parents as a couple?

Where did you meet?

How often did you meet?

Where did you see each other?

What activities did you do together?

The purpose of these questions is to assess the extent of your identity as a partner in a relationship. Some interviewers have asked inappropriate questions about sexual practices with this partner and non-partners and on masturbation. It is advisable to express any discomfort you feel with such questions and ask the interviewer to reframe it in more appropriate.

Are there any organizations for LGBTQI in your country?

Check online beforehand. Be ready to provide names of groups, in order to build your external and internal credibility. Explain why you may or may not have reached out to these organizations.

Did you meet any others of your sexual identity in Turkey?

Did you ever have a relationship with a woman (for homosexual males)?

How do you feel in Greece as a man (with this particular sexual orientation)?

How will you socialize in Greece with this identity?

How do you imagine your life in Greece regarding your sexual orientation?

These questions assess the extent to which identity shapes daily life. Be open, if possible. N/I.

QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTICIPATION IN PROTESTS & RESULTING ARREST:

Where was this demonstration/protest/rally?

When was it?

Describe the scene of the protest?

Check the date and exact location of the protest before the interview. If you have pictures on your phone from the protest, then ask the interviewer if you can show them, or email them to the regional GAS/EASO office immediately after the interview.

Who attended it with you?

The interviewer wants the first and last names of those individuals. Be as specific as you feel you can be. If you are concerned for their safety by naming them, then tell this to the interviewer

Why did you attend?

What was your role in the event? / Why were you protesting?

These questions assess whether participation in this protest and/or the resulting arrest were so threatening to your safety that it was reasonable to flee the country after.

How many people were arrested with you?

Who arrested you?

Why did they arrest you?

What was their uniform?

Describe their weapons

Google Images is a good source to check standard uniforms of military and non-military units. If you remember and can consistently describe uniform or clothes, then provide that information. If not, then explain trauma, shock, or passage of time is blocking your memory.

Example: "He had a red beret, white sash, dark green camouflage, high black boots."

Describe the journey to the prison?

What was your situation (in the vehicle to prison)?

Were you transported to prison in a jeep, van, or military truck? Were there many others in the vehicle? Were you handcuffed or hooded? Was the journey long and the road bumpy? Be descriptive.

QUESTIONS ABOUT HOME INVASIONS/HOME ATTACKS:

Can you explain how they (the attackers/rapists) got into your house?

It is sufficient to say: "I do not know."

How many raped/attacked you? How many were involved in shooting your family?

It is best if you can remember and consistently provide the same answer. However, if you can't provide this information, then it is not your fault or something to be ashamed of.

How does the uniform of the (attackers/rapists) look like?

EASO case officer training for Greece interviews forbids this question because, "the victim could

have been jumped or approached from behind and never have seen their attacker.” However, this question is asked in nearly every interview, so it is best to be prepared for it. Google Images is a good source to check standard uniforms of military and non-military units.

If you remember and can consistently describe uniform or clothes, then provide that information. If not, then explain trauma, shock, or passage of time is blocking your memory.

Example: “He had a red beret, white sash, dark green camouflage, high black boots.”

How did the weapons of the (attackers/rapists) look? / Describe their weapons?

Same as above – it is advised to explain trauma, shock, passage of time blocks memories. It is also common to not have noticed specifics about weapons during an attack. You may wish to mention that likelihood as well.

Describe the situation when you entered (the room of the attack/rape)?

It is advised to prepare a drawing of the room and house or have paper available to draw both on at this point. Take your time, show your emotions, and ask for a break if necessary.

Describe the rape?

Describe how they attacked you and where you were hurt?

It is advised to share only as much as you are willing to share. Refuse to go into more detail if it will bring you distress. Note any discomfort you feel in answering this question for the record.

Note: The first question is unnecessary and insensitively asked, in the view of Advocates Abroad. It is a violent intrusion on traumatic memories and disrespectful to the experience of the applicant.

Describe the location of each person in the house?

Same as above – explain trauma, shock, passage of time prevent a more accurate response.

What time did this attack happen?

Was it at night, during the afternoon, during the day, during a favorite TV program or radio show?

Try your best. If you can only provide an estimate, then explain trauma, shock, and passage of time prevent a more complete answer.

How did you escape/Why did they let you run away?

It is sufficient to say, if true: “They let me escape. I do not know why.”

QUESTIONS ABOUT TORTURE:

Can you tell me what you mean by “torture”?

First, explain that the definition of torture involves “inflicting severe pain on someone as a punishment or in order to force them to do or say something.” Next, explain how your experience(s) fits that definition. Keep your answer short and don’t hide your feelings if you get upset.

How often were you beaten?

The interviewer commonly uses words that minimize pain and suffering, such as “beating” instead of “torturing” or “slap” instead of “punch.” Be aware of that use of language. Be careful to

respond with the terms that are accurate to your experience(s).

Were you ever told when, on what conditions you would be released?

N/I

Was there any development in the beatings? / Did it get better over time?

This question is bizarre and there is no instruction Advocates Abroad feels is appropriate to provide beyond asking the interviewer to clarify. N/I.

Were they saying anything to you when they beat you?

N/I

How many people beat you each day?

Be consistent!

How long would this person/these people beat you on your body?

It is rare and unlikely that anyone could accurately track time while enduring torture. Instead, try to answer using other means of tracking time.

Example: "I detained near an airport and remember that two planes took off during most of the sessions of torture, and I know that planes depart hourly. I would say the sessions lasted two hours."

Describe the types of beatings?

Did they beat you in the same place?

Where did this beating take place?

The response to the first question should be prepared and practiced beforehand.

The last two questions can refer to either location in the prison or the specific part of your body. Ask for clarification.

Use these questions to establish control of the room and interview. Stand up and move around as necessary to show where you were tortured. It is advised to wear loose fitting clothes.

If your injuries or scars are in private areas of your body, then take photos and submit those to the interviewer. If the injuries or scars are in non-private areas, then ask the interviewer if you can show them these injuries or scars. Standing up and moving also helps you focus and breathe more fully.

Have you been injured when they beat you?

Show injuries if there are physical scars. Explain and describe any psychological conditions if there are emotional or mental scars, such as PTSD. If you have pictures or medical records, then refer to them.

Was it the same person beating you every day?

Be consistent!

Were they wearing the same uniform?

Describe the uniform?

Describe the weapons they were carrying?

Advocates Abroad found these questions were in every interview where there were questions on

torture. It is important to be as specific and consistent as possible. Check Google Images for their standard uniform. If they were wearing civilian clothes, then be consistent in your description.

Did they say anything to you when you arrived in the prison?

Did they tell you why you were detained?

Were you registered before being taken to a cell? Were your family or friends threatened or contacted by the authorities in your presence before you were taken to a cell?

Describe the prison?

Describe the cell that you were kept in?

If you had on a hood, if it was night when you entered the prison, if you were confined to one cell or wing of the prison, then explain these reasons for your limited visibility/accessibility.

If the cell was too dark to see details, then describe it based on other memories and senses. Could you hear airplanes taking off and landing in the distance? Could you hear traffic, or the sounds of other inmates or guards? Could you smell the toilets in the cell? Were you able to feel the length of the room by walking around while you were detained?

With whom were you detained inside the cell?

If you feel revealing the name of someone will put them at risk, then explain to the interviewer why you will not provide specific names.

During your detention, did you have any contact with your family?

Did your family know about your detention?

How did they find out?

Did they try to visit?

N/i. If your family was threatened or afraid of the authorities, then the interviewer might ask why they risked the visit to see you.

What was a typical day in the prison like?

Were you woken up by guards, provided some food, then spent the day cleaning toilets? Were you in solitary, and unable to interact with others? Were you left in the cell all day, but at night you were brought to another cell to be tortured?

Be consistent and clear. The question intends to tie together all the different details and events that you have described.

How did you escape?

Do not elaborate or exaggerate. It is sufficient to say: "I was released and do not know why."

PART 6: CLOSING QUESTIONS

*Is there anything you would like to add?

This is the time to add in anything you felt you were unable to say during the interview, for example, if during the interview, you were interrupted or otherwise not permitted to explain or provide the details supporting your argument for asylum.

What is your telephone number or a number I can reach you on?

This question is significant. The question is discussed above in the first section of this script. It is used to assess credibility and to ensure the offices have a means of notifying you about your case.

Don't lose credibility by providing a number if you said earlier that you did not have a phone.

***Can you confirm that the interview has been read back to you and the information is correct and complete? / This interview was recorded, and so the readback is not necessary.**

Politely, but firmly, request a readback of the transcript if the interviewer says that a readback is unnecessary because there was an audio recording of the interview. It is essential that you have the opportunity to review and make alterations to the contents of your transcript before the interview ends. Alteration and explanation is only possible with a readback of a transcript.

Even with multiple requests, transcripts have generally inconsistently provided by GAS/EASO. It is advised to establish a time and day to collect the transcript, before you leave the interview.

The latest point in which a transcript is due to an applicant is at the point of his/decision. However, it is crucial to collect it before the decision. It is advised to ask for the transcript after two weeks from the interview. Visit GAS/EASO as often as you need to until successful.

Did you understand the interviewer well?

The interviewer may be asking if their questions made sense. If every question did not make absolute sense, then mention those questions. Explain why you did not understand the question.

***Did you understand the interpreter well?**

Unless the interpreter was absolutely precise and accurate, then it is essential to bring up two or more questions when the interpreter had failed to communicate your answers. You would have helped yourself for the appeal with these comments of when or how you did not understand the interpreter. A record of problems in transcript(s) is useful for strong arguments in an appeal.

Do not be worried about insulting the interpreter, or that criticisms will result in a rejection. EASO/GAS has not historically issued retaliatory rejections because of complaints of interpreter issues.

All of us at Advocates Abroad wish you the best of luck in your interview(s).

We are always available for questions during this difficult time at: cases@advocatesabroad.org

You are not illegal and you are not alone.