

## Ministry of Security and Justice

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Centra for Legal Aid Assistance and Settlement (CLAAS)  
To the National Director of CLAAS, Mr. M.A. Joseph Francis  
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Pakistan

**Directorate-General for  
Immigration**  
Migration Policy Department

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**Our reference**  
491332

*Please quote date of letter  
and our ref. when replying. Do  
not raise more than one  
subject per letter.*

Date 17 April 2014  
Concerning Recommendations on the assessment of asylum requests from  
Pakistani Christian asylum seekers

Dear Mr. Joseph Francis,

On 25 February of this year, we talked about the situation of Christians in Pakistan. During our pleasant conversation, I arranged with you that I would respond in writing to your recommendations for the way asylum applications from Pakistani Christian asylum seekers are being assessed. Therefore, I send you this letter.

The information you provided about the situation of Christians in Pakistan shows that sometimes there may be reason to grant Pakistani asylum seekers who are Christians protection in the Netherlands. However, this will always depend on an individual assessment of the asylum seeker's claim by the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS). The INS compares the claim of each individual asylum seeker with the available objective information (from independent sources) about the situation of Christians in Pakistan, particularly the official reports by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. In preparing the official report, the Minister of Foreign Affairs takes the information from CLAAS into account. The thematic official report on the position of Ahmadis and Christians in Pakistan, dated 20 December 2012, referred to CLAAS a number of times as a source from which certain information was derived. Thus, this meets your request to also draw on your information in the preparation of the official report.

You asked me if CLAAS could play a role, as an expert, in assessing the authenticity of documents introduced during the asylum process and the credibility of the Christian religious beliefs. I cannot comply with this request because the assessment of the asylum application is a prerogative of the INS.

But first of all, it is up to the applicant himself to provide a plausible explanation concerning why he needs protection in the Netherlands. He can use supporting documents from NGOs, but the INS always makes its own assessment regarding the objectivity and reliability of the information provided. In addition, the INS also looks at the content of the information, such as whether the information matches the statements made by the asylum seeker during the procedure or the available information on the situation in the country of origin. The same applies for an organisation such as CLAAS and the information it provides. In each case, an individual assessment is made, based on the content of the information.

As far as the authenticity of the documents is concerned, the INS has a special bureau, Bureau Documents. The investigation performed by Bureau Documents of the INS is twofold: a technical investigation (how the documents are produced) and a tactical investigation (an investigation of the (in)compatibility of various aspects). If Bureau Documents receives a document for which there is no reference material, then a judgement cannot always be given on the authenticity based on previously mentioned investigations. If no judgement can be made by Bureau Documents, this does not, however, mean that the contents of a document will simply be ignored. We consider if it is possible to carry out another form of investigation, for example in the country of origin. Even if other investigations do not provide the necessary results, an individual assessment is carried out in each case.

Finally, you asked me to record interviews with asylum seekers, in reference to possible negative experiences with (the work of) interpreters. However, I see no reason to comply with this request because I believe sufficient safeguards are being provided for asylum seekers to be able to call attention to dissatisfaction with the work of an interpreter.

An interpreter acts as an intermediary in an interview with a foreign national. He makes it possible for the INS employee and the asylum seeker to communicate with each other. The interpreter is not a partner in the interview. It is, therefore, not the intention that he airs his personal opinion or interferes with the content of the conversation. The interpreter is expected to act in accordance with the Code of Conduct for INS Interpreters. This Code of Conduct includes the desired criteria set by the INS in terms of responsibility, integrity and conduct and professional practice. This guarantees that an interpreter is not a disruptive factor in the asylum hearing and that the applicant can tell his story without having to experience any reluctance.

After each asylum hearing, the applicant is always asked whether he was satisfied with the work of the interpreter. He may, if needed, consult his advisor if he is dissatisfied with the work of an interpreter. In addition, the INS has a complaints procedure if an asylum seeker wishes to submit a formal complaint about an interpreter. An asylum seeker has also the opportunity to discuss the report of the interview with his/her advisor. Corrections and additions can be made to the report of this interview.

Yours sincerely,  
The Minister for Migration,

F. Teeven

**Directorate-General for  
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17 April 2014

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