

ASYLUM DECLARATION OF [NAME]
A# XXX-XXX--XXX

I, [full name], hereby state under penalty of perjury that the following statements are true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief, and that I incorporate the following statements into my application for asylum (Form I-589).

Summary:

I, [full name], was born in XXX_on [date of birth]. I come from the XXX tribe who are said to be hard working and wise. Because of this reputation, members of other tribes tend to be more suspicious of XXXs. I myself experienced problems with my HUSBAND's family and eventually my HUSBAND because of my tribal background and status as his wife. In XXX women are treated as second class citizens and are considered to be inferior to men. They are expected to entirely depend upon men. Once a woman is married she is supposed to do anything that her HUSBAND asks her to do even if it is not in her best interests. To do otherwise, is considered rebellious and is not tolerated by society. If a woman is unable to give birth to a male child she is considered to be a stranger who has come to visit the family but now must leave. Because I am an independent XXX woman who never gave birth to sons, I experienced years of abuse and a near miscarriage at the hands of my HUSBAND. Because of his constant threats I was forced to flee XXX and continue to fear return.

Full Declaration:

1. I was born in XXX into a Christian family and have always practiced the religion. The treatment of Christians varies greatly across XXX. Christians in the North are persecuted by Muslims and frequently killed. However in the South, where I come from, there is a larger Christian population and thus less religious persecution than in the North.
2. I was raised primarily by my mother, [name], because my father died a sudden and mysterious death when I was only two years old. At the time of my father's death, my mother was his second wife. His first wife and her children took all of my father's inheritance. While I was too young to understand what was going on at the time, my mother later told me about all the horrible things the community did to her upon my father's death. According to my mother, the community forced her to drink the water in which my dead father was bathed. They also shaved her head and prohibited her from speaking to anyone else in the community. After the burial, my mother took my two older sisters, my younger brother and me to her parent's home in the village of XXX We remained under the care of my maternal grandparents while my mother went to work as a XXX in order to support us.
3. Supporting four children on her own was a constant struggle for my mother. She always told us that she suffered in order to provide us with the opportunity to get a good education. Despite the general sentiment that school was not a place for women, my mother stressed that *all* her children including her daughters should study as much as possible so that we could obtain good jobs and be independent.

4. In XXX culture, a woman's role is in the home. Most men forbid their wives from working and discourage their daughters from attending school because they want women to depend upon men for their livelihood. I think they do this in order to maintain control over their wives and daughters. This is exactly what happened to my mother when she married my father and he forced her to give up her studies. After his death, my mother found herself stranded and had to scramble to obtain a degree so that she could find a job to support our family. Understanding my mother's struggles inspired me to pursue higher education and gain my own economic independence.
5. Upon completion of secondary school, I moved to XXX to attend College. I completed College and obtained a job in a finance company before returning to my Post-Graduate studies some five years later. I hold a Bachelor of Science degree in XX, a Masters of Science in XX, and a Masters in Business Administration in XX. Upon completion of my post-graduate studies I began work as a senior banking executive in one of the oldest banks in XXX. From there my career advanced and I worked at a second tier bank for two years before I met my HUSBAND , [NAME], in 2002 while staying with one of my church pastors, XXX.

Meeting & Marrying HUSBAND

6. HUSBAND replaced my choir leader at the XXX Fellowship International, a Christian Fellowship that I attended. The Fellowship brought individuals from many Christian churches in the area together to worship. At the time, HUSBAND was also an in-ordained pastor of the XXX International Church in XXX. My friendship with HUSBAND grew until September 2004, when he asked me to marry him. When he proposed to me, HUSBAND explained that he had been praying to God for a wife for some time, and that he was finally convinced that he should marry me even though doing so required that he disobey his family's wishes.
7. According to HUSBAND, his family discouraged him from marrying me because they believed that as an Ibo woman with a well-paid job, I would be too hard to control. HUSBAND's family is from XXX state and speaks a different language than Ibo. His family, like most XXX believed that men should be the head of a household and control all the money and important decisions. Consequently, HUSBAND's family had already selected another woman from his tribe for him to marry and they were not pleased with his decision to marry a woman from the XX tribe. The family's distaste for me was so great that even HUSBAND's eldest sister living in the U.S. called HUSBAND in an attempt to convince him not to carry out his plans to marry me.
8. Our wedding was delayed for several months because HUSBAND took some time to try to convince his family to accept his marriage to me. Despite his efforts, HUSBAND's mother refused to attend the traditional meeting where his family delivered the dowry to my family. This was extremely insulting to me and my family. Despite this, I went forward with my plans to marry HUSBAND because I genuinely believed that God had picked HUSBAND as a HUSBAND for me. I felt that no matter what obstacles came my way during our wedding

preparations, I had an obligation to carry out God's will by marrying the man that he sent to me.

9. During our pre-marriage counseling sessions with the church, HUSBAND was advised by the Church to find alternative accommodations for his step-brother, step-sister, and uncle who were all living in his apartment at the time. According to our religious practices, a man is expected to provide a home for his new bride in which none of his extended family members reside. This is thought to give the couple time to adjust to married life without undue influence from the family. However, in our case HUSBAND was afraid that if he asked his relatives to move out, they would blame me for having ousted them from their homes. Instead, HUSBAND pleaded with me to allow his family to remain in his apartment after our marriage and promised that it would only be for a short time. His step-sister and brother were to move away to attend college and his uncle was going to move into an apartment provided to him by his employer. HUSBAND also promised that all three of them would share one of the three bedrooms in the apartment so that I could have my own room in which to keep my things. Thinking that this was only going to be a short-term situation, I agreed.
10. I married HUSBAND in the XXXX and began staying in HUSBAND's apartment shortly thereafter. Unfortunately, his relatives never moved their things into one room so I had nowhere to put my stuff. Every day after work, I went to my own apartment to pick up clothes for the next day. When this situation became unbearable for me I rented a larger four-bedroom apartment. My hope was that HUSBAND would leave his family in his apartment and move into the larger apartment with me but HUSBAND brought his relatives to live with us in our new apartment. When I confronted HUSBAND about this he said something like, "Why would I live in a big apartment and allow my people to stay somewhere else? You don't like my people? They said this is what XXX do –they want to be in charge and they don't want anybody else around." For the sanctity of my marriage I let it go and allowed his family to live with us.

Verbal & Physical Abuse by HUSBAND's Family

11. Living with HUSBAND's siblings was like living in hell. They constantly called me terrible names like "useless woman" and "good for nothing XXX." They were completely disrespectful and constantly challenged my position in the house. Even though I paid for the rent and all of the food, they tried to make me feel as though I was just a visitor in *their* home. They also said things like "you may have a good bank job but you don't control our brother, he is still the man of the house!" HUSBAND's step-sister X regularly said things that insinuated that I was less of a woman. If I reacted, she would threaten to physically fight with me. To show me that she was ready at any moment to fight me she'd wear shorts (a woman would never fight in a skirt or dress) after we had an argument. Whenever I complained to my HUSBAND about his siblings' treatment he took their side and either didn't believe me or told me that it was *my* fault for not showing them that I loved them.
12. OnXXX, I came home from work to find that someone had eaten my favorite bread (an imported baguette that I had asked everyone not to touch). When I saw X in the kitchen I

asked her who ate the bread. Y, HUSBAND's step-brother, came out of the bedroom and pounded on his chest saying that he ate the bread because his brother bought it. Then he sarcastically said something like "you are a wealthy woman why don't you just go buy more bread." Upset by this, I went and woke my HUSBAND who was sleeping in the bedroom and asked him to come hear what his step-brother was saying to me. When HUSBAND asked Y what was happening, Y called him a "woman wrapper"¹ and said something like, "ever since you married this good for nothing woman, you have changed." Angered by the insult, HUSBAND slapped Y and they started to fight. At some point during the brawl, Y left HUSBAND, and punched me in the chest with a closed fist. At the time, I was one month pregnant. Fearing that Y would harm the baby I left and went into our bedroom where I wept. Shortly after that incident Y left to attend school but my problems with the family didn't end there because soon thereafter, we started receiving very angry telephone calls from HUSBAND's relatives. Apparently Y told the family that I had kicked him out of the house. I listened while HUSBAND tried to defend me to his family and worried that eventually all their pressure would take its toll on HUSBAND.

13. OnXXX, I gave birth to our first child, [CHILD1] via cesarean section due to complications. After spending seven days in the hospital, I returned home. HUSBAND's uncle, who was the elder of our home, never came to see me in the hospital or congratulate me on our daughter's birth. In fact, he moved out of our apartment shortly after CHILD1's birth and I never heard from him again. This was very insulting to me.
14. When the wife of another of HUSBAND's uncles visited me, she mentioned that she was relieved to see that HUSBAND's sister's allegations were not true. Apparently, HUSBAND's sister had been saying things to the family about me like "oh this XXX girl is so wise, don't you know she's had abortions so her womb can't conceive." Those words wounded me deeply, because my faith doesn't permit abortions. Additionally, several members of HUSBAND's family made derogatory comments about me for my failure to give birth to a son. They said things like "we want a boy. We don't want a girl! You better have a boy so that you can have a place in the family!"
15. In October XXX, my HUSBAND asked X to help cook because I was still recovering from my surgery. She refused and told him that he should stand up to his wife and demand that she complete her household duties. Angered by her words, HUSBAND beat X and she moved out of the house shortly thereafter. HUSBAND's violent behavior was very worrisome to me. I knew that he had a bad temper but I'd never seen him act violently before this incident. Before leaving us, X threatened to return home and tell everyone that she was forced to leave because of me. Again, we received calls from HUSBAND's family and again HUSBAND tried to explain that I was not the cause of X's departure but little by little, HUSBAND started to change. I think the pressures from his family became too great and he too started to see me as a threat to his manhood.

¹ In XXX, the women wear large pieces of fabric called "wrappers". The term "woman wrapper" is used as an insult against men who are seen as falling under the control of a woman.

The Beginnings of HUSBAND's Abuse

16. In December XX, I was hired by a new bank to work in the XXX. By that time, I had built up such a reputation for success that I was given an unusual offer for a person in my position, a mortgage, in order to entice me to accept the job. I used the mortgage to buy a six bedroom home in XXX. We moved into the home in October. When HUSBAND invited his family to come see our new home, they asked how he was able to afford such a beautiful house on his meager salary as an accountant in a small firm. When he told them that I purchased the home with my mortgage they started to give him a lot of grief. HUSBAND's family said things like, "XXX woman has fooled you!" and pressured him to put the home in his own name. According to HUSBAND's family, as the man of the house, the title needed to be in HUSBAND's name alone. This is when HUSBAND really started to change. He demanded that I put the title of my house in his name and threatened to divorce me if I didn't. Divorce in our community would have brought a lot of shame upon me. Traditionally, failure of a marriage is considered failure of the wife alone. I wanted to avoid divorce but I hadn't even finished paying the mortgage at the time so there was no way that I could have re-titled the house into HUSBAND's name. I tried to explain this to HUSBAND but he had already turned into a different person and wouldn't listen to me.
17. In October XX, I hired a new maid named D to clean the house. HUSBAND started telling D not to clean anything. Prior to this time, I had paid other maids to clean our homes and shop for our groceries. HUSBAND never seemed to mind much but once I bought the house, HUSBAND started telling me that it was my job as his wife to do all those things. Sensing that we were experiencing marital problems, D started to take advantage of our situation. For example, she started asking my HUSBAND for money to have her hair braided. Even though HUSBAND refused to contribute to her salary and other household expenses, he gave D money out of his pocket to buy nice things for her. This made me extremely uncomfortable so I fired D in XXX

HUSBAND's Escalating Verbal Abuse & his Sister's Visit

18. In XXX, HUSBAND's sister, N, and her HUSBAND came unannounced to visit us from the U.S. and immediately took control over our home. For example, XX brought X back into our house. XX also said things to me like "I've come to fight you in my brother's house" and that I didn't deserve to live there anymore. I was already eight months pregnant with my second child at this point and I wasn't willing to fight with HUSBAND's family any longer. I simply went to work in the morning and came home to sleep at night. I tried my best to stay away from HUSBAND's relatives in order to avoid any conflict.

HUSBAND's Physical Abuse Begins

19. During his sister's visit, HUSBAND started to change even more. It was as if he finally succumbed to all the pressures from his family. He started insulting me and verbally abusing me. He said things like "my mother said I shouldn't marry you and I did you a favor by marrying you."

20. In December, after XX left, HUSBAND's uncle, UU came to visit unannounced with his wife and daughter. During their approximately two-week long stay with us, UU insulted my HUSBAND by saying things like HUSBAND had no control over me. For example, UU said that I should heed all of my HUSBAND's commands and skip work in order to prepare breakfast for him. Empowered by his family's suggestions HUSBAND started ordering me to stay home from work. One day in XXX, HUSBAND hid my car keys from me so that I couldn't drive to work. When we started arguing about the keys, HUSBAND slapped me across the face so hard that it left finger marks. I grabbed something nearby to protect myself (I can't remember now if it was a shoe or some other hard object) and told him that I would use it against him to defend myself if necessary. Then I called a member of our church who had been providing marriage counseling to us who spoke to HUSBAND over the telephone and convinced him to return my car keys so that I could leave for work.
21. Around this same time HUSBAND started saying things to me like "you are a worthless woman; you won't respect your HUSBAND because you have a job." He resented me for all of my success in the workplace because it meant I did not depend on him. HUSBAND and his family were fiercely opposed to the idea of an independent woman and did their best to try to make me feel awful about my independence.

HUSBAND's Beating with an Electrical Cord

22. Shortly after I gave birth to our second child, a girl we named CHILD2, in XXX, HUSBAND started to physically abuse me on a regular basis. In XXX, HUSBAND's sister X who had continued to live with us even after N left, started to tell my housemaids not to follow any of my instructions. For example, one day I asked a housemaid named XXX to wash the childrens' clothes and then went upstairs. When I came back downstairs I noticed that XXX had not touched the dirty laundry. I went to look for XXX and found her watching television with X in Child's room. When I asked Housemaid to complete her task she refused so I asked her to leave. When my HUSBAND returned home from work later that day, X told him that I had sent the housemaid away. I have no idea what story she told him, all I know is that by the time he entered our bedroom where I was sleeping with our two young daughters, he was furious.
23. HUSBAND dragged me out of the bed while screaming "why did you send XXX away from the house?" As I explained what happened he began poking me with his finger until finally he pushed me to the floor. When I grabbed him to brace my fall, HUSBAND fell atop me. Then he held me to the ground as he beat me with an electrical cord that he pulled out of the wall. HUSBAND lashed me across the chin leaving a gash in my lower lip. I started screaming from the pain which awoke my mother who was asleep in the next room. She had come to stay with us to help me care for our newborn child. My mother pulled HUSBAND off of me while asking why on earth he would want to kill me. HUSBAND verbally insulted my mother who returned to her room in tears, packed her things, and left our home. After that time my mother never returned to visit us. The entire experience was terrifying and horribly embarrassing for me. To this day, I have a scar on my lip from the lashing because I never went to the hospital to get stitches. Instead, I called two of HUSBAND's Pastor friends in the

church and told them what HUSBAND had done to me. Because it was so late at night they said they would stop by in the morning to check up on me.

24. The next morning around 8:30 or 9:00a.m. Pastor B and his wife and Pastor A came to visit me. After I explained what had happened, Pastor B said something like “you are not the first woman to be beaten by her HUSBAND why are you making such a big deal of this?” Shocked by his response, I almost stopped attending the church altogether. I couldn’t believe that the Pastor himself would encourage my HUSBAND’s mistreatment of me.
25. Two days later, my maid told me that we ran out of diapers. HUSBAND and I were still not speaking at the time so I told her to ask him for the money to buy more diapers. Even though I had the money to purchase them myself, I was fed up with HUSBAND’s treatment and thought that if he wanted to be the “man of our family” then he should be a man in every aspect and take responsibility for our child’s needs as well. She did so when HUSBAND returned home that night from work. From our bedroom where I was breastfeeding the baby at the time, I could hear HUSBAND yelling downstairs so I locked all the doors into the room. Then I listened as HUSBAND tried to open both doors into the room and finally kicked one in. HUSBAND lunged at me, slapping me across the face and almost knocking our infant from my arms. As I bent over to lay the baby onto the bed, HUSBAND punched me all over with closed fists. As he hit me he called me a “foolish woman” and “useless woman” and told me that he would teach me a lesson for not obeying him. He demanded to know where the key for the adjoining room where we usually kept the diapers was. Impatient with me, he kicked in that door as well, entered the room and started searching for diapers. When he found one, he took it downstairs to the maid and I didn’t hear from him again that night. I assume he must have slept downstairs. I had bruises from his blows for about a week after the incident. This time however I didn’t bother reporting his abuse to the church because I remembered how Pastor B had reacted. Even though my HUSBAND’s attacks upset me greatly I tried my hardest to put them behind me and move on. We continued with our marriage counseling. The counselors always told me to pray for my HUSBAND and show him more love so that my love might change him. On some level I believed what they said and truly hoped that my love could hold our marriage together.

My Attempts to take a Family Vacation

26. Once my second child CHILD2 was old enough to travel, I decided that we should take a family trip to the United States. Hopeful that travel might bring HUSBAND and me closer together, I was very excited about the trip and started making arrangements for our travel visas. Every time I asked HUSBAND for his passport however, he just kept saying that he’d give it to me the next day but never did. I later learned that HUSBAND’s family told him not to give me the passport because if he got a visa it would signify to others that he was only able to get a visa because of his wife. That would have been humiliating to HUSBAND as a man and so he refused to take part in our family vacation.

My Grandfather’s Funeral & Public Humiliation Coupled with a Private Beating

27. In XXX, my grandfather who had raised me as his own child died. Traditionally, both sides of the family attend a burial ceremony and the in-laws typically present something alongside the daughter of the deceased. When the master of the ceremony called out “now can we have [CLIENT’S NAME] and her HUSBAND’s family present,” there were no relatives to accompany me because none of HUSBAND’s family attended the funeral despite the fact that they knew that I loved my grandfather as a father.² Their public display of disregard for my feelings made me feel totally unaccepted by my in-laws and was an utter embarrassment to me. During the ceremony my HUSBAND, X and I got into an argument about X’s interference with our maid. This too embarrassed me greatly.
28. After the ceremony X, our two daughters, my HUSBAND and I returned to our hotel. When we got to the hotel room my HUSBAND started asking me things like “what gives *you* the right to try to argue with me in public?” He started saying things like I had not been trained correctly and asking how could I not respect him as my HUSBAND? Then he said something like “do you think you are King? Are you a Princess?” and started pointing furiously at my face. As he lodged his accusations at me, he actually struck my eye with his finger. When I tried to point back at him, he grabbed my wrist and twisted my arm backwards. I started to scream from the pain. I struggled to get free and grabbed him around the waist as he punched me all over my backside with closed fists. Finally, he pushed me away, stormed out of the room, and checked into another room for the night.
29. After the incident I could not bring myself to be intimate with HUSBAND again. He treated me like a piece of furniture that was of very little value. He saw me as something that he could use when he wanted to and then simply push me aside when he was done. Shortly after our return from the funeral I went to England on a business trip for 10 days. I was very happy to be away from HUSBAND and could not wait to leave on vacation to the U.S.

Vacation in the U.S.

30. In XXX, I purchased tickets for me and my two daughters to fly to the U.S. HUSBAND demanded that we stay with his sister N who had treated me so badly while visiting our home. I refused and HUSBAND took our passports. Then I called our pastor, Mrs. A who came to our home to counsel us. After she tried to get the travel documents back from HUSBAND to no avail, she encouraged me to stay with HUSBAND’s sister for the sake of peace in our marriage. Reluctantly I agreed to HUSBAND’s demands.
31. On XX, my two daughters and I entered the U.S. in XXX on tourist visas and went to stay with HUSBAND’s sister Nse, in her home in XXX. At the time I had no intentions of staying in the U.S. or leaving my HUSBAND. One day, N made a point to tell her HUSBAND about HUSBAND’s latest update in front of me. She said that HUSBAND had called to tell her that their nephew S had found a job in XXX and that HUSBAND had invited XXX to move into *his* house. Silently, I became very upset because HUSBAND’s house was *our* house and my

² X who was in her twenties at the time attended the funeral with us. At the time, she was living with us and HUSBAND ordered her to come so that she could help take care of the children while I was busy with the funeral activities.

HUSBAND never consulted me about this. Despite this incident, I was hopeful that upon return, the Church's counseling sessions would convince HUSBAND to be kinder to me in order to reconcile our marriage. Divorce is not an option in our culture and it wasn't until much later that I even considered such drastic actions.

The Rapes Begin

32. When we returned to XXX, things only got worse. HUSBAND continued to treat me like his property and at the same time like something that was so worthless to him that he could easily discard it. Fed up with his treatment, I no longer wanted to have sex with him. The next time HUSBAND tried to be intimate with me I refused to have sex. He would not listen and instead forced himself upon me. During our next marriage counseling session I mentioned the rape and our marriage counselors told me that the bible instructed me not to refuse sex to my HUSBAND. They said that as a Christian woman, I had to always say yes to my HUSBAND no matter what the circumstances were. I believed them because they were my religious compass and as a good Christian I wanted to comply even though I personally had no interest in sexual relations with HUSBAND after all that he'd done to me.
33. Our relationship deteriorated so much that Pastor P and his wife started counseling us in our home frequently on top of our regular marriage counseling sessions at the church that we attended on Sundays. HUSBAND never cooperated with our marriage counselors. It got so bad that sometimes, when Pastor P and his wife were at our home, HUSBAND would slap me across the face in front of them. One time HUSBAND shouted at the Pastor and his wife saying "leave me alone. If I had a gun I would kill her" pointing at me, and then he said "nothing will happen to me!" The couple had to regularly pull HUSBAND off of me and then lock me in another room in order to stop him from physically harming me. Sometimes they even counseled us so late into the night that they just slept in our home because it was too late for them to try to return to their own home. At times they advised me to leave the house for my safety until the evil spirits that they believed were possessing HUSBAND had left him. They meant only temporary breaks or short vacations because it would not have been culturally acceptable for me to just leave my HUSBAND.
34. In XXX, HUSBAND raped me and I discovered that I was pregnant in XXX. I didn't feel ready to have the child and I confided in a friend, C, who suggested that I should abort the child and that God might understand given the circumstances. When I brought this up with our marriage counselors from church, they told me that abortion was not an option because God could never forgive me. I continued with the pregnancy and HUSBAND told our marriage counselors that he didn't think that he was the father of the baby. This was terribly humiliating for me. It implied that I was a prostitute or had committed adultery. Thankfully the church counselors told HUSBAND that he should not say things like this because everyone in the church would ostracize me if they believed him. Fortunately people at our church did not believe him.

My Near Miscarriage due to HUSBAND's Abuse

35. In the end of XXX, I discovered that HUSBAND had stolen all my important documents including our travel documents and the title to our house. I confronted HUSBAND at about 11:00pm that evening and asked him for the documents. He said he didn't have them. When we started arguing about this he slapped me across the face with an open hand and I tried to defend myself but could not because HUSBAND continued to beat me with his closed fists. He beat me until I was bloody and fell to the floor. Terrified that I was losing the baby I begged HUSBAND to take me to the hospital but he refused saying something like "no you will die here! No one will take you to the hospital!" HUSBAND's nephew Steve was downstairs and heard my screams. Steve begged HUSBAND to take me to the hospital but HUSBAND again refused. I called the Chairman of the Marriage Committee,³ Pastor A, and told him what happened and pleaded with him to have HUSBAND take me to the hospital. HUSBAND refused to listen to the Pastor. Eventually Pastor A, called Pastor A2, who was able to convince HUSBAND to take me to the hospital.
36. At the hospital, they said that I was in danger of having a miscarriage so they ran some scans to make sure the baby was still alive. Over the next 5 days, I was hospitalized and given various injections in the hopes that they would save the baby's life. HUSBAND left me alone in the hospital and only came upon request by the doctor to sign documents. Our family doctor was an acquaintance of HUSBAND's so I never told him or the other hospital staff about HUSBAND's abuse. I was also ashamed of how my HUSBAND had treated me. In XXX culture, women don't speak of marital abuse to strangers and I wasn't about to tell the hospital staff about our problems. Therefore, the doctors kept calling HUSBAND and telling him about my recovery as if he cared to know. To me however it was obvious that HUSBAND couldn't have cared less about me and our baby.

My Futile Attempt to Report HUSBAND's Abuse to the Police

37. When I got out of the hospital I went to our jurisdiction's police station called the XXX to report the incident. Although there were only male police officers at the station I described to them in detail how my HUSBAND had beat me so brutally during my pregnancy that I'd nearly lost my baby. I also told them about all the other incidents when HUSBAND had hurt me. The police said something like "woman, that is a family affair, go and submit to your HUSBAND" and refused to investigate or even take down a report. I felt so helpless. If the police refused to protect me, who would? I also felt very humiliated and alone.

HUSBAND's Abuse Continues

38. For two months after my release from the hospital, I had to continually return for checkups and to receive more injections. Then, on XXX, I asked HUSBAND's nephew XXX who was staying with us at the time to watch the children so that I could go get my hair done. He agreed and as I was leaving the house, HUSBAND stopped me and told me that I was not allowed to leave. He said I needed to stay home to watch the kids instead of getting my hair done. When I explained that I needed to go to the Salon that day because it was a day off

³ The marriage committee is made up of female and male pastors. Their role is to counsel and guide couples to prepare for and maintain successful Christian marriages.

from work HUSBAND said I shouldn't go to work either. When I tried to walk away ignoring him, HUSBAND grabbed, slapped me across the face, and threw me to the ground. My right hand hit the wall as I fell and started bleeding very badly. While I was on the ground HUSBAND started punching me and saying things like "I will teach you a lesson! You must learn how to respect me! When your HUSBAND says something you must listen! You are not ready for marriage." Eventually, I lost consciousness and was taken to the hospital by my uncle, E who was called by my friend C who had found me unconscious when she unwittingly stopped by to visit me. C knew that E was living nearby in XXX at the time and quickly called for his help. At the hospital they tended to my wounds and they gave me an IV. After several hours I was released. The same doctor that knew HUSBAND attended to me, so again, I didn't tell the hospital staff what happened to me. I still have scar on my right hand from where it was cut on the wall.

HUSBAND Beats me while I'm Pregnant

39. On XXX. in the morning. HUSBAND woke me up and ordered me to wash his car. I refused telling him that I couldn't given my precarious medical state and the fact that I was about three months pregnant at the time. He proceeded to beat me. At one point, HUSBAND grabbed my neck and twisted it, slamming my head against the headboard of our bed. I screamed and tried to stand up but couldn't because I was too dizzy. HUSBAND rushed out of the room and I picked up my phone to call the Chairman of the Estate (or housing association) where we lived. As I was pleading with the Chairman to come and save my life HUSBAND came back into the room. He tried to grab the phone out of my hands and in the process, twisted my arm. Eventually he grabbed the phone and stormed out of the house. I watched his cell phone drop to the floor as he left furious. Then, I picked up the phone and ran out of the house, dialing Pastor A to tell him what HUSBAND had just done to me but Pastor A hung up on me.
40. I then ran to Pastor A2's house to ask for help. He told me to go straight to Pastor A's home so that he could see with his own eyes all the bruising and swelling on my face. He said, maybe then, Pastor A would understand the terrible abuse that I was suffering from. I went to Pastor A's house and rang the bell over and over again but he refused to open the door. Then I returned to A2's house to tell him that A would not open his door for me. Pastor A2 told me to wait for Pastor A who would be leaving his house at 7:30am to go to church. I waited at the gate until A came out to go to church. I told the Pastor "you told HUSBAND to beat me and look what he's done to me."⁴ The Pastor asked if I was sure that it was HUSBAND that had done this to me. I said that I was sure and he promised to discuss this later with HUSBAND at church.
41. By the time I returned home HUSBAND had left for church services. For the first time, I called my mother in her village and told her what happened to me. Concerned for my safety, my mother called my uncle in XXX and instructed him to go immediately to my side in order

⁴ I was referring to the time when I had complained of HUSBAND's abuse to the pastor and he made the comment about me not being the first woman nor the last to be abused by her HUSBAND . I took his comment as an implicit message to HUSBAND, that he could abuse me if he liked because that is what HUSBAND s are allowed to do to their wives.

to protect me from HUSBAND. My uncle, E and my brother, A, and his friend came to my home and the four of us went together to church. My brother and uncle confronted the Pastor and asked him to instruct HUSBAND to explain why he'd done this to me. The Pastor tried to calm them down and assured them that he would look into the matter. My brother, his friend, and my uncle left.

42. At the end of the church service that day, the marriage committee asked Pastor A to suspend HUSBAND from the church due to his behavior. Pastor A publicly told the marriage committee that he would not accept the recommendation. Instead, he advised HUSBAND to rent his own home where we both could live because according to the Pastor, once HUSBAND owned our house he could tell me to “shut up” and I would have no choice but to listen to him. The Pastor insinuated that my financial independence was the cause of our problems and that if HUSBAND had more control over our financial situation then he could also properly control me as his wife. I later heard from others that the Pastor even lent HUSBAND money to rent a house and on March 10th I woke up to find HUSBAND gone. The nanny told me that HUSBAND had left at 6 am in the morning. When I looked around the house I realized that HUSBAND had packed his things.

Unsuccessfully Seeking Police Protection Again

43. XXXX to report the incident that occurred on XXXX and to let them know that HUSBAND had disappeared. The policemen made fun of me saying things like, don't worry about him “Maybe you are not giving him sex well!” and “oh he's probably off with someone else enjoying himself!” I was totally humiliated by the police and decided at that point, that I'd never return to try to report HUSBAND's abuse. It was clear to me that the policemen were more interested in humiliating me, than helping to protect me from my HUSBAND's abuse.

HUSBAND Attacks my Family in their Village

44. On XXXX I returned home from church to find more than 20 missed calls from my mother. I thought something awful had happened. I called my mother who explained that HUSBAND had come to her village to fight everyone there. She told me that HUSBAND called her a “useless woman” and the “mother of a prostitute” and said that if he hadn't married me no one would have. My cousins challenged him and they had a physical altercation before HUSBAND left the village furious. My mother told me that she was calling to make sure that I was still alive. Given HUSBAND's actions in the village, my family imagined that he had probably already killed me.

HUSBAND Tries to Kidnap our Children

45. The following Wednesday morning, my uncle K appeared at my front door explaining that the family had sent him to make sure that I was okay. I assured him that I was and left for work. The next day, XXXX I stepped out of a meeting and turned my cell phone on to call home to check on my uncle and children. Almost immediately I received a call from police officer A who said that they had been trying to reach me all morning regarding a child kidnapping case. The officer ordered me to appear at the police station immediately. In route

to the station, I called my uncle K to ask him what was going on. My uncle explained that my HUSBAND appeared at the house that morning (probably thinking that only my nanny would be home) and entered the house intending to take the children from me. To HUSBAND's surprise, my uncle intercepted him and a fight ensued. My uncle was elderly (over 60 years old) and was very badly injured from the altercation. During the struggle HUSBAND managed to grab my oldest daughter and ran out of the house. My uncle called another uncle E and explained what happened. He said that when E heard this, he jumped onto his motorcycle and started racing towards my house to help. When E ran into HUSBAND who was stuck in traffic E started screaming something like "child Kidnapper, child kidnapper!" at my HUSBAND. The traffic officers encircled HUSBAND and took everyone to the police station where they intended to sort everything out by calling the child's mother to identify who was who.

46. When I got to the police station I realized that it was the same station where I had tried to report HUSBAND's abuse but was told that it was only a family matter. The officers recognized me and asked if this was the HUSBAND that I was trying to report before. I confirmed and the police told HUSBAND that he should try to reconcile things with his wife and again told me that they could do nothing about the abuse because it was a family matter. Fortunately, I was allowed to take my daughter home with me that day.
47. The next day HUSBAND started calling me and ordering me to give him our children. I refused and he continued to call saying that one way or another he would get the children, no matter where I tried to take them. HUSBAND knew that if he took the children from me it would be a fate worse than death. My children were all I lived for, and he knew that. I believe he pursued the children as just another way to punish and control me. He wanted to take away every source of joy in my life and he knew that our children were the greatest source of joy I'd ever have. As a result of his threats, I sent my two children with their nanny and my uncle back to our family's village that weekend. My uncle E moved into the house with me in order to make sure that I was safe.
48. On XXX, I went back to the police station with an entire written complaint about my HUSBAND's threatening telephone calls. The police accepted it but never did anything to follow through on my complaints. That same day, HUSBAND went in the afternoon to my oldest daughter's school. Fortunately, I had already withdrawn my daughter from school and explained to the Proprietress that I had to do so in order to protect her from her father. The Proprietress of the school called me as soon as HUSBAND left and warned me that he'd been there looking for our daughter. Sympathizing with my difficult situation, the Proprietress had told HUSBAND only that our daughter did not appear at school that day.

HUSBAND Sends Others to Threaten Me

49. The same week that HUSBAND went to CHILD1's school, I was about to drive to work one day when I noticed two men who I'd never seen before waiting for me outside the gate that

surrounded our house. As my uncle opened the gate, the men rushed to the driver's side of my car and started threatening me by saying things like, "where are the children? If you don't tell us where they are we will kill you!" I screamed for my uncle to help, and when he appeared the two men ran away. From that point onwards, my uncle escorted me to and from the office to ensure that no one waiting for me in the streets would harm me during my commute.

HUSBAND's Stalkings and False Criminal Charges

50. On several occasions in XXXX, HUSBAND appeared at my house intending to harm me but my uncle E was able to fight him off. HUSBAND's telephonic threats continued until one day in mid-to-late April, I received a note from my boss at work that the police needed me to appear at XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX and answer some questions for the State Criminal Investigation Department. I remembered then that HUSBAND's cousin's HUSBAND, XXXX, was Deputy Commissioner of Police and I imagined that he may have used those connections to influence the XXX police.
51. My uncle E accompanied me to the station where the police handed me a criminal allegation. It was then that I discovered that HUSBAND had hired a lawyer to write a petition to the police accusing me of kidnapping our children among other things. The police took my statement and I provided them with a lot of information on how to verify that what I was saying was the truth. Ultimately, because they considered the situation to be a "family matter" and because I was also five months pregnant at the time, the police did not lock me in a jail cell. Still, the police made me stay in the police station all day, threatening me and saying things like "why don't you want to respect your HUSBAND? If you don't we will lock you away in jail!" They did everything they could to intimidate me into submitting to my HUSBAND's demands. I said nothing during the whole time. From 11 am when we arrived until about 10 pm at nighttime they held me at the station without any food or water. When they finally let me leave that night, the Police instructed me that I'd have to return on the XXX with someone who could pay a bail for me.
52. XXXX, I returned to the police station with Pastor U. The police told me that if I wanted to leave that day I'd have to pay XXXX which I did. The entire time I cried out of fear. The Police continued to belittle me by saying that I was a "bad wife" who didn't listen to my HUSBAND. Finally, Pastor U stood up for me and explained all the incidents of abuse that he personally witnessed. The police were surprised but finally believed me and let me go. They asked that I return with the children so that we could sort things out but I never did because I was afraid that the police would take my children away from me. I explained that I was going to be traveling for a while but that I'd hired a lawyer and the courts could sort out our custody over the children. By this time, I had already sold our house because I knew that if HUSBAND were somehow able to gain legal control of the house then I would be forced to rely on him financially and he would finally be able to control me as he had always wanted. I was fortunate to find a buyer who was willing to pay a portion of the sale price (like a down payment) while allowing me to keep living in the house until December of that year. I used that money to help pay back part of my mortgage.

HUSBAND's Attempts to Discredit Me in My Workplace

53. On XXX my XXX lawyer filed for divorce. It was very difficult to find my HUSBAND so they were not able to serve him with the divorce papers until May 29th. As soon as HUSBAND received the paperwork he called me screaming. He said that I had no right to file for divorce. The following Monday, HUSBAND appeared at my office and asked to see my boss. The receptionist said that my boss was in the office upstairs. Then, HUSBAND started screaming that he was my HUSBAND and that I was a “worthless wife,” a “prostitute” and, that I was pregnant with another man’s child. At the time, the bank was full with more than 300 people including my co-workers, and bank customers who suddenly stopped and listened to HUSBAND’s ranting. It was so loud that my boss actually heard HUSBAND yelling from his office upstairs. In order to diffuse the situation, my boss brought HUSBAND into his office. The receptionist was so scared for me that she called me shortly thereafter and warned me not to go home that night because she was afraid that my HUSBAND would kill me.
54. While HUSBAND was with my boss, he told my boss all sorts of lies about me and was so convincing that my boss became angry at me. My boss later chastised me so harshly that I drafted my letter of resignation on the spot. When my boss later called me into his office to find out why I was resigning I explained that I didn’t want to work somewhere where my boss didn’t believe me. I gave him Pastor A2’s telephone number and the Pastor explained everything to him. In order to set things straight, my boss invited my HUSBAND back into the office where my boss explained all that Pastor A2 had told him. Furious, HUSBAND left the office and went to threaten Pastor A2 for having shared the information with my boss. I decided not to resign, and from that point on, my boss instructed the bank’s security guards not to let my HUSBAND into the branch building. Several times after that HUSBAND tried to get into the bank and was not allowed to enter the building. As an additional precaution, my boss allowed me to park my car in a hidden parking lot so that my HUSBAND would not know when I was at work. It also made it easier for the security guards to tell HUSBAND that I wasn’t there so that he would go away.

HUSBAND's Manipulation and Deception Continues

55. Given all the shame that my HUSBAND brought upon me and the rumors that circulated after his public display in the bank, I was transferred to another branch where the workers were not aware of my HUSBAND’s accusations. Still, HUSBAND continued to call me on the phone to threaten me. At some point in June, HUSBAND contacted my boss and tricked him into thinking that he wanted to apologize to me and change his ways. After hearing of this from my boss, I was hopeful that HUSBAND’s sudden change of heart would allow us to rebuild our marriage. When HUSBAND arrived at the door that day, I answered it and allowed him to enter the house. Instead of apologizing he took some of our furniture that he had purchased with his own money, including our bed. For a while after that I had no bed to sleep on.
56. On XXX, my maternity leave began and I went to Imo to stay with my family and see my children. I made sure not to tell anyone who might inform HUSBAND of my whereabouts. I

had already decided that given all that was happening with HUSBAND, it would be safest for me to take a vacation for the remainder of my pregnancy. I made arrangements to go to the United States and XXX. I went to stay with a friend, F, in XXX.

57. XXX, while still in the U.S. on vacation, I received a telephone call from my friend C. C told me that she'd run into my HUSBAND and according to her, there was nothing that my HUSBAND did not say. C described to me how HUSBAND insulted her by saying "you are birds of the same feather" after calling me a "useless girl that was hiding." HUSBAND told C to warn me that he would find me anywhere and that he wouldn't rest until he'd "permanently harmed" me. HUSBAND also insisted that C tell him where I was. To protect me, she lied and said she had no idea where I was. Then, according to C, my HUSBAND said that he knew I had moved from XXX to XXX state. C described how HUSBAND said "she thinks she will be safe there but I can get her there too!" C was very upset as she explained this all to me. When our conversation ended, I called my mother and warned her to take precautions because my HUSBAND might send people to Imo to look for me or worse, to harm the children. From that point on, my family protected my children by keeping them inside my brother's house that was in another part XXX city. My HUSBAND never even knew about my brother's house and so long as the girls never went outside the house, we thought that HUSBAND might never find them.

HUSBAND sends People to Find me in XXX

58. According to my mother, while I was away strange people started appearing at the family village asking about me. Each time those people came, my family told them that I was living in XXX even though I was still on vacation in the U.S. My family said that the people looking for me would always ask when I'd be coming back to the village. My family would say that they didn't know because I seldom visited the village. No one in my family ever recognized any of these strange visitors and everyone was fairly confident that my HUSBAND was behind all of the inquiries.

My Diminishing Hope for a Better Future

59. Before I left XXX, members of the church marriage counseling committee told me that they would take the time that I was away to pray and work with HUSBAND so that he would change. During my time in the U.S., the marriage counsel continued to send me almost daily text messages on my cell phone saying things like "keep praying and God will touch HUSBAND." They were adamant about the fact that through their counseling and my prayers HUSBAND could change. Their pressure was so great that I started to believe that HUSBAND was changing. In hindsight, I think I was only able to do this because I wanted to believe them so badly. I just wanted to have a happy family and so I became very hopeful that God would touch my HUSBAND and change him for the better. Soon, I started to take comfort in the idea that I could return to a new HUSBAND and mentally planned to return to HUSBAND.
60. When our daughter CHILD3 was born on XXXX, I sent HUSBAND an email telling him all about her birth. Although he never responded, I was convinced that with all the hard work

that the marriage committee had been doing and the birth of our daughter, HUSBAND would change. The miracle of CHILD3's birth after my near miscarriage only reinforced these feelings. Her survival gave me renewed hope for a better future with her father.

61. Just before I returned to XXX I received an email from Bishop at the church that I had attended before I met HUSBAND. In the email, Bishop explained that HUSBAND had appeared at his church with photocopies of my divorce papers telling everyone that I had an illegitimate child. Bishop XXX offered to help us both through our difficulties by providing some marriage counseling to us once I returned. I was very receptive to the idea and considered this to be one more sign that HUSBAND would finally change his ways.

Returning to XXXX

62. On XXX I returned to XXX with my newborn baby. On XXX, I met HUSBAND at Bishop's office. For hours the Bishop tried to help us while HUSBAND called me terrible names like "witch." The Bishop prayed with us and finally sent us both on our way saying that he was sure that God would touch HUSBAND. The following day HUSBAND called the Bishop and said that he had been lying. When I heard this, I thought the change was finally occurring.
63. The Bishop decided that it was time to start our reconciliation process and I readily agreed. However, the following day, I received a call from the Bishop who told me that HUSBAND was now accusing me of having stolen his car. Finally, it became clear to me that no matter what we tried, HUSBAND, would not change his ways. I had already started to make arrangements to get travel visas for my children because I was weary of my HUSBAND and thought that at the very least we should have visas so that we could travel to the U.S. just to get away from him if need be. When I told the Bishop that I was in the process of getting tourist visas for my children so that we could escape HUSBAND for a while, he encouraged me to do so. Finally, the Bishop conceded that he thought HUSBAND would not change in the short term and he recommended that I take some time apart from HUSBAND and let things cool down a bit between the two of us. I still held a small hope that a miracle could change HUSBAND but I knew I needed to get my children away for the short term until I could figure out if HUSBAND would ever be able to change or what I would have to do next in my life in order to protect my children. Once we received our visas I decided to take some time in XXX to wait and see if things with HUSBAND could cool down while I was still in XXX or if it was necessary for me to travel abroad in order for the the situation to be diffused.
64. I stayed in my brother's house in XXX from early November until March. During that time only my family and two of my closest confidants in the marriage committee knew where I was living. I stayed inside the house all day long, I wasn't able to work and it was a horrible experience for me. I was so used to working and living my own life that the confinement felt very stifling. I told myself that I would wait until the New Year because I hoped that HUSBAND would make a New Year's resolution to be a better HUSBAND and father. Unfortunately, nothing changed with HUSBAND.

65. From the very beginning of my stay in XXX, my family told me that strange people were coming to my mother's house looking for me. One day I got a strange phone call on my cell phone from a man who asked if I remembered him. He told me he was a client of mine at the bank, and that he had gone to my home in XXX and couldn't find me, then he asked where I was. I told him I didn't remember him and he insisted that I should, that he was a client of mine. I knew that HUSBAND must have put this man up to this. The same thing happened several other times and each time I refused to disclose my location to the callers.

Another Vacation to the U.S.

66. When the New Year came and HUSBAND still hadn't changed I decided to take the children to the U.S. for a while. There at least I thought we could have a break from constantly worrying that HUSBAND was coming to harm us. XXXXXXXXXXXX with my children and went to stay with a family friend in XXX. Each time I spoke to my family in XXX they told me that HUSBAND continued to send people to harass them. Even my divorce attorney told me how terribly HUSBAND would act during our divorce hearings. HUSBAND continued to threaten everyone that as soon as he found me, he'd inflict an injury upon me that I could never forget. Sometimes, HUSBAND even threatened to kill me. Before my mother came to the XXXX she told me that HUSBAND appeared at her house several times and threatened my family by saying things like "you cannot hide her forever. I will find her and kill her!" At this point I realized that it would not be safe for me to return to XXXX.

Realizing that I Cannot Return to XXXX

67. While I had originally planned to return to XXXX, it seemed like that was an impossibility. Sometime in mid-May I started looking for an attorney to assist me with my application for asylum. I knew that re-starting my life in the U.S. would not be easy. I went to a bank and had an informational interview with them to try to figure out the odds of whether or not I could eventually re-start my finance career in the U.S. I was told that I'd have to start anew working as a teller and work my way up. I couldn't bear the idea so I started considering other careers. Everyone that I spoke to said that nursing was a relatively easy profession to start and would allow me to support my daughters so I tried to enroll in nursing school. I quickly learned that in order to study I would need a student visa and I'd have to complete many pre requisites. I applied for a student visa at the beginning of XXX. My visa was approved in July 2010, and I enrolled in classes at XXXX City Community College shortly thereafter. As an international student, I pay extremely high tuition and my personal savings have been depleted. I am currently taking Anatomy and Physiology II, Microbiology, Psychology, and Speech Communication. While my student fees are incredibly expensive I feel I have no other choice because I need to support my daughters. Around the same time that I received my student visa, I also found an attorney at the Tahirih Justice Center to represent me in my request for asylum.

68. In XXX my friend, I, called me to say that HUSBAND came to her church and embarrassed her by speaking about me so poorly. He told her things like I'd run away with his two children and one of my children was not even his. He said that he knew she was my friend and so she had to tell him where I was. I refused and HUSBAND said that he was sure I'd

left to live with another man. She pled with him to just let me be and warned him that if he did find me and kill me as he had threatened to do so many times that my family would retaliate. According to I, HUSBAND told her that he didn't care about the consequences by saying something like "I'll just cross that bridge when I come to it."

69. If I were forced to return to XXX today I would have no other choice but to return to where my family is in XXX state, and hide in my brother's house. I'd have to live a very oppressive life and I don't think that I could support my daughters doing so. I have no doubt that eventually HUSBAND would find me at my brother's house. If I don't live in hiding, HUSBAND is certain to find me. He's been sending people to try to track me down for some time now and I don't think that there is anything that I could do to stop him. HUSBAND has vowed to "inflict permanent injury" upon me and take everything of any worth away from me, including our children. I truly believe that he is capable of killing me.
70. I am also afraid that HUSBAND will use his connections within the police force to continually harass me with false charges as he did before. XXX is a very inter-connected country; there is no city that I could move to where I would be safe from him. For example if I moved to XXXX, I would have to work in order to support my three children. It won't be long for someone to recognize me, and report back to HUSBAND that I have returned to XXX. Even passing through the airport in XXX could be dangerous for me, because someone could recognize me there and alert HUSBAND to my return.
71. HUSBAND is not a reasonable man. In his mind he owns me and always will. He will not rest until he's done what he wants to me. He feels that he lost control over me and that is a sign of "failure" for a HUSBAND in XXX. Other men are calling him a weakling and people are gossiping about him. In HUSBAND's mind the only way to reclaim control over me is to physically subjugate me.
72. I too have been stigmatized by our public divorce. Within my culture and religion divorce is extremely shameful. I'm not even certain I could find work at this point because the rumors about our divorce are so widespread.

My Struggles for Safety and a New Life Here

73. Some nights I have terrible nightmares about what HUSBAND did to me while we were married. Particularly, I dream about what happened on the night of March 8th. Sometimes the events of that night repeat over and over again in my nightmares. Even once I came to the U.S. I found myself very anxious and often imagined that HUSBAND or his family would find me and hurt me here. It has taken a long time for me to refocus my nervousness and anxiety into something productive. Fortunately, concentrating on my studies has allowed me some relief and I finally feel like I'm starting to move on. I am so hopeful for my future and my new career. It has not been easy starting from scratch again and this entire experience has been so humbling for me. Sometimes I find myself crying just thinking about all that I gave up in XXX to come here and struggle to begin anew.

APPLICANT

Date

