After entering Swiss territory

After entering Swiss territory you will have several options to get a refugee status. Most people enter Swiss territory "illegally". When police stops you at the border or somewhere else you have the right to ask for asylum. You don’t need to answer any other questions to the police. They are obliged to bring you to the next reception center.

All reception centers are located close to the border. Personally, I prefer the center in the canton of Basel because it is considered one of the best reception centers in Switzerland regarding the treatment by the staff, the quality of food, free clothing and the speed of processing the application, due to the large number of its staff and its proximity to several human rights and humanitarian organizations, which can provide you protection and free legal consulting, and benefits during the holidays, etc. In the reception center your request is proceeded and you are asked several questions (name, country of origin, route, reasons for applying for asylum etc.), and you and your family is transferred to a refugee camp in a particular canton, which you can choose by yourself. In these camps the situation is usually better than in the first camp (more freedom to go out and in, and more pocket money, in general it will be more calm. Unlike in the past, when many asylum seekers got B for political reasons, especially political celebrities, or those who have been tortured in their home country and have evidence for that. If the request for asylum has been accepted, you are transferred to a particular canton and city, where the state secures a home for you and your family, and where you are given a (relatively) small budget to feed and start your new life here.

An important point is: if you have Syrian nationality but a fake passport of another nationality, this will not affect your application for asylum. But it is better to tell the truth in the first interview. Most Syrians will get F regardless of their story, except they were personally involved in war crimes or when their fingerprints have been registered in another Schengen country before entering Switzerland.

This article is based on personal experiences of me and some friends. You should not understand it as a general advice. Everyone of us has a different story, different reasons to be here and different plans for the future, even if they state their stories to categorize us in good, bad, and opress us systematically. The text shows just a few options and you should make thoughts about your specific case, i.e.: What is the right or good story (age, country of origin, etc.)? When and (where) do you want to ask for asylum?

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The 9th of February three asylum seekers were controlled by three cops in Thun. The only purpose of the control was the stigmatization, degradation and oppression of the three asylum seekers. It seems like this act of stigmatization by the police was one too many for the asylum seekers concerned, who are currently interned in the new federal refugee camp on the military camp in Thun. The Medias report that they allegedly attacked the two cops, which lead to "scenes of violence which made it necessary for several police patrols to rush to help". One cop was slightly injured in the process. A businessman from the shopping alley in Thun, who had obviously chased his side in the fight between the oppressor and the oppressed, helped the cops overwhelm one of the searched asylum seekers. Quickly a mob of mainly reactionary people crowded the scene. Some of them shouted out racist comments and at least one of them kicked one asylum seeker lying on the ground. The social democratic director of security Peter Siggenthaler told the media: "What those people did, definitely didn't help their cause and nor the city's that benevolently said yes to the refugee camp. The asylum seekers have nothing to do with this."

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The Story of an immigrant

I made my way from Northern Africa to Europe in the need of a better future and a decent life. First I wanted to tell you, that I would like to speak on my behalf and on the behalf of my comrades of the same origin. Everybody knows how immigrants suffer before arriving European territories, whether in Turkey and Greece or the Mediterranean Sea. But it seems, that most of the people do not know about the current suffering in the land of exile, most notably Switzerland. A country, known in the media for its humanitarian role in crisis and war, is finding hard and marginalizing legislation (humanity and politically). We, who have reasons to leave our homes and are looking for a refuge, are divided in good (“fleeing war”) and bad (“fleeing poverty”) migrants.

Bunkers and camps

It begins with being put in accommodations isolated from the social environment, on the outskirts of a city, near the forest or industrial areas. Being placed in underground bunkers, unhealthy places, made for wars in ancient times. These have been equipped for housing refugees, sometimes up to 120 people, 10 to 20 in each room. Living there, means you have to cope with violence and theft, which are daily routine and effects of these conditions. The staff (security and social workers) don’t feel responsible for this, but are taking care that aggressions remain on that level (and are not expressed against the staff) by calling the police. These conditions make it more difficult or impossible to even get in contact with the local population or to live a life as they do.

There is political campaigns of anti-immigrant parties, such as the SVP, trying to spread fear among the Swiss population. These campaigns are fertile ground for the xenophobic and brutal behaviour of police towards refugees.

Omnipresent police

Police is on the lookout for us. Checks and raids are an omnipresent and daily experience: in front of passers-by in the street, at the train stations, sometimes referees inside the bunkers and camps, without warning, during day and night. The treatment matches the profiling – it’s simply racist. Not long ago I have been treated like that. The policeman claimed, that I am here to steal and loot the wealth of his country and that he could not be pleased living in a bunker, because it’s a better place back than at your country! And adding: ‘Your place is outside Switzerland’! I responded by expressing his racist assumptions, that something is better here and that it’s non of his business judging over people’s rights to travel and migrate. There is many reasons for us to leave our homes, and if the policeman would have just expressed one of those, he wouldn’t have dared to say this words.

Administrated life

It must be said that all immigrants have the so called N-status during their asylum procedure. This document does not allow you to work or even travel outside the country. The meager benefets aren’t enough to buy proper food. Most of the asylum procedures end with a negative decision, even if you were the most orderly person, not causing any troubles. People with a “negative” are even more exposed to arbitrariness and persecution by the authorities – only 20 Swiss francs every two days and regular replacements to different shelters in the canton of Zurich, they call here “seven days”. Without documents, you get arrested and imprisoned again and again, sometimes for three days, with a fine of 700 francs and a 3 month suspended prison sentence.

You get officially banned from the place and canton where you have been arrested, for 24 hours up to 2 years. The circumstances most of immigrants are living in, aren’t known by neither a Swiss nor a foreign public. I would like to say here that I’m not able to reflect my daily life of many immigrants here in Switzerland in those few words. There are painful stories of some immigrants who have suffered enormously during years without a solution.

Get involved more:

-Tuesday Meeting Point: Meeting point for the struggle against camps and bunkers (discussions, knowledge-exchange, self-organizing, resistance), tuesday from 2-7 pm
Address: Kranz: 14 (close to Langstrasse),
8001 Zurich
-Beobachtung Zurich: organizing occupiations and strikes against illegalization. / every second wednesday 6 pm / Kranz.
24 or Shihlquai 125
-RAF-ASZ: anti-racist & feminist space, friday from 2 pm, monday & wednesday 6-8 pm (german class & dinner) / Address: Fluelastr. 54, 8048 Zurich
-ASZ, autonomous school: language classes, workshops, etc., monday, wednesday/friday, all day / Address: Shihlquai 125 (close to “HF” manimation), Fluelastr. 54, 8048 Zurich
-FZI: women-only support, Tel. 044 436 90 00 / Address: Badenerstr. 682, 8004 Zurich
-Medirenne: medical support for sans-papiers, (find more places on www.zdinfo.ch/en/ Links) / Address: Kronenstr. 10, 8006 Zurich

ZBA: legal consulting for canton Zurich only, wed. 1.30 – 5 pm, phone consultations: monday & wednesday 11-12 am, friday 9 – 11 am & 1.30 – 5 pm, Tel: 044 454 60 30 / Address: Bertast, 8, 8003 Zurich
-SPAZ: legal consulting for sans-papiers, tuesday 3-6 pm, monday 1 – 4 pm,
Tel. 043 960 87 77 / Address: Kalkbreitestr. 8, 8004 Zurich
-FIZ: women-only support, Tel. 044 436 90 00 / Address: Badenerstr. 682, 8004 Zurich

Find support and more:

-Freiplatzaktion: legal support, mon 1 – 6.30 pm (register till 9 am), Tel. 044 241 54 11 / Address: Langstr. 64, 8004 Zurich

The Story of an immigrant

Questioning the status

How is it possible to imprison men of dignity and indepenence seeking for a decent future, and expose them to a policy of isolation and exclusion without the slightest feelings of humanity. How is it possible to take into custody a man of dignity and independence in the search for their future and their livelihood, the policy of isolation and exclusion without the slightest feelings of humanity. As if it is not enough, some politicians are saying that these immigrants are criminals and thieves. Yes! the policy of extremism and racism makes people steal something to still their hunger or something to warm their bodies. But there are crimes plundering billions and violating human rights, not the ones of immigrants, individuals living in a free society, and no one dares to punish them, because they belong to the same authoritarian regime. The facade of a righteous and neutral Switzerland is showing more cracks the closer you look.