

ESCAPE TO SAFETY SOUNDTRACK

Introduction

GISELA: Welcome to the exhibition 'Escape to Safety'. You are going to go on a journey. You are being persecuted in your own country. So you have decided to leave your friends, family and jobs behind to seek asylum in Britain. You don't know what awaits you, but you hope you will find safety there. You will meet three asylum-seekers on your journey. Only move on to the next station of your journey when you are told to do so. Move now to station 1.

Station 1: Safe house in Taiwan

108 seconds

ASIF: My name is Asif. I am from Afghanistan. I am waiting for the agent to take me to Britain. I am in a safe house in Taiwan. I had to pay \$8700 for my papers. I could not go to the Taliban and ask them to give me a passport . I have to leave my country because of the Taliban. I am a journalist but they say that if I report anything that is against them I will be in big trouble.

Short Pause

ASIF: I was receiving death threats from them. They beat me up at the police station. They have killed my father. My father was a surgeon and he was active in politics, and he was a different religion. They put him in prison and tortured him. He promised to change his religion so they released him. But he did not, so he was shot by the Taliban in our village. We protested that my father's killers

should be prosecuted but nothing happened. I realised that I would get killed and I was endangering my family so my mother asked me to leave.

Male Voice: Move! Come on, it's time to go! Move on to the next station.....

Station 2: War zone

109 seconds

MARY: My name is Mary. I am from Rwanda. There was fighting, and bombs, and killing. My family was in danger because my mother is Tutsi and my father Hutu. All the time they were harassed and interrogated. When the President's helicopter was shot down the war suddenly got worse. I was eight years old and I saw them kill my aunt and uncle, and many more.

OFFICIAL VOICE: At least half a million people were killed in the Rwandan genocide.

MARIA: *(background noise of bombings and machine gun shootings)*. We left in our nighties because the bombs were falling all around us. We walked and walked with thousands of other people, leaving the city. When we reached a safe village, my father left the country and we hid in the village for a long time. Even when the killing stopped, Dad couldn't come home because it was not safe for him.

Male voice: Now! Move! No time to waste! Move on to the next station.....

Station 3: Border

100 seconds

BORDER GUARD: (*shouting, background noise of many people in despair*) 'Move, stop hanging around! Just queue up over there. Passports! Show me your papers! Where's your visa? Where's your passport? The refugee camp is another 10 kilometres that way. *[repeated]*

MARIA: We went to Uganda and met Dad again in the refugee camp. I hadn't seen him for one and a half years. But it still wasn't safe for us to go back because the Tutsis might take revenge on my father who is Hutu. So we decided to go to Britain because we had family there and my parents could speak English.

3 second pause

ASIF: (*dreamy*) Great Britain. They preach human rights and democracy to other countries all over the world so it must be a good safe country that respects human rights and all different kinds of people.

Male Voice: ***Come on! Hurry up! Move on to the next station.....***

Station 4: Lorry

53 seconds

AHMED: (*nostalgic music and background sound of lorry's engine on*) My name is Ahmed. I am from Palestine. I have escaped because there is no future for me there. My brother was killed when the Israeli army bombed the house near us. And now my house has been destroyed as

well. There is no work for me, there is nothing I can do there. I want to go to a country where I can work and live in peace. I have friends in London who I can stay with, who will look after me, and find me a job.

Male Voice: Get out! Move! Move on to the next station.....

Station 5: Immigration (airport)

131 seconds

STEWARDESS VOICE: *(background noise of an airplane landing)* You have arrived in Heathrow, London

ASIF: *(nostalgic music)* The agent has left me here. He has taken my passport away from me. I feel ashamed. I do not want to be an asylum-seeker.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER: Passports! Passports!

ASIF: I want to apply for asylum. *In Afghani: I want to apply for asylum. I am from Afghanistan, please tell me what I have to do. I cannot go back home.*

MARIA: I don't understand what is going on. I don't understand what they are saying. Mummy, what are they saying?

IMMIGRATION OFFICER: You want to apply for asylum?

MARIA: What is asylum? I just want a safe place to live with my family

Echo of Maria's voice saying: I just want a safe place to live with my family

ASIF: *(to himself)* We think about what we are escaping from, not where we are escaping to.

IMMIGRATION OFFICER: Are you asylum-seekers? You will be interviewed. Where did you come from? How did you get here? Through what country? Which aeroplanes did you take? Who brought you here? This form - you must fill in this form.

Echo of immigration officer's lines

IMMIGRATION OFFICER: How do I know you're genuine? What's the address of your local police station? What's the address of your local doctor? The local primary school? Fill in this form! If you don't fill it in soon you will be sent back.....

Echo of immigration officer's lines

ASIF: But I have no solicitor!

IMMIGRATION OFFICER: Fingerprints here. Photos, we must take your photographs. Now move. On to the next station.

AHMED: But I have no solicitor

Station 6: Detention

139 seconds

5 second pause – sound of chains, cell's door clunking

AHMED: They have put me in a prison. They call it detention centre. *(sound of chains)* When I arrived in England, I jumped out of the lorry. *(soundtrack of 'anxious' music)* I didn't know where I was. I made my way to

London because I had a cousin there, Arif. I filled in the asylum application form too late, so they are going to deport me back to Palestine. No-one told me I had to do it so soon. I couldn't understand the form. I don't speak English. And I don't know a solicitor.

NEWSREADER VOICE: 'An official inquiry has been launched into the death of an asylum-seeker, found hanged by his shoelaces in a detention centre. Mikhail Bodnarchuk was due to be deported back to Ukraine the day after he killed himself. (*source: Independent on sun Feb 9th, 03*)

NEWSBOY VOICE: Read all about! The Sun says 'end asylum madness. This sea of humanity is polluted with terrorism and disease and threatens our way of life!' (*The Sun, Jan 27th, 03*)

CONSERVATIVE OLD LADY VOICE: It's not that we are racist, we just don't want asylum seekers here. This country is like a boat and the more people who come the more likely the boat will tip into the sea.

MAN: They steal our jobs, they scrounge off the state and they are not real refugees at all!

ECHO: (*male voice*) Scroungers, scroungers, scroungers
(*old lady's voice*) They bring disease

CONSERVATIVE OLD LADY: (*with tone of disgust*)
You're all bogus!

Male voice: Get out of here! Go home! Move on to the next station

Station 7: dispersal

220 seconds

ASIF: *(soundtrack of marching and tense music)* The Home Office have sent me to Glasgow. They don't give you a choice. It's here or the streets. These are the buildings where no-one else wants to live because they are in such bad condition. The Home Office will not allow me to work until they decide whether I can stay, so I cannot earn money.

RACIST VOICES: Go back home! This country doesn't belong to you! You're destroying this country! Criminals! Terrorists!

ASIF: I ignore the verbal abuse, because if you respond there will be a fight, and if you fight you get hurt.

NEWSREADER VOICE: The Scottish Refugee Council reported 70 racially motivated attacks on asylum seekers in Glasgow between August and January 2001. *(source HRW report 2003)*

ASIF: *(to himself)* But we try to educate people - When we explain things to people things change We had a protest on the day the asylum-seeker was murdered. There were asylum-seekers and Scottish people *(sounds of smashing glass, throwing of bottles, police vans sirens)*. People threw bottles and stones at us.

NEWSREADER VOICE: Two Iraqi Kurds who were on their way to a student party were attacked in Plymouth. One escaped with cuts and bruises, but another ended up in hospital, his face split open with a kebab skewer carried by one of the assailants. *(source: The Observer, June 29th, 03)*

ASIF: People think asylum-seekers must be poor. We had everything in our country. It's just the circumstances that force you to leave. We just want people to respect us like human beings.

NEWSREADER VOICE: Home Office figures reveals that 2,000 racial attacks have been inflicted on asylum seekers who have been dispersed around Britain between 2000 and September 2002.

ASIF: No matter where you live you always want to go back to your country. I wrote to Tony Blair and said that if there is a proper regime in Afghanistan many Afghans will go back, and I am the first one who will go back. But it is not safe now with the warlords. One set of killers have been replaced with another.

I miss my family, my country, my job. But if I am returned now I'll definitely be killed.

Male voice: Move on to the next station!

Station 8: New Life

239 seconds

Less tense music

MARIA: I am happy now. My mum still cries in her sleep, but I have stopped having nightmares of my aunt and uncle being murdered. I have made lots of friends in my new school and both my parents are working. My dad is a teacher but can only get a job as a taxi driver, and my mum is a nurse but can only get work as a care assistant. My family was given permission to stay in Britain for four years, but now the Home Office wants to send us back.

We know it is not safe for us to go back. My parents are scared that they will be killed because they are from different ethnic groups, and there is still violence and revenge and killing.

CHILDREN AND ADULT VOICES (*chanting*) The Mukandoli family must stay! The Mukandoli family must stay! Refugees are welcome here (*repeated*)

MARIA: (*background sound of chanting 'refugees are welcome here'*) My friends at school and the teachers are campaigning to stop the Home Office deporting us. They have visited the MP and written to the Home Office and have fundraised for a good lawyer - now we are marching to the Houses of Parliament to protest.

CHILD VOICE: (*chanting*) Refugees are people.

ADULT VOICES: (*in chorus, chanting*) Just like you and me! (*repeated*)

MARIA: It's nice to have friends, but I am scared. I am scared they will send us home where my family faces persecution and maybe even death (*sad music*).

GISELA: (*soundtrack of sad music with sounds of pictures being taken*) Move on your journey is over for now

THE END