

Immigration Office
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Subject: Application for international protection
Applicant: Arsen Hakobyan, 18.2.1952, Republic of Armenia

Conducted by: Uno Varnod - Immigration Office, Republic of Januan
Date: 25th January 2007

This interview was based on Mr. Hakobyan's application for international protection lodged on 27th May 2006 („the application”). In the application Mr. Hakobyan stated that he was an Armenian national of Yezidi origin and religion; he is not a member of any political party. He left Armenia because of the problems his family had faced due to their Yezidi origin. He is afraid to return to his home country, where his family cannot live anymore. The interview was held in English with help of Mr. Kumyan, an English-Armenian interpreter.

Officer: Are you Arsen Hakobyan?
AH: Yes.

Officer: Good morning, Mr. Hakobyan. My name is Uno Vanod and I am representing the Immigration Office. I would like to ask you some questions regarding your application for international protection in order to gain information necessary to consider your request. Are you ready to start the interview?
AH: Yes, of course.

Officer: Could you tell me where you come from?
AH: I come from Armenia, village of Arteni.

Officer: What is your religion?
AH: Yezidi

Officer: What is your ethnic origin?
AH: Yezidi, as well.

Officer: Don't you belong to Kurdish people?
AH: No, we are a separate nation.

Officer: Are you a member of any political party or association?
AH: No.

Officer: Are there any of your relatives accompanying you here in Januan?
AH: Yes, my son and his family has come with me – Marine, his wife and Armen, his son, he's five.

Officer: Are there any of your relatives staying still in Armenia?
AH: No, my wife lived with us but she had died before we left Armenia.

Officer: When did you arrive in Januan?
AH: In May, 26th of May – this year.

Officer: How did you get here, how did you travel?

AH: We paid some money to a man who promised to get us out of Armenia. I don't know how exactly we got to Januan, we were travelling in a van together with some other people.

Officer: Which countries did you cross on your way to Januan?

AH: I don't remember much about the travel, we were closed in the van most of the time, we always stopped only for a short time...I couldn't recognize which country we were staying in.

Officer: And when did you leave Armenia? How much time did it take to get to Januan?

AH: We left Armenia on 23rd of May.

Officer: And how did you then get to the reception center?

AH: We took a bus. One of the men who was travelling with us knew some people in Januan. They told us to ask for asylum and how to do this.

Officer: What was your life in Armenia like - before you decided to leave? Could you please describe it in short?

AH: Well, I was born in 1952 in Arteni. I attended school and after finishing it I worked with my father on our farm. In 1980 I got married and in the following year my son was born. In the same year, my parents died. We used to live quite a peaceful life but then came the problems. At the end of this, our house was burnt, my wife has died during the fire and we lost our cattle. We were not able to live on, we decided to leave.

Officer: What kind of problems did you face in Armenia?

AH: My son had to stop attending school because he was often bullied by his classmates and teachers as well.

Officer: Would you describe in which way exactly he was bullied?

AH: He was taunted, insulted - many times, sometimes he was beaten as well. We complained several times but nothing has changed.

Officer: Who did you complain to?

AH: We went to the teacher, to the school director, and once we even contacted the police.

Officer: Were there any other difficulties you had to face?

AH: Yes, I suffer from diabetes and I need regular medical care. But my doctor refused to prescribe necessary medicine to me, later on he repeatedly refused to provide any medical treatment to me as well as to another members of my family. It wasn't always like this. Before, people just used to look suspicious at us, they were not friendly. But after Armenia got independent, it has worsened. Our neighbours often insulted us, thretaned us. Finally, they burnt our house and...my wife died during the fire...

Officer: Ah, I'm sorry. When did it happen?

AH: It was in summer 2006.

Officer: How did you realize that the house was burnt by your neighbours?

AH: It happened when I was out of house together with my son. As we were coming home, we saw our house in fire... We ran closer and I realized that my wife was inside ... We started to extinguish the fire but it was too late to take it under control....

Officer: And what about the neighbouring houses, nobody from there found out that your house was burning, didn't anybody take any action?

AH: No... You know, our house was standing separately from others, at the end of our village.

Officer: Ah, I see. So, you were not successful in your effort to extinguish the fire...

AH: Yes. Fortunately, my daughter-in-law escaped as well as her son... But we didn't manage to get my wife out of the fire....(Crying) I'm sorry...

Officer: We can make a small break if you want to, it's no problem...

AH: No, no.. it's not necessary, I'll be fine, thank you...

Officer: Well, how did you realize that the house was set on fire by your neighbours?

AH: My daughter-in-law told us – she saw two of our neighbours running away from our house. And before it happened there were numerous threats from our neighbours, they wanted us to leave. Even afterwards, people made comments...Everybody knew who did it, but nobody did anything with it.

Officer: What kind of threats or comments?

AH: They permanently called us satanists, repeated that they didn't want any Yezidis adoring devil in their village...that it was time to clear their village from satanists and so on...

Officer: Did you report that incident to the police? Did they take any action?

AH: No, I informed the local police station but nothing happened. I went to Yerevan to complain. But I was only severely beaten there, they didn't want to deal with my complaint.

Officer: Would you describe what happened exactly - how did they beat you, what did they say?

AH: They were three, when I talked about the fire, they just smiled and said: "We'll see what we can do." When I asked whether anybody would come to my place to see what had happened, they started to insult me, slapped me and kicked me several times. My leg was wounded, but somehow I got home. Even then the doctor didn't want to help me, I had to treat it myself. And I still have problems with my leg because of it.

Officer: Did you face any other problems after that?

AH: Not with the police. But a few months after that, our neighbors dispersed our drove, we lost the cattle which was our only livelihood.

Officer: Were there any other Yezidi people living in your village, who faced similar problems?

AH: No, we were the only Yezidis there...There used to live a few Yezidi families before, but they had either died or left.

Officer: And what was the last thing that made you leave Armenia?

AH: After my wife's death I was...shocked... I could not believe that anybody was able to do this, I just couldn't understand why this must have happened. I wanted to take a revenge, to get those who were responsible for that. And I tried, but when I saw that nobody cared, nobody was willing to take any action...then I became desperate. And anxious, afraid of what would come next... This was probably the first moment when I started considering the possibility to leave the place where our family had been living for such a long time. But I could not imagine how to do this in practice, where to go, it was not possible. The only way we could live on was our cattle. When we lost it, we lost everything.

Officer: Did you ask police for help?

AH: Yes, I contacted local police office, they promised to send somebody to deal with it, but nobody came.

Officer: Didn't you contact the superior police office?

AH: No, there was no point in doing this... I was afraid of them – after my previous experience with police in Yerevan.

Officer: Did you try to ask anybody else for help?

AH: I contacted my father's friend who used to live in our village before he moved to Yerevan. I only knew that he was working there, I didn't know what kind of job he had. But he was the only person I hoped could help us somehow. He said that the best solution for us would be to get out of the country and that he could help us.

Officer: Wasn't it possible to move to another part of Armenia?

AH: No, it would be the same everywhere – people in Armenia, they don't like Yezidis. Neither we would be able to live anywhere else because we haven't got enough money for that – our house was burnt up, we lost our cattle...and we could not afford to buy another. And after my wife died during the fire I was really scared, I could not imagine to move to another place, where we didn't know anybody. If people who knew our family, who had lived with us for a long time, were able to do such things to us, I didn't believe that it would any better at another place, where we would arrive as strangers. I don't want my family to live in fear.

Officer: So, how did you manage to get out of Armenia?

AH: The father's friend promised to arrange everything. I gave him all of our savings to pay for it.

Officer: What are you afraid of - in case that you return back to Armenia?

AH: We have no means to live there, nobody wants us to live there, they made it impossible for us to live there. My family is not safe there, nobody will protect us. And my health state is getting worse since I get no medical treatment, not enough medicine I need.

Officer: What exactly do you suffer from?

AH: Diabetes, I need to take insulin several times a day. And I used to get it before. But then our doctor refused to give me as much insulin as I needed even when I complained about the difficulties I had. My eyesight got rapidly worse. Several times the doctor refused to provide us any treatment – for example, after I was injured by the policemen in Yerevan... From then on I still couldn't walk appropriately and sometimes it's very painful.

Officer: And you have already contacted local medical staff, do you get appropriate treatment now?

AH: Yes, I did, I really appreciate it...Of course, I still have problems with my leg and so on... but at least somebody cares. Anyway, I cannot sleep properly – either I couldn't sleep or I have nightmares.

Officer: I understand... Let me get back to your religion. Your parents were Yezidis as well or was it your decision to become a Yezidi?

AH: My parents were Yezidis, of course, I was born as Yezidi.

Officer: Would you tell me some details about your religion? Who you pray for?

AH: Meleke Tawus.

Officer: Who is it, could you tell me more about this person?

AH: She's one of the seven angels, she created the first man and woman.

Officer: I see...And how many times a day you pray?

AH: Three times, morning, noon and evening.

Officer: Do you have any special place of worship?

AH: No, normally we don't pray together.

Officer: Thank you very much for all your answers. Would you like to add something to this interview? Do you have any questions?

AH: I just want to ask you for possibility to live here, to live safely. I would be grateful if I could stay here and get appropriate medical care.

Officer: I understand. OK then, if you don't have any questions, the interview is officially over. Thank you very much, goodbye.

AH: Goodbye.

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