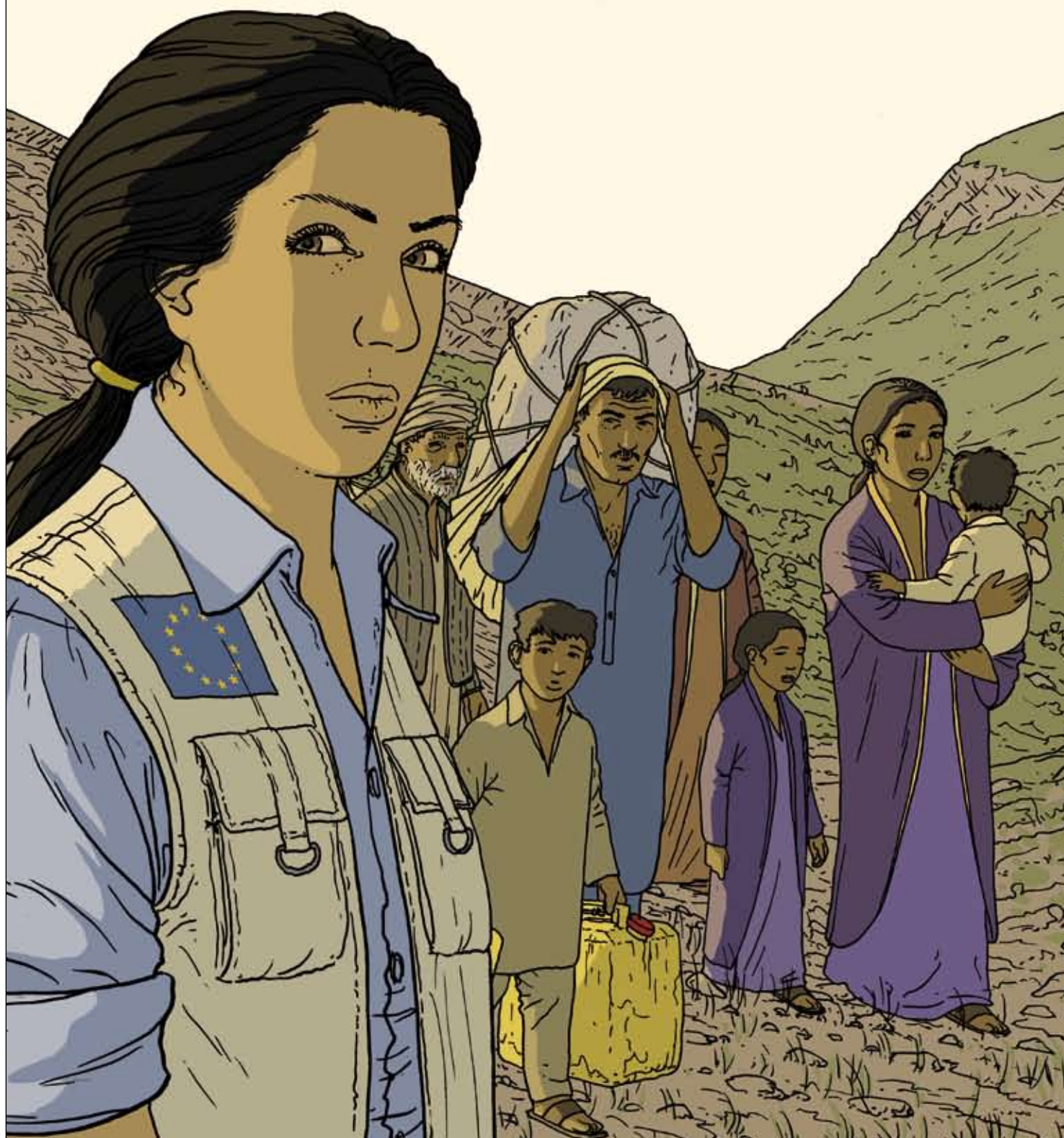


Hidden disaster

ERIK BONGERS



Hidden disaster

ERIK BONGERS



Special thanks to Thorsten Münch for his vital input to the story.
Special thanks to Alexandre Istratov for allowing the use of his photographic vistas of Brussels.
<http://www.istratov.be>

"Hidden disaster" is a wholly fictitious story written to illustrate how the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid department responds to crises, from a human interest angle. Any resemblance to real people is entirely coincidental.

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Cataloguing data can be found at the end of this publication.

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2010

KR-31-09-144-EN-C
ISBN: 978-92-79-13380-0
doi: 10.2795/11166

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Printed in Germany

GOOD EVENING.
AT LEAST TWO THOUSAND PEOPLE ARE BELIEVED
TO HAVE BEEN KILLED AND MORE THAN TEN
THOUSAND INJURED IN A POWERFUL EARTHQUAKE
THAT STRUCK BORDUVIA LAST NIGHT. THE
EPICENTRE WAS IN THE URGI MOUNTAINS IN THE
NORTH OF THE COUNTRY.



STEVEN BRAVERS IS IN THE
NORTH BORDUVIAN CITY OF
KELLOW...



...BUT OUTSIDE THE CITY IT MAY BE EVEN
WORSE. THERE ARE REPORTS FROM THE REBEL-
CONTROLLED URGI MOUNTAINS THAT LANDSLIDES
HAVE BLOCKED MANY RIVERS AND THAT FLOODS
ARE NOW THE BIGGEST THREAT.



BRUSSELS. EUROPEAN QUARTER.

FLOODS !?!





FLOODS WOULD MAKE THE SITUATION EVEN WORSE! THE BORDUVIAN GOVERNMENT MUST BE STRUGGLING TO COPE WITH THE HUMANITARIAN NEEDS!



WE MUST INFORM THE COMMISSIONER! SHE'S BRIEFING THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ON THE EARTHQUAKE TOMORROW AND NEEDS TO BE UPDATED ON THE FLOOD RISK. SHE SHOULD ALSO KNOW THAT THIS HASN'T YET BEEN CONFIRMED BY THE BORDUVIAN AUTHORITIES.



YES, WE HAVE TO BE VERY DIPLOMATIC WITH THE BORDUVIANS! THE CONFLICT WITH THE REBELS COMPLICATES THE SITUATION. WE CAN'T RISK JEOPARDISING THE AID EFFORT WHEN SO MANY PEOPLE ARE SUFFERING!



ARE THERE ANY REPORTS FROM THE FIELD MAX?

RED CROSS AND UNITED NATIONS ARE SETTING UP IN KELLOW AND MORE RELIEF AGENCIES WILL ARRIVE IN THE COMING DAYS. WE'VE ALREADY RECEIVED SOME REQUESTS FOR FUNDING.



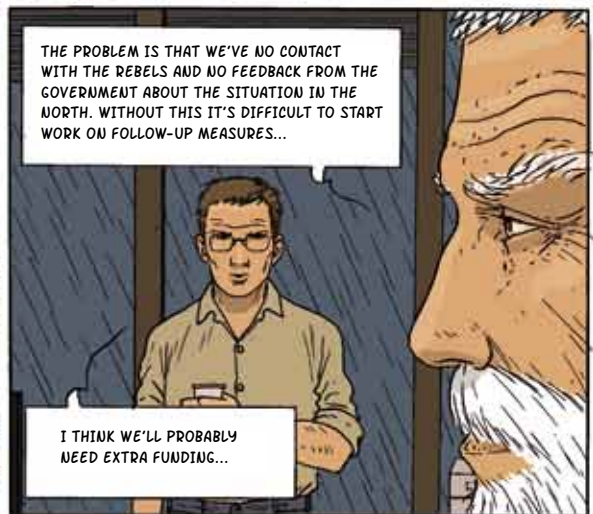
FOR THE EMERGENCY FUNDING WE'VE PREPARED A €3 MILLION FAST TRACK DECISION AND HAVE SEVERAL PARTNER ORGANISATIONS ON STAND-BY.



THINGS ARE MOVING RAPIDLY IN THE GOVERNMENT-HELD AREA, BUT I'M MORE WORRIED ABOUT THE URGU MOUNTAINS WHERE THE REBELS ARE IN CONTROL.

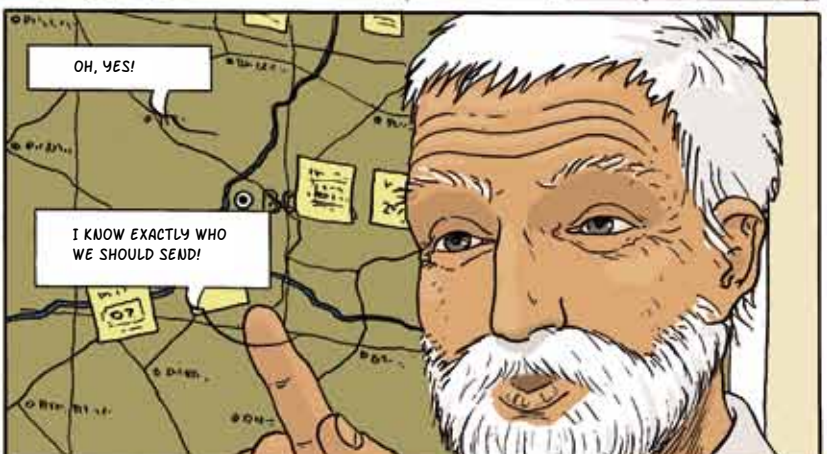


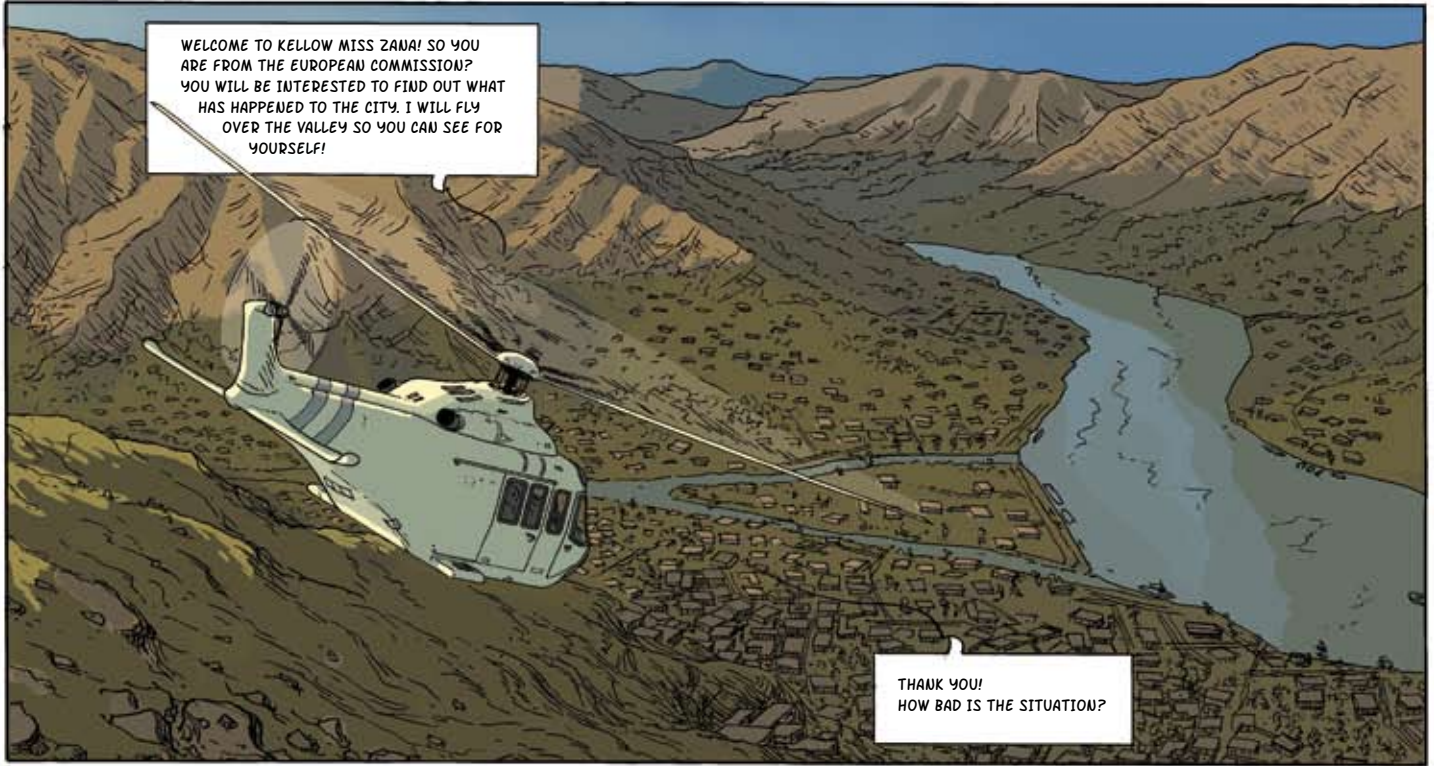
AS DESK OFFICER FOR BORDUVIA, I REALLY NEED MORE INFORMATION! I DON'T HAVE A FULL PICTURE OF WHAT'S GOING ON YET!



THE PROBLEM IS THAT WE'VE NO CONTACT WITH THE REBELS AND NO FEEDBACK FROM THE GOVERNMENT ABOUT THE SITUATION IN THE NORTH. WITHOUT THIS IT'S DIFFICULT TO START WORK ON FOLLOW-UP MEASURES...

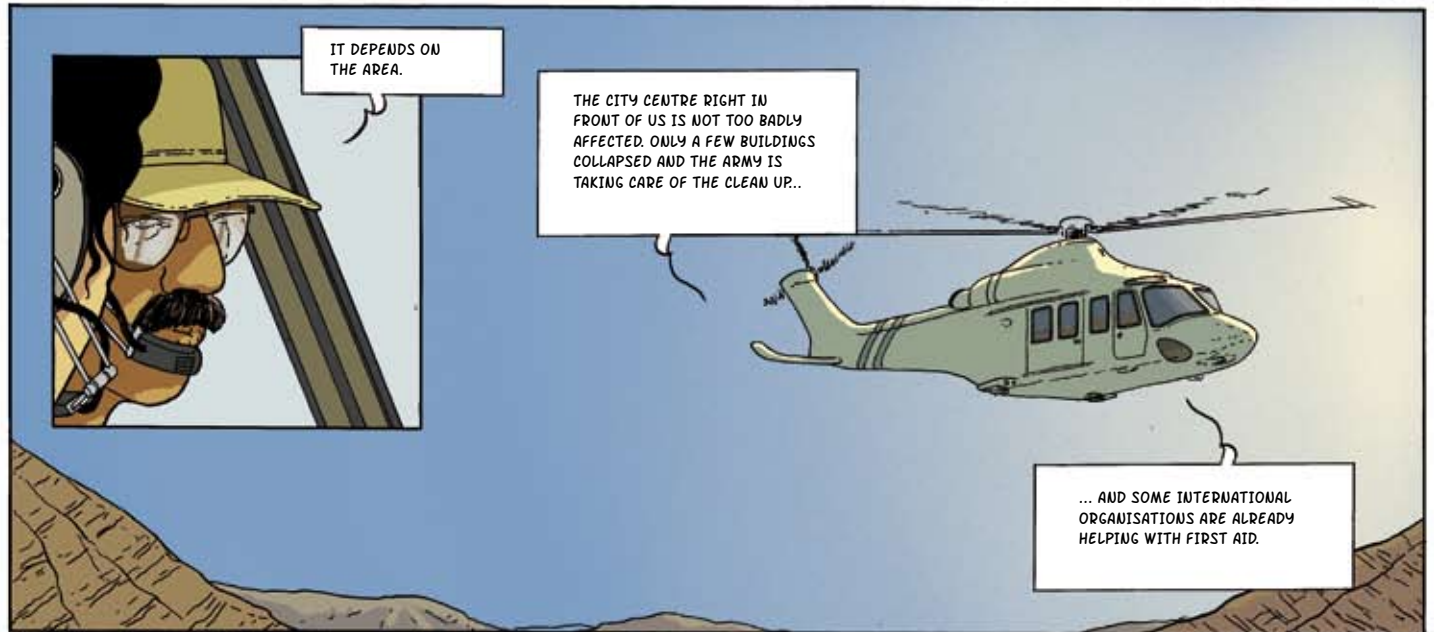
I THINK WE'LL PROBABLY NEED EXTRA FUNDING...





WELCOME TO KELLOW MISS ZANA! SO YOU ARE FROM THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION? YOU WILL BE INTERESTED TO FIND OUT WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THE CITY. I WILL FLY OVER THE VALLEY SO YOU CAN SEE FOR YOURSELF!

THANK YOU!
HOW BAD IS THE SITUATION?



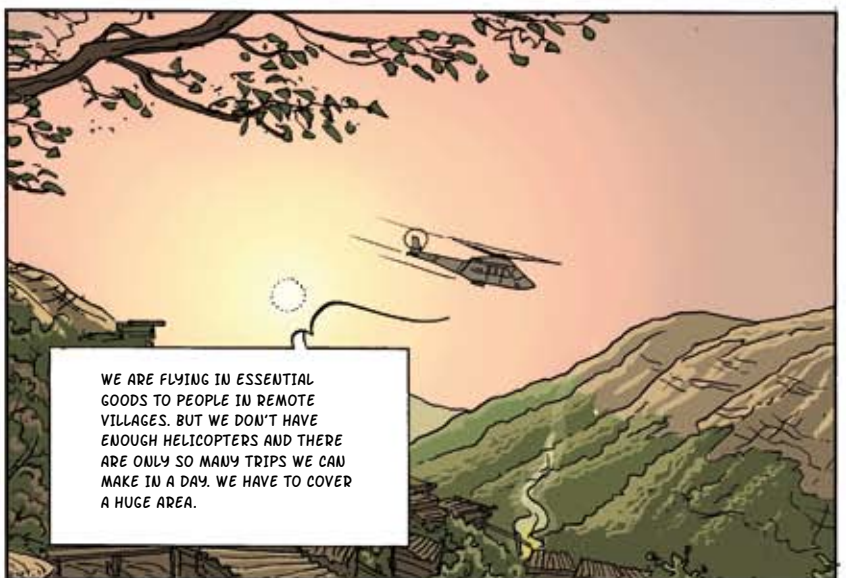
IT DEPENDS ON THE AREA.

THE CITY CENTRE RIGHT IN FRONT OF US IS NOT TOO BADLY AFFECTED. ONLY A FEW BUILDINGS COLLAPSED AND THE ARMY IS TAKING CARE OF THE CLEAN UP...

... AND SOME INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS ARE ALREADY HELPING WITH FIRST AID.



THAT'S GOOD. WHAT ABOUT THE OTHER NEEDS? SHELTER, FOOD, BLANKETS...



WE ARE FLYING IN ESSENTIAL GOODS TO PEOPLE IN REMOTE VILLAGES. BUT WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH HELICOPTERS AND THERE ARE ONLY SO MANY TRIPS WE CAN MAKE IN A DAY. WE HAVE TO COVER A HUGE AREA.



WHERE IS THAT SMOKE ON THE HILLSIDE COMING FROM?

FUNERALS I THINK. THE KELLOW HILLS ARE WHERE THE POOR PEOPLE LIVE. THEY HAVE BEEN HIT VERY HARD BY THE EARTHQUAKE. THERE WERE MANY LANDSLIDES, SO YOU CAN IMAGINE...



ARE THE SURVIVORS THERE GETTING ANY HELP?



YOU MEAN WITH STUFF LIKE TENTS AND FOOD...?

YES.

WELL ... I'M NOT SURE ...



WELL, I SUPPOSE I'LL HEAR MORE ABOUT IT AT MY FIRST BRIEFING!



OK, THANKS FOR DROPPING ME OFF AND FOR THE GUIDED TOUR!



KELLOW, UNITED NATIONS BASE CAMP

GOOD MORNING, EVERYONE!



WELCOME TO TODAY'S BRIEFING. FIRST I WANT TO WELCOME AND INTRODUCE ZANA TO THE TEAM.



ZANA IS AN ECHO FIELD EXPERT - FROM THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION. SHE'S HERE TO ASSESS THE SITUATION IN THE URGI MOUNTAINS. THE INFORMATION SHE OBTAINS WILL BE VITAL TO EXPANDING OUR EFFORTS IN THAT AREA...

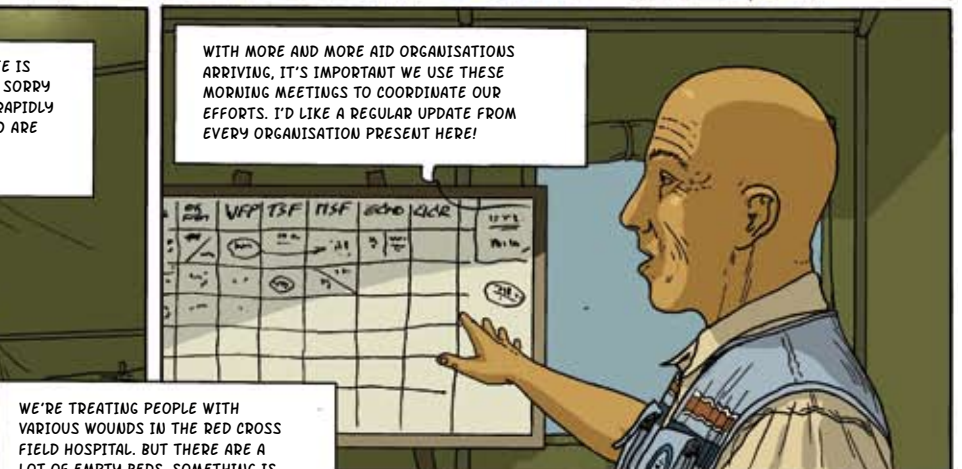


WHILE WE WAIT FOR HER TRAVEL PERMITS TO ARRIVE, ZANA WILL BE WORKING WITH THE TEAM HERE.



OK, STATUS REPORT THEN...

OUR CURRENT ESTIMATE IS 20,000 DEAD AND I'M SORRY TO SAY THE COUNT IS RAPIDLY RISING! ABOUT 30,000 ARE INJURED...

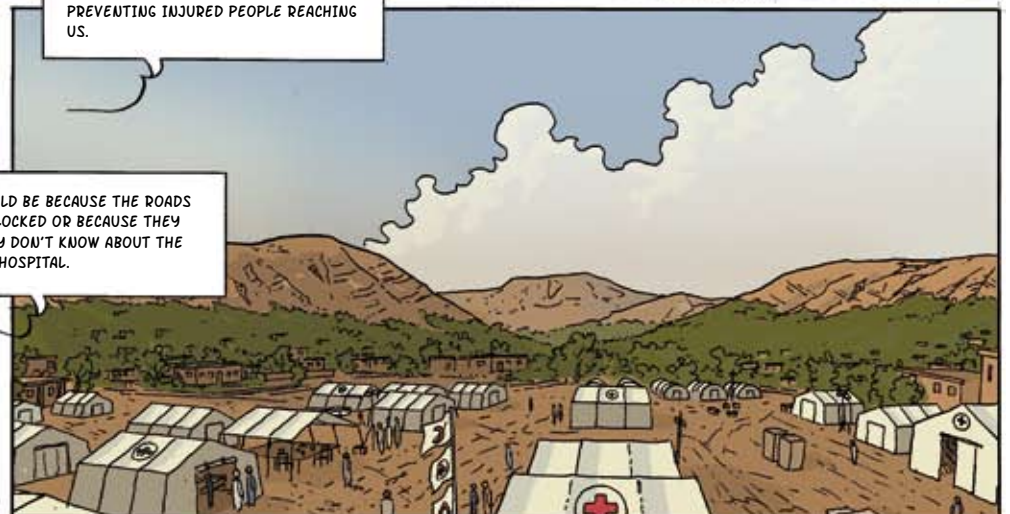


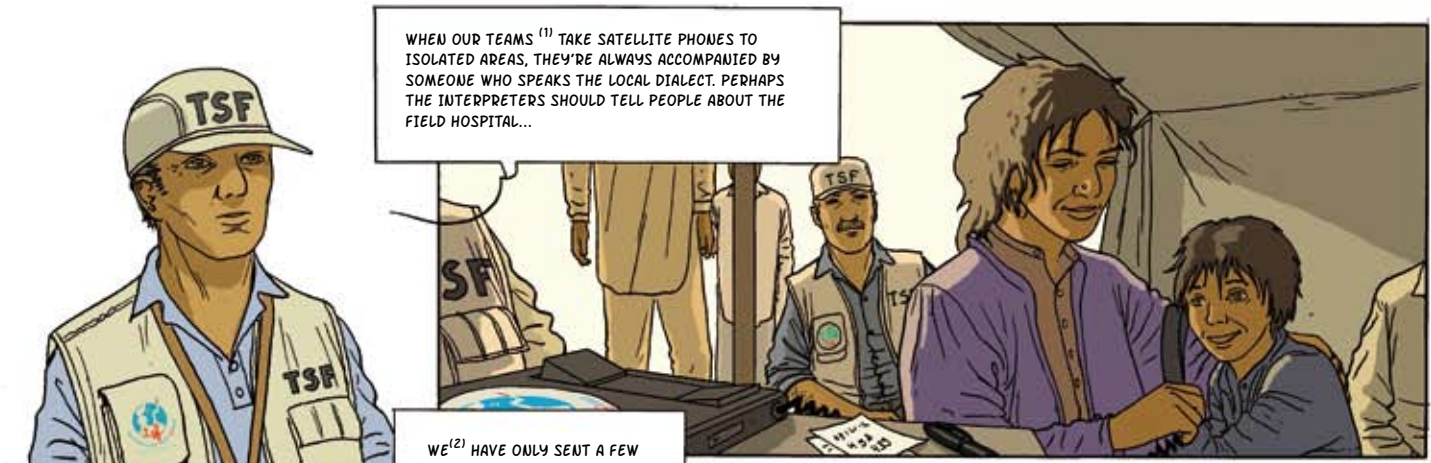
WITH MORE AND MORE AID ORGANISATIONS ARRIVING, IT'S IMPORTANT WE USE THESE MORNING MEETINGS TO COORDINATE OUR EFFORTS. I'D LIKE A REGULAR UPDATE FROM EVERY ORGANISATION PRESENT HERE!

WE'RE TREATING PEOPLE WITH VARIOUS WOUNDS IN THE RED CROSS FIELD HOSPITAL. BUT THERE ARE A LOT OF EMPTY BEDS. SOMETHING IS PREVENTING INJURED PEOPLE REACHING US.



IT COULD BE BECAUSE THE ROADS ARE BLOCKED OR BECAUSE THEY SIMPLY DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE FIELD HOSPITAL.





WHEN OUR TEAMS ⁽¹⁾ TAKE SATELLITE PHONES TO ISOLATED AREAS, THEY'RE ALWAYS ACCOMPANIED BY SOMEONE WHO SPEAKS THE LOCAL DIALECT. PERHAPS THE INTERPRETERS SHOULD TELL PEOPLE ABOUT THE FIELD HOSPITAL...

WE ⁽²⁾ HAVE ONLY SENT A FEW SHIPMENTS TO THE KELLOW HILLS. IT WAS ASSUMED PEOPLE THERE WOULD COME DOWN TO THE CITY FOR HELP...



IT'S BEGINNING TO LOOK AS IF VERY FEW HILL PEOPLE ARE COMING DOWN TO THE RELIEF CAMPS...

I THINK I KNOW WHY!



MY NAME IS TESJANG. MY "CLEAN WATER" ORGANISATION INSTALLS WATER PUMPS AND FILTERS FOR THE VILLAGES IN THE HILLS - SO I KNOW THEM WELL!...



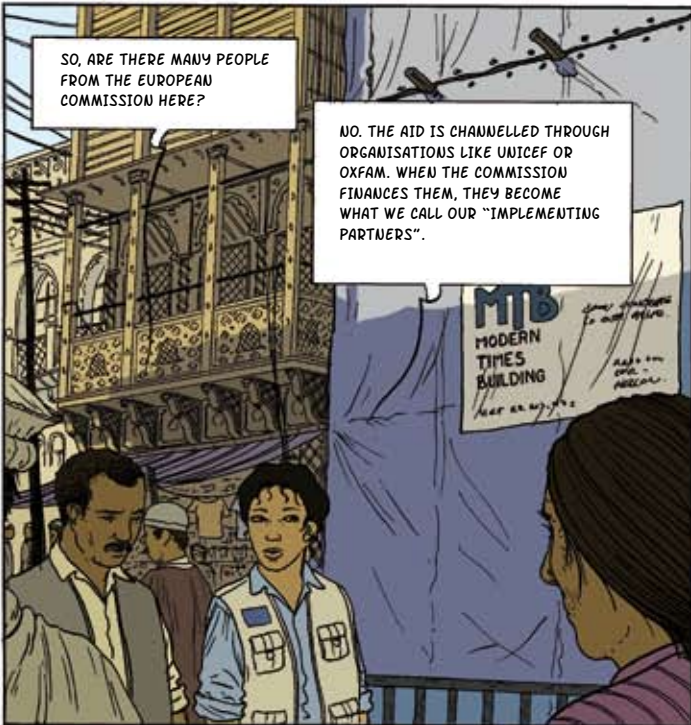
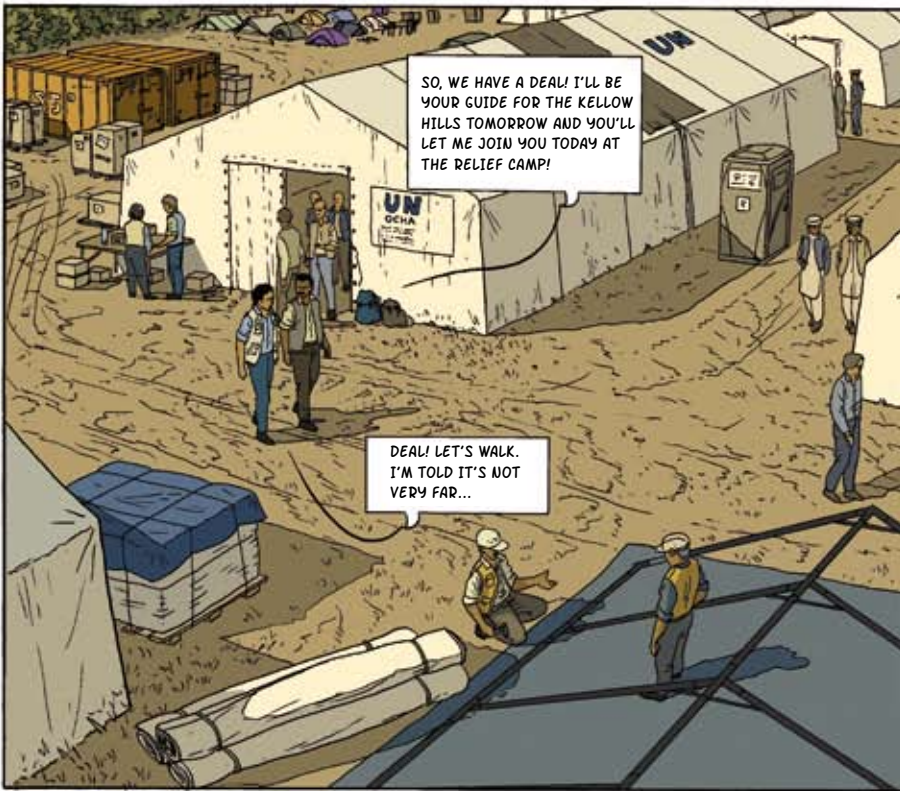
THERE'S DEFINITELY A SOCIAL BARRIER. HILL PEOPLE SEE THE CITY AS BEING OFF LIMITS. WE NEED TO PERSUADE THEM TO COME DOWN. I AM WILLING TO GO AND TELL THEM ABOUT THE HELP AVAILABLE IN THE CAMPS AND THE HOSPITAL.



I COULD JOIN TESJANG! I CAN ASSESS NEEDS AT THE SAME TIME...



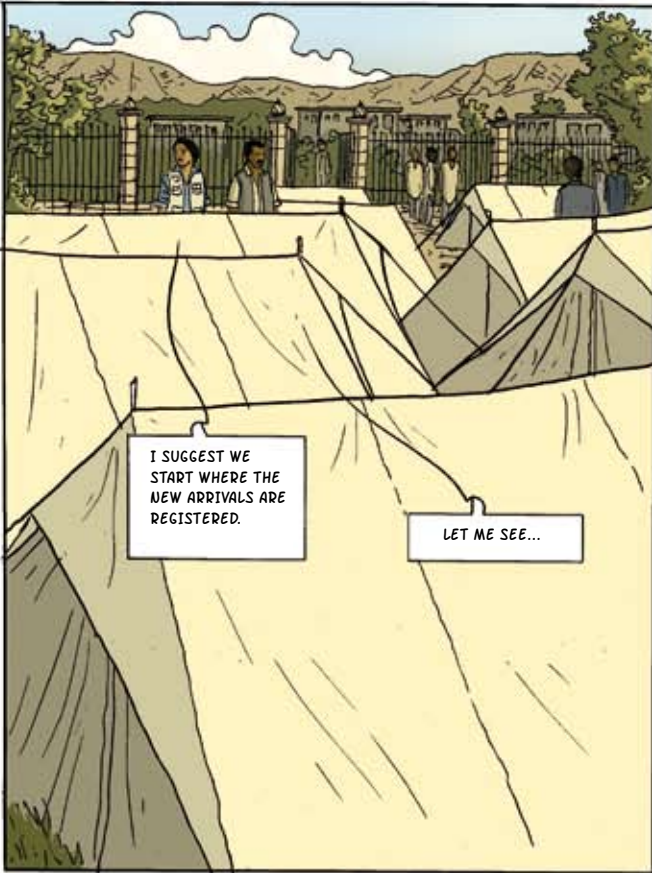
(1) TÉLÉCOMS SANS FRONTIÈRES (TSF), FRENCH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION (NGO)
(2) UNITED NATIONS' WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (WFP)





IN FACT I HAVE TO WRITE ABOUT MY VISIT TO THIS CAMP FOR A SITREP. SO LET'S GET TO WORK!

PHEW! ... I HARDLY RECOGNISE THIS PLACE!



I SUGGEST WE START WHERE THE NEW ARRIVALS ARE REGISTERED.

LET ME SEE...



OK, REGISTRATION...



ASSESSMENT OF INFORMAL CAMP IN KELLOW FOR DISPLACED PEOPLE. ENTRY AND REGISTRATION OF NEW ARRIVALS WELL-ORGANISED BY THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES.



HE SAYS THAT IN HIS VILLAGE, MORE THAN A HUNDRED PEOPLE DIED...

I UNDERSTAND THAT BUT I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO KNOW HOW MANY SURVIVORS FROM HIS VILLAGE NEED HELP.



THE CAMP RELIES ON LARGE STORAGE BLADDERS FOR ITS WATER SUPPLY. THERE ARE ENOUGH OF THESE, BUT CHILDREN ARE PLAYING ON TOP OF THEM AND THEY ARE LIKELY TO GET DAMAGED. THEY NEED TO BE ENCLOSED FOR PROTECTION.



YES, YES, I KNOW YOU'RE HAVING FUN BUT WHAT IF YOU BURST THE TANK? WE NEED THE WATER FOR DRINKING, COOKING AND WASHING!

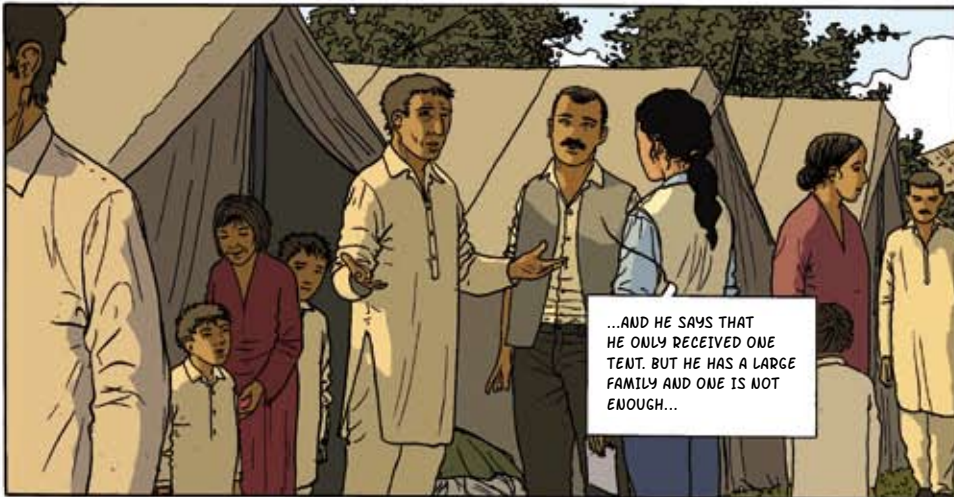


THE TENTS ARE POORLY SITED: THE ARRANGEMENTS ARE TOO CHAOTIC AND IMPRACTICAL IF THE CAMP IS TO BE HERE FOR A LONG TIME.



THESE TENTS ARE MUCH TOO CLOSE TOGETHER! YOU CAN HARDLY WALK BETWEEN THEM! IT MAY BE A MINOR DETAIL BUT THEY COULD HAVE BEEN PITCHED IN A WAY THAT GIVES THE FAMILIES MORE PRIVACY!

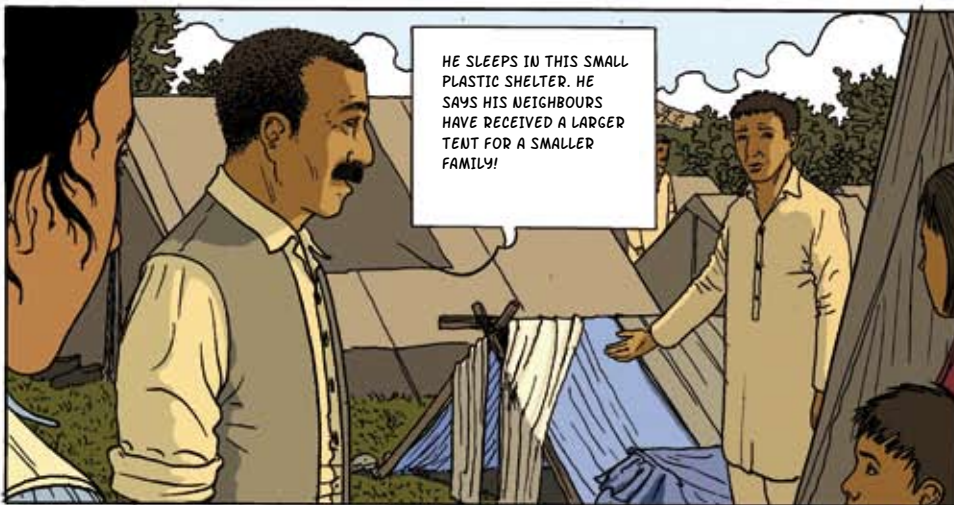
TESJANG, IS IT OK IF WE DO SOME INTERVIEWS NOW?



...AND HE SAYS THAT HE ONLY RECEIVED ONE TENT. BUT HE HAS A LARGE FAMILY AND ONE IS NOT ENOUGH...



HE COMPLAINS ABOUT UNFAIR FOOD DISTRIBUTION. HE IS ONLY ALLOWED ONE BAG. OTHER FAMILIES HAVE OLDER SONS THAT MANAGE TO GET EXTRA BAGS. SO THEY HAVE TWO OR THREE PER FAMILY!

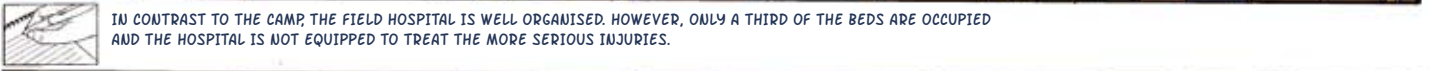


HE SLEEPS IN THIS SMALL PLASTIC SHELTER. HE SAYS HIS NEIGHBOURS HAVE RECEIVED A LARGER TENT FOR A SMALLER FAMILY!



IT IS CLEAR FROM INTERVIEWS THAT DISTRIBUTION OF SHELTER MATERIALS AND FOOD IS POORLY ORGANISED PUTTING THE MOST VULNERABLE AT A DISADVANTAGE. SOME PEOPLE RESORT TO MAKESHIFT SHELTERS, EVEN THOUGH THERE ARE ENOUGH TENTS AVAILABLE.

OK, I'M FINISHED HERE. LET'S LOOK AT THE FIELD HOSPITAL NEXT.



IN CONTRAST TO THE CAMP, THE FIELD HOSPITAL IS WELL ORGANISED. HOWEVER, ONLY A THIRD OF THE BEDS ARE OCCUPIED AND THE HOSPITAL IS NOT EQUIPPED TO TREAT THE MORE SERIOUS INJURIES.



THIS CHILD CANNOT HAVE PROPER SURGERY BECAUSE HER FRACTURES ARE TOO COMPLEX. EITHER SHE NEEDS TO BE TRANSFERRED TO A HOSPITAL OR WE NEED DOCTORS WHO SPECIALISE IN THIS KIND OF TRAUMA.

AND THERE ARE MANY OTHERS LIKE HER!

I'LL HIGHLIGHT THIS IN MY REPORT. IS THERE A CHANCE WE COULD INTERVIEW SOME PATIENTS?



HE SAYS HE IS NOT THE FATHER BUT A NEIGHBOUR. THEY ARE THE ONLY SURVIVORS FROM BOTH THEIR FAMILIES.

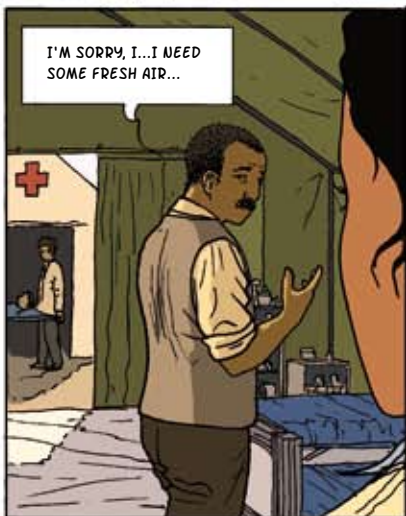
THEIR HOUSES WERE STRUCK BY A ROCKSLIDE. THEY WALKED FOR TWO DAYS TO GET HERE.



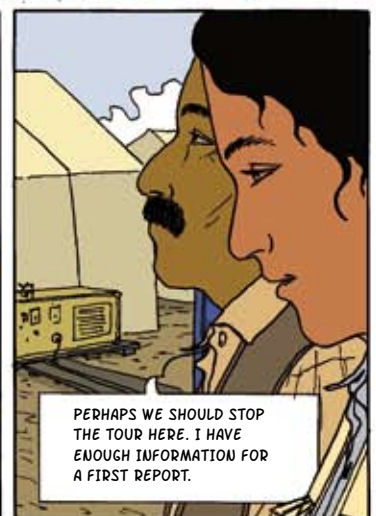
THE MAN SAYS THAT ... THAT HE HAS NOT HAD THE COURAGE TO TELL THE GIRL HER PARENTS ARE DEAD...



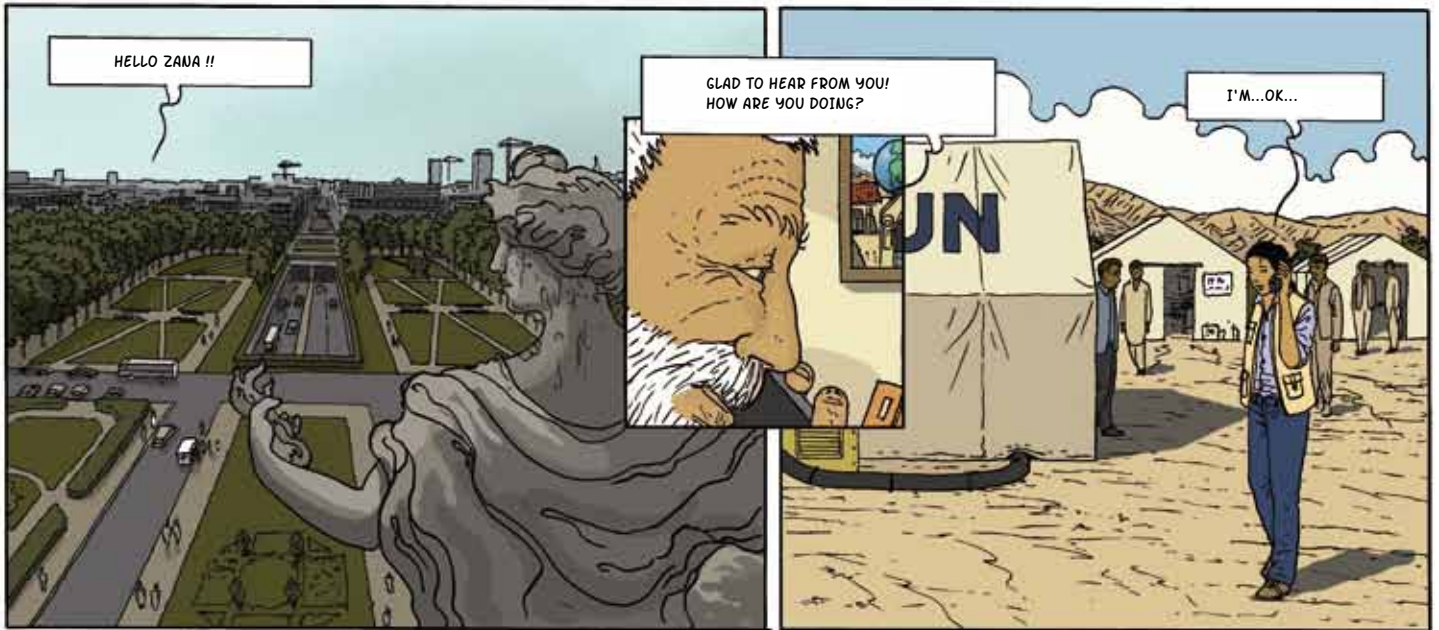
MAMA...



I'M SORRY, I...I NEED SOME FRESH AIR...



PERHAPS WE SHOULD STOP THE TOUR HERE. I HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION FOR A FIRST REPORT.



HELLO ZANA !!

GLAD TO HEAR FROM YOU!
HOW ARE YOU DOING?

I'M...OK...



ARE YOU SURE? YOU DON'T
REALLY SOUND OK TO BE
HONEST...

I'VE JUST BEEN TO THE
FIELD HOSPITAL AND THE
STORIES THAT I'VE HEARD ...
WELL, IT'S TOUGH MAX...

HEY, HEY. CHIN UP! YOU'VE DONE
THIS BEFORE, HAVEN'T YOU? JUST
PUT IT ALL DOWN IN ONE OF THOSE
PUNCHY REPORTS OF YOURS. THAT
WILL HELP!

WELL, THAT'S WHY I'M CALLING
ACTUALLY. I'VE ALREADY WRITTEN
MY REPORT AND I WANTED TO
BRIEF YOU.

REALLY TOUGH...

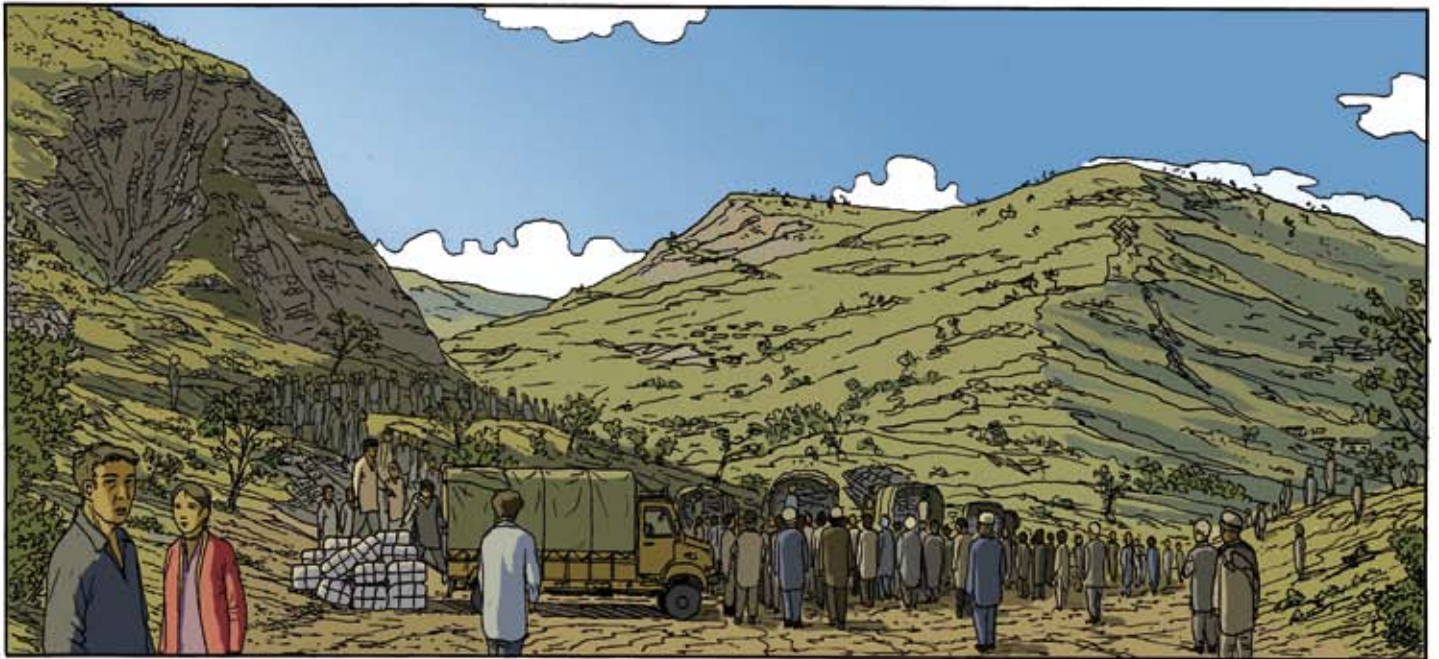
YES...I UNDERSTAND... I'LL CONTACT
SOME OF THE MEDICAL AGENCIES AND
ASK THEM TO SEND MORE SPECIALISED
TEAMS...

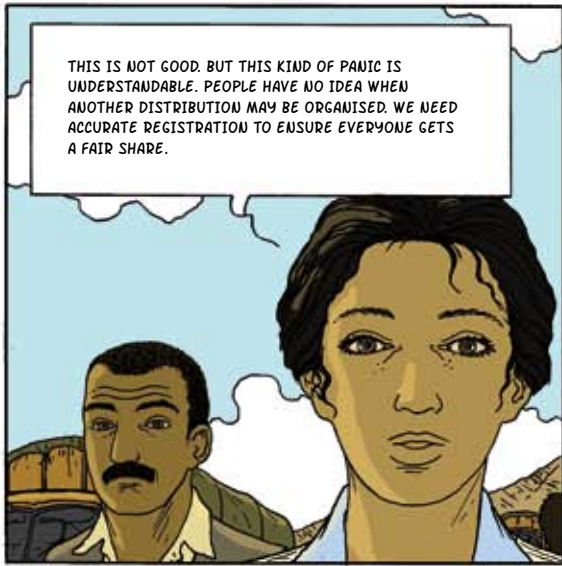
THE REST IS LESS CRITICAL. YOU'LL SEE IT
ALL IN MY REPORT. TOMORROW I'M GOING
TO VISIT THE KELLOW HILLS NORTH OF THE
CITY. I HEAR THAT AID ISN'T REACHING THE
PEOPLE THERE.



AND WHAT ABOUT YOUR PERMITS
FOR THE URGI MOUNTAINS?...

SOMETIME SOON?!... IF
THERE'S ANYTHING ...
JUST CALL ME, OK? BYE
FOR NOW.





THIS IS NOT GOOD. BUT THIS KIND OF PANIC IS UNDERSTANDABLE. PEOPLE HAVE NO IDEA WHEN ANOTHER DISTRIBUTION MAY BE ORGANISED. WE NEED ACCURATE REGISTRATION TO ENSURE EVERYONE GETS A FAIR SHARE.



PLEASE LINE UP!! AND WRITE YOUR NAME ON THE LIST!! IT IS THE ONLY WAY WE CAN ORGANISE THIS!

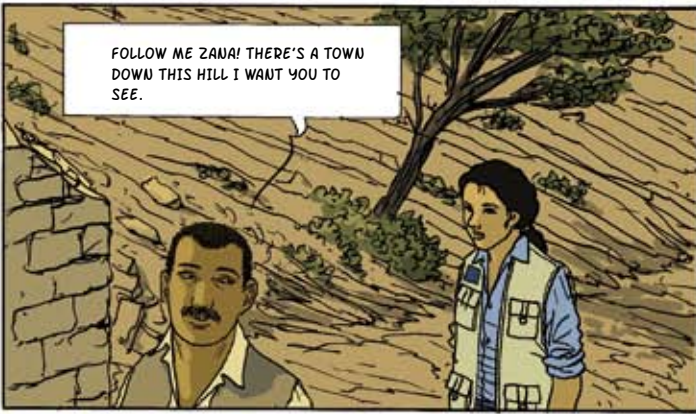
WE CAN'T BEGIN AGAIN UNTIL EVERYONE COOPERATES!!



LINE UP IN YOUR VILLAGE GROUPS! ASSIGN ONE PERSON FROM EACH VILLAGE TO FILL IN THE LIST!



THANK YOU! WE WILL RESUME IN FIVE MINUTES!



FOLLOW ME ZANA! THERE'S A TOWN DOWN THIS HILL I WANT YOU TO SEE.

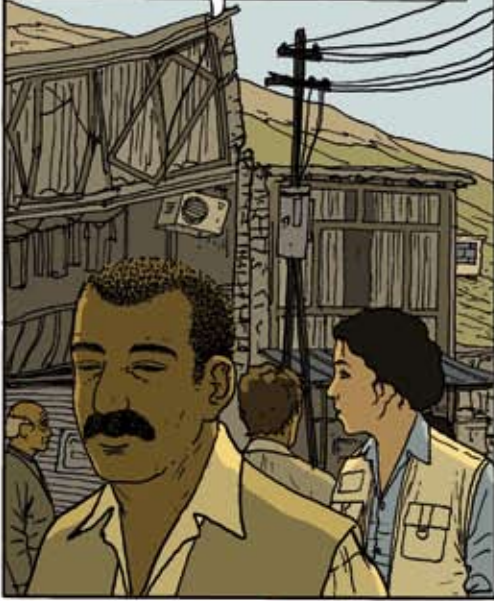


I SEE SOME OF THE HOUSES HAVE BEEN RED-TAGGED...

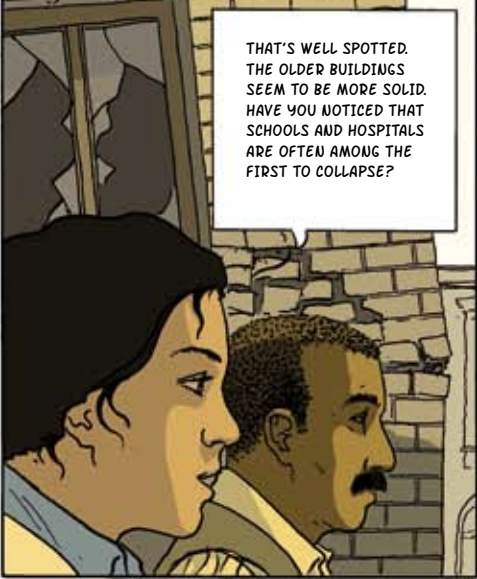


THIS IS ACTUALLY ONE OF THE LUCKIER NEIGHBOURHOODS. AT LEAST SOME AID HAS BEEN DELIVERED HERE.

YOU MEAN THE RED POSTERS? IT'S A SIMPLE BUT EFFECTIVE WAY TO LET PEOPLE KNOW THE HOUSES ARE DANGEROUS. WHAT I FIND STRANGE IS THAT IT'S MAINLY RECENT BUILDINGS THAT ARE TAGGED. OLDER STRUCTURES SEEM TO HAVE BEEN SPARED BY THE EARTHQUAKE.



THAT'S WELL SPOTTED. THE OLDER BUILDINGS SEEM TO BE MORE SOLID. HAVE YOU NOTICED THAT SCHOOLS AND HOSPITALS ARE OFTEN AMONG THE FIRST TO COLLAPSE?



TESJANG? LOOK!...



SHE SAYS SHE UNDERSTANDS IT'S DANGEROUS, BUT MANY PEOPLE HAVE STAYED. SHE HAS NOWHERE ELSE TO GO. SHE HAS NO FAMILY HERE.



OK. DOES SHE KNOW THERE ARE CAMPS DOWN IN THE CITY?



SHE SAYS NO.



WE'RE GETTING TO THE WORST PART NOW...

CAREFUL HERE...

I HAVEN'T SEEN THE ARMY OR ANY AID AGENCIES WORKING HERE...

THAT'S TRUE! DON'T FORGET TO MENTION THAT IN YOUR REPORT!



CAN YOU SMELL THAT, TESJANG?



THAT'S A SMELL I COULD NEVER FORGET. THERE ARE BODIES SOMEWHERE UNDER THESE COLLAPSED HOUSES. I DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW PEOPLE CAN STILL BE LIVING HERE. THE AREA SHOULD HAVE BEEN COMPLETELY EVACUATED!

AND IT GETS WORSE. FOLLOW ME. THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT TO SHOW YOU...



THERE IT IS, ZANA! CAREFUL...DO NOT STEP TOO CLOSE TO THE EDGE...



CONCLUSION OF SECTORAL ASSESSMENT OF THE KELLOW HILL AREAS. MOST HOUSES ARE UNINHABITABLE. NOTHING HAS BEEN DONE YET TO EVACUATE THE PEOPLE TO RELIEF CAMPS.



THE IMPACT OF THE EARTHQUAKE IS FAR WORSE IN THE HILLS THAN IN THE VALLEY.



LANDSLIDES SWEEPED AWAY ENTIRE NEIGHBOURHOODS IN JUST A FEW SECONDS....



IT IS A SCENE OF UTTER DEVASTATION!





HI, MY NAME IS ROBAJO.



ROBAJO WILL BE YOUR INTERPRETER...

AND GUIDE! I LIVE IN THE URGI MOUNTAINS SO I KNOW THEM VERY WELL!

ROBAJO HAS A WORK PERMIT FOR THE CITY AS WELL, SO HE CAN PASS CHECKPOINTS WITHOUT ANY PROBLEM.



SPEAKING OF PERMITS, HERE ARE YOUR CLEARANCES FOR THE URGI MOUNTAINS.



BE AWARE THAT IT MIGHT STILL BE DIFFICULT TO GET THROUGH CHECKPOINTS. THE SOLDIERS ARE NOT USED TO SEEING FOREIGNERS...

SO, IN THE WORST CASE, WE MIGHT BE BACK THIS AFTERNOON!...



POSSIBLY. BUT IF ALL GOES WELL, I'LL SEE YOU IN A COUPLE OF DAYS. OH, AND DON'T FORGET TO CALL US TWICE A DAY!

HAVE A SAFE TRIP !!



OK ROBAJO, ARE YOU READY?

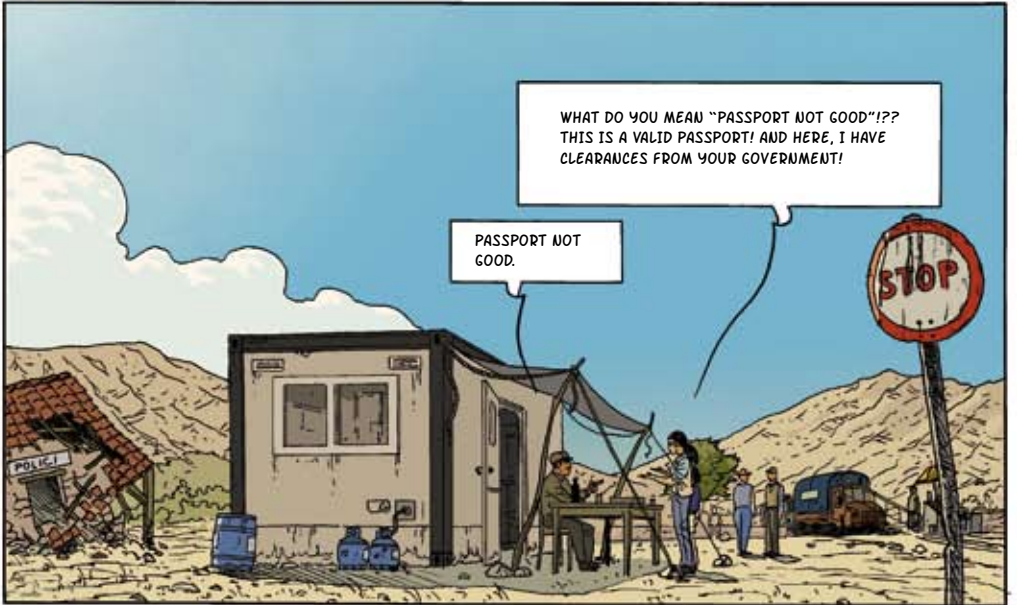
I'M READY!



LET'S GO THEN!



PASSPORT NOT GOOD.



WHAT DO YOU MEAN "PASSPORT NOT GOOD"!?? THIS IS A VALID PASSPORT! AND HERE, I HAVE CLEARANCES FROM YOUR GOVERNMENT!

PASSPORT NOT GOOD.



LOOK, I WORK IN HUMANITARIAN AID FOR THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND I'M HERE TO HELP. I'LL HAVE TO REPORT THIS TO THE MINISTRY OF...

THIS WON'T HELP ZANA.



MAYBE HE WANTS MONEY?

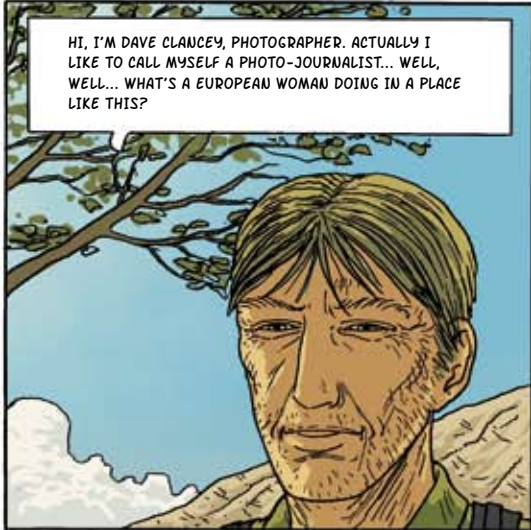


EXCUSE ME, ARE YOU FROM ECHO?

YES! AND I...



WAIT HERE PLEASE.



HI, I'M DAVE CLANCEY, PHOTOGRAPHER. ACTUALLY I LIKE TO CALL MYSELF A PHOTO-JOURNALIST... WELL, WELL... WHAT'S A EUROPEAN WOMAN DOING IN A PLACE LIKE THIS?



I'M ZANA. I WORK FOR ECHO, THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S HUMANITARIAN AID DEPARTMENT. THIS IS ROBAJO, MY GUIDE.



TO THE URGI MOUNTAINS? WATCH OUT FOR THE REBELS... THOUGH I DOUBT YOU'LL EVER GET THERE.



I WAS TRYING TO GO THERE TOO, FOR A STORY ON THE REBELS BUT... I GUESS I'LL JUST HAVE TO GO BACK TO THE CITY.



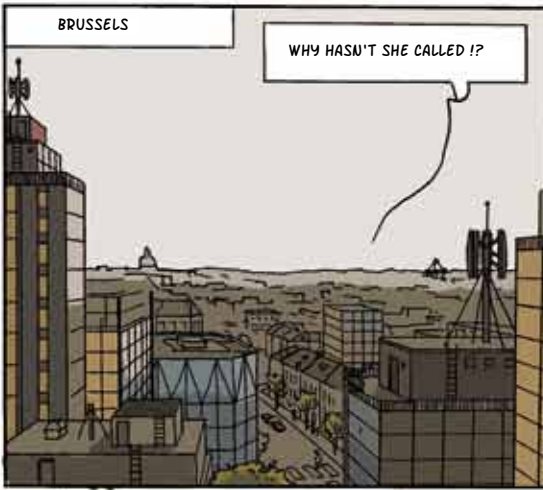
WE CAN'T JUST GIVE UP! WE HAVE A JOB TO DO... AND WE HAVE THE RIGHT PERMITS...



SO DO I!



CHEWING GUM?



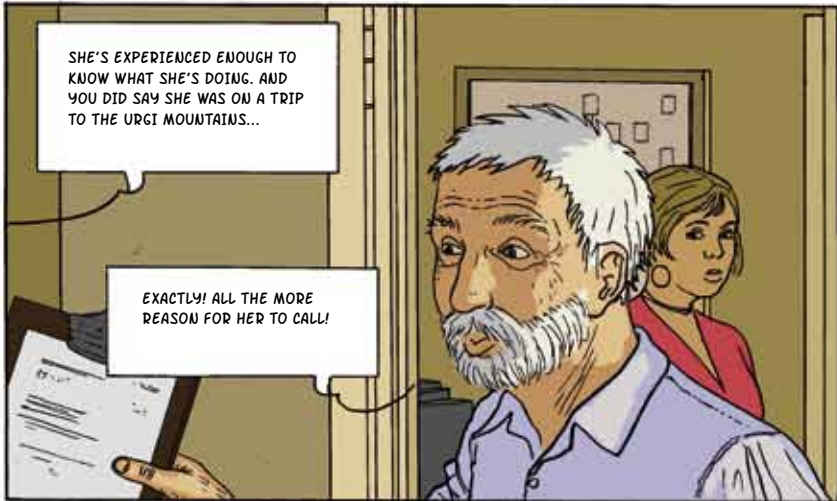
BRUSSELS

WHY HASN'T SHE CALLED !?



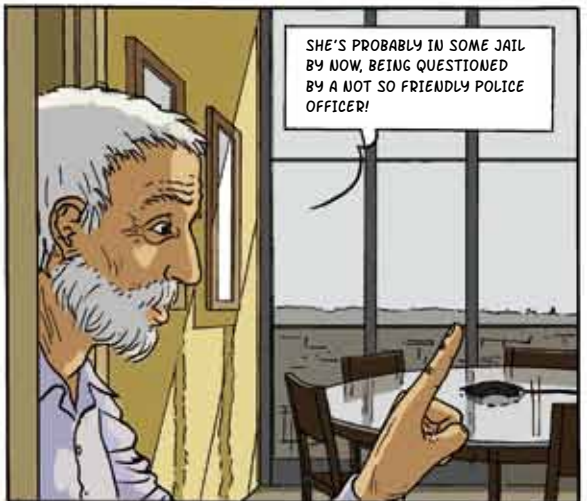
SHE PROMISED SHE WOULD CHECK-IN WITH ME EVERY DAY!!

CALM DOWN, MAX...



SHE'S EXPERIENCED ENOUGH TO KNOW WHAT SHE'S DOING. AND YOU DID SAY SHE WAS ON A TRIP TO THE URGJ MOUNTAINS...

EXACTLY! ALL THE MORE REASON FOR HER TO CALL!



SHE'S PROBABLY IN SOME JAIL BY NOW, BEING QUESTIONED BY A NOT SO FRIENDLY POLICE OFFICER!



HAVE A SEAT PLEASE...



YOU HAVE SEVERAL PERMITS... EVEN FOR THE HIGH PLATEAU. WHAT IS YOUR BUSINESS THERE?

I'M A HUMANITARIAN AID EXPERT FROM THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION. I'VE BEEN SENT HERE TO ASSESS THE EFFECTS OF THE EARTHQUAKE IN THE URGJ MOUNTAINS.



AS YOU CAN SEE, I HAVE VALID PERMITS. THEY WERE ISSUED BY YOUR GOVERNMENT!



THIS IS VERY UNUSUAL. FOREIGNERS ARE NEVER ALLOWED IN THE MOUNTAINS!



I'M SORRY BUT I CANNOT LET YOU PASS.



I SEE...





CAN I SEE THE PICTURES ON YOUR CAMERA?



HERE, JUST PRESS THE ARROW KEYS TO BROWSE...



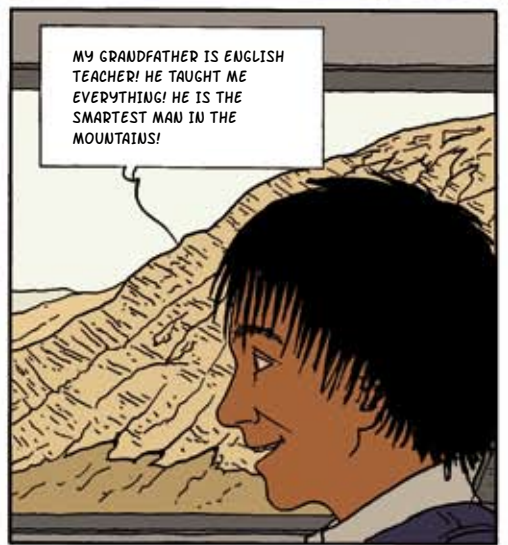
SO, DO YOU HAVE A BIG FAMILY ROBAJO?

NO... NO BIG FAMILY...

YOU LIVE WITH YOUR PARENTS? BROTHERS? SISTERS?



MY PARENTS AND MY SISTER ARE DEAD. I LIVE WITH MY GRANDFATHER.



MY GRANDFATHER IS ENGLISH TEACHER! HE TAUGHT ME EVERYTHING! HE IS THE SMARTEST MAN IN THE MOUNTAINS!

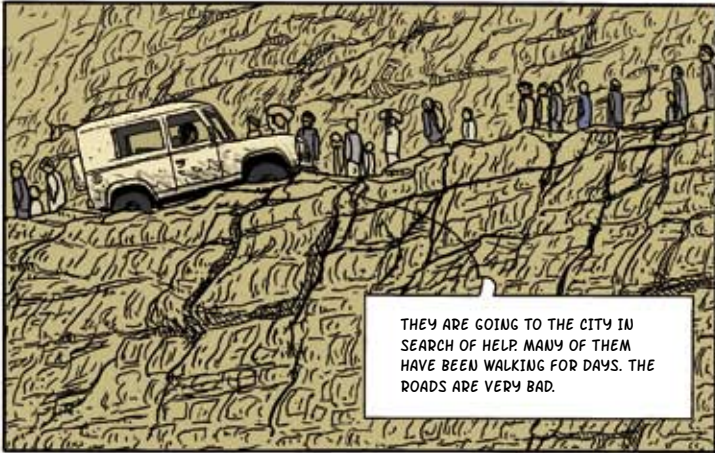


AN ENGLISH TEACHER, REALLY? AND ARE YOU AS SMART AS HIM THEN?



LOOK ZANA...

OH!



THEY ARE GOING TO THE CITY IN SEARCH OF HELP. MANY OF THEM HAVE BEEN WALKING FOR DAYS. THE ROADS ARE VERY BAD.



THEY SAY THEY DO NOT TRUST THE REBELS TO HELP THEM.



DAVE! DO YOU MIND? WE HAVE MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO DO!



MORE IMPORTANT? REALLY? HOW DO YOU THINK PEOPLE GET TO KNOW ABOUT DISASTERS AND THE HELP YOU PROVIDE, WITHOUT US JOURNALISTS?



WHAT NOW?

I KNOW ANOTHER PATH... BUT IT'S FOR DONKEYS, NOT CARS!...



WELL, I'LL BE THE DONKEY THEN! LET'S GO!



FOLLOW ME! THE PATH LEVELS OUT SOON!

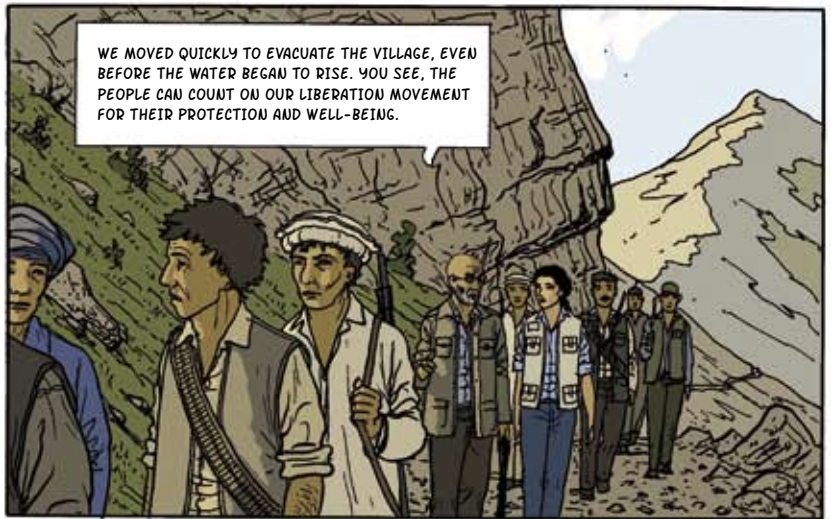


ALMOST HOME! MY VILLAGE IS JUST AROUND THIS CORNER!



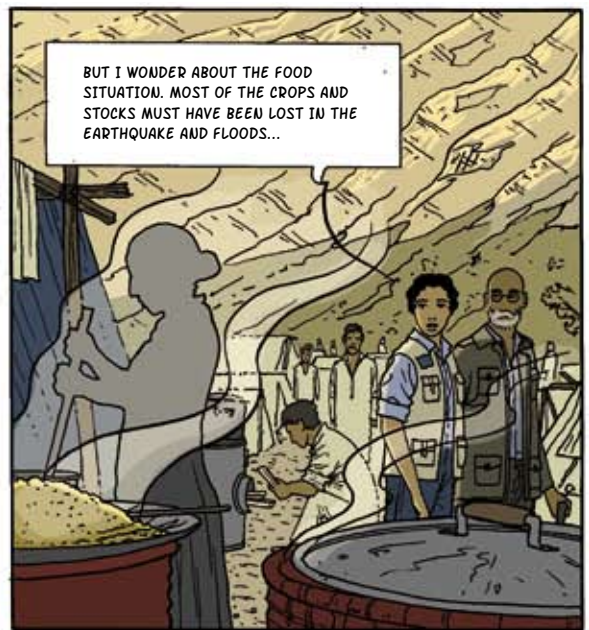
OH...







WELL, I CAN SEE THAT YOU HAVE MADE A... REMARKABLE EFFORT TO HELP OUT.



BUT I WONDER ABOUT THE FOOD SITUATION. MOST OF THE CROPS AND STOCKS MUST HAVE BEEN LOST IN THE EARTHQUAKE AND FLOODS...



I... I ASSURE YOU THERE IS NO PROBLEM!



IF YOU EXCUSE ME NOW, I HAVE WORK TO DO.



SO, WHAT DO YOU THINK?

THIS PLACE IS A NIGHTMARE.



IT'S ALL DONE WITH THE BEST OF INTENTIONS, BUT IT WON'T LAST FOR LONG. LOOK AT THESE SHELTERS. THIN PLASTIC!

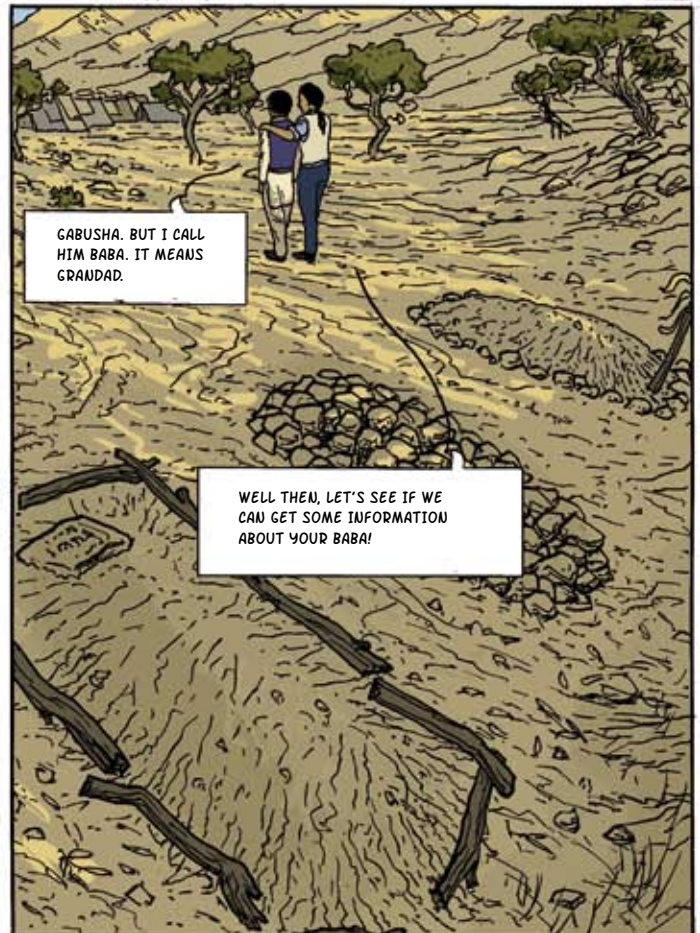


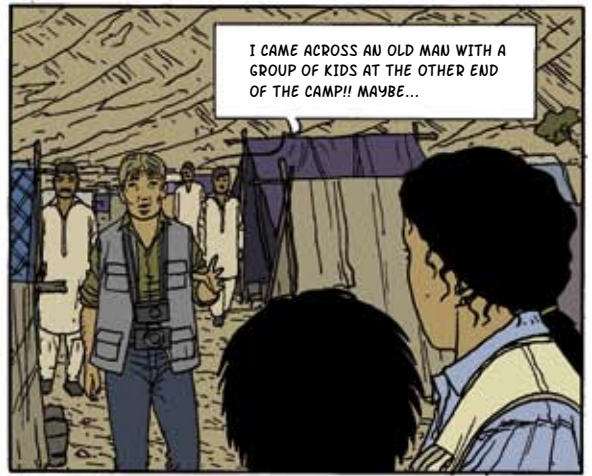
YOU CAN EASILY IMAGINE WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN WINTER. THEY'LL FREEZE TO DEATH... IF THEY EVEN MAKE IT UNTIL THEN!

WHEN I ASKED THE REBEL LEADER ABOUT FOOD, HE SAID THERE WAS NO PROBLEM...



BUT I SAW HIS FACE. IT ISN'T TRUE! WE MUST GET HELP IN FROM OUTSIDE! I HAVE TO TALK TO HIM AGAIN!





I CAME ACROSS AN OLD MAN WITH A GROUP OF KIDS AT THE OTHER END OF THE CAMP!! MAYBE...



BABA !!!
BABA GABUSHA !!



BABA! I'M SO GLAD I FOUND YOU!!

HO! QUIET ROBAJO!
DON'T YOU SEE I'M BUSY?

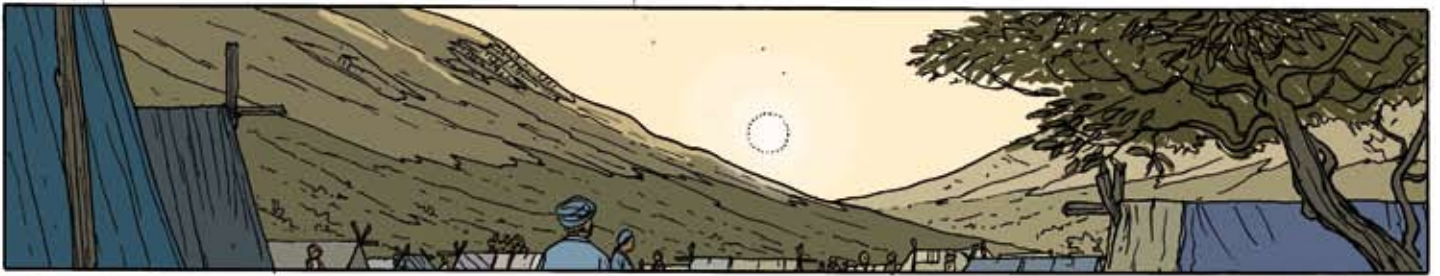


TEACHING? NO, MY DEAR ROBAJO...
UNTIL THESE CHILDREN HAVE THEIR HOMES BACK...

I AM BABA GABUSHA THE STORY TELLER!



YOU ARE BUSY! ARE YOU TEACHING? ENGLISH LESSONS?



...WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY IS THAT IF YOU ACCEPT INTERNATIONAL AID, WE CAN IMPROVE... HELP YOU TO IMPROVE THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF THESE PEOPLE EVEN MORE...

AND HOW WOULD THAT LOOK TO THE BORDUVIANS? IT WOULD APPEAR WE ARE NOT CAPABLE OF TAKING CARE OF OUR OWN PEOPLE.



IN TRAGEDIES LIKE THIS, INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY IS NORMAL. BORDUVIA IS ALREADY ACCEPTING OUTSIDE HELP, DELIVERED IMPARTIALLY BY INDEPENDENT AGENCIES. IF YOU DO THE SAME, PEOPLE HERE WILL BENEFIT... WHICH SURELY IS A GOOD THING!



MAYBE. BUT IF WE ALLOW PEOPLE IN, THE BORDUVIANS WILL ALSO HAVE ACCESS TO OUR VILLAGES, AND I CAN NO LONGER CONTROL...GUARANTEE THE SAFETY OF OUR PEOPLE.



I'M SORRY. MY DECISION IS FINAL.



YOU MUST CONVINCE HIM, BECAUSE IF NOT...

I KNOW DAVE! IF NOT, CIVILIANS WILL SUFFER. IT'S THE SAME OLD STORY. I JUST WISH I COULD FIND AN ARGUMENT TO PERSUADE HIM!





AFTERSHOCK !!!

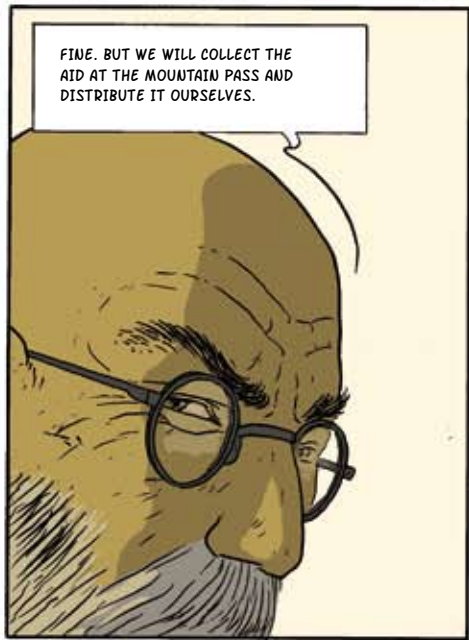
RRRRRRRR





LISTEN. WE NEED TO FACE UP TO THE REALITY HERE. PEOPLE NEED IMMEDIATE AID AND WE'RE READY TO HELP - AS WE'RE ALREADY DOING IN KELLOW...!

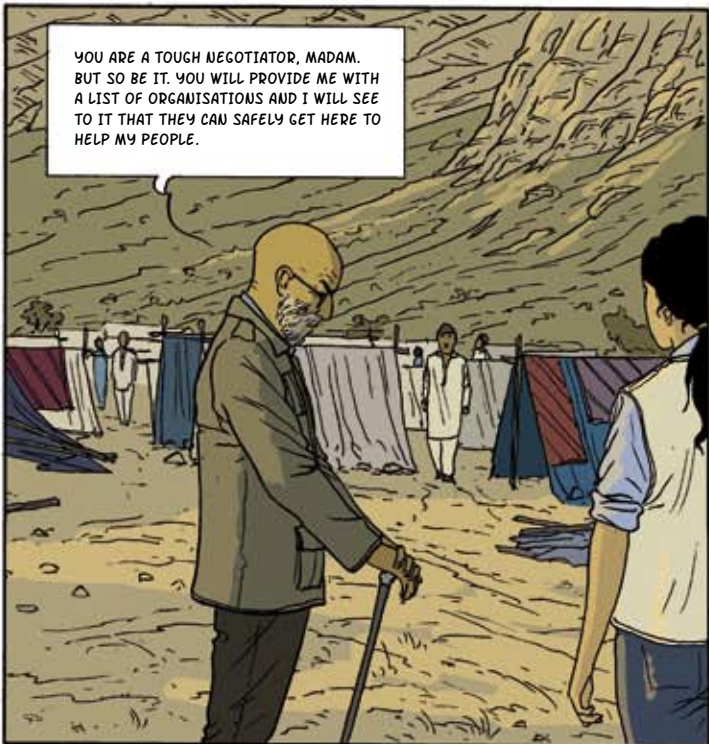
HOW WOULD IT LOOK IF THESE PEOPLE GET LEFT OUT!? LOOK AT THEM! THEY'RE SCARED!



FINE. BUT WE WILL COLLECT THE AID AT THE MOUNTAIN PASS AND DISTRIBUTE IT OURSELVES.



NO! THAT'S THE JOB OF THE AID AGENCIES. THEY ARE POLITICALLY NEUTRAL AND WILL MAKE SURE THE NEEDIEST PEOPLE ARE HELPED. THE SAME RULES APPLY TO EVERYONE!



YOU ARE A TOUGH NEGOTIATOR, MADAM. BUT SO BE IT. YOU WILL PROVIDE ME WITH A LIST OF ORGANISATIONS AND I WILL SEE TO IT THAT THEY CAN SAFELY GET HERE TO HELP MY PEOPLE.



IMPRESSIVE...

DAVE, HOW FAST CAN YOU GET YOUR STORY AND FOOTAGE OUT?



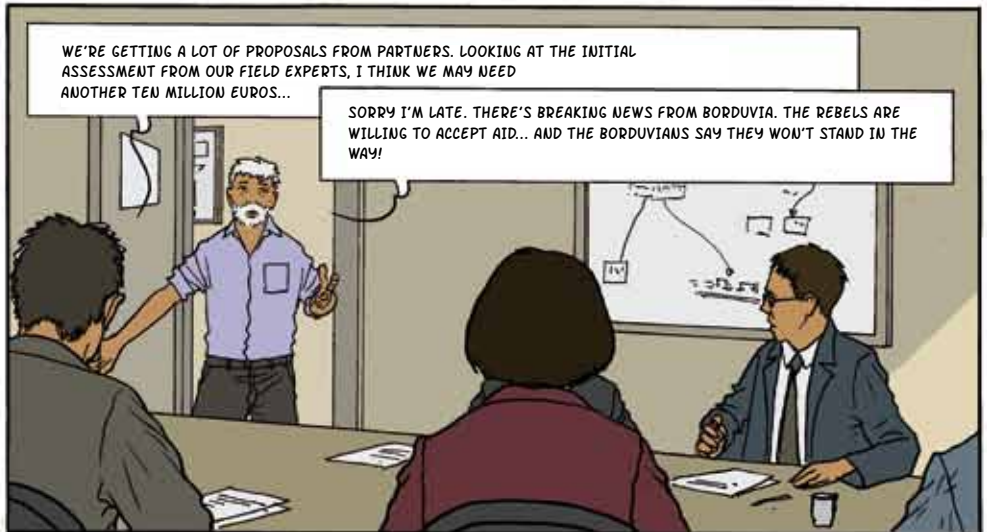
YES...

OF COURSE...

RIGHT AWAY!

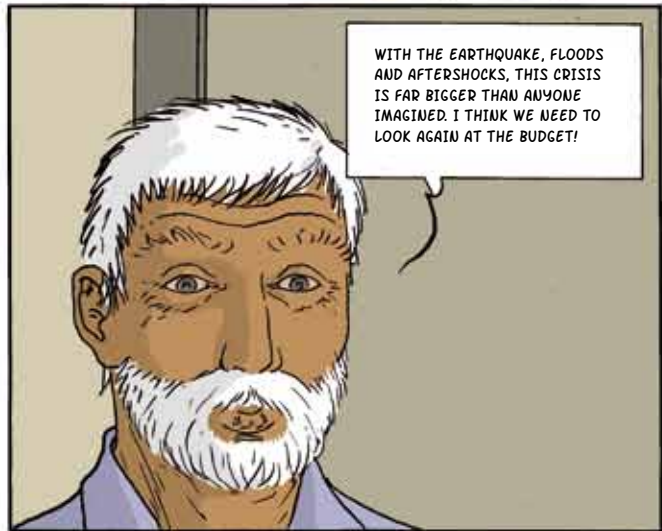


SO, AS YOU ALL KNOW, THE COMMISSIONER HAS ALREADY APPROVED THREE MILLION EUROS IN FAST-TRACK AID. SHE SEES NO PROBLEM IN HAVING A FOLLOW-UP FUNDING DECISION... PROVIDED THE NEEDS ARE CLEARLY IDENTIFIED.

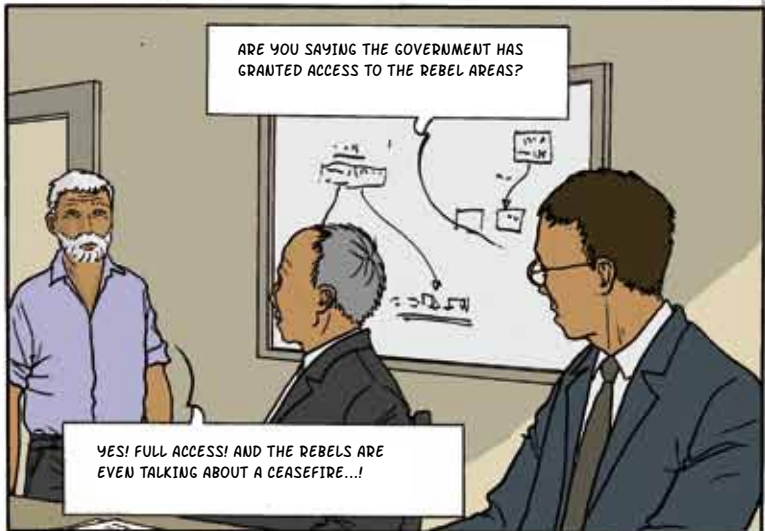


WE'RE GETTING A LOT OF PROPOSALS FROM PARTNERS. LOOKING AT THE INITIAL ASSESSMENT FROM OUR FIELD EXPERTS, I THINK WE MAY NEED ANOTHER TEN MILLION EUROS...

SORRY I'M LATE. THERE'S BREAKING NEWS FROM BORDUVIA. THE REBELS ARE WILLING TO ACCEPT AID... AND THE BORDUVIANS SAY THEY WON'T STAND IN THE WAY!



WITH THE EARTHQUAKE, FLOODS AND AFTERSHOCKS, THIS CRISIS IS FAR BIGGER THAN ANYONE IMAGINED. I THINK WE NEED TO LOOK AGAIN AT THE BUDGET!



ARE YOU SAYING THE GOVERNMENT HAS GRANTED ACCESS TO THE REBEL AREAS?

YES! FULL ACCESS! AND THE REBELS ARE EVEN TALKING ABOUT A CEASEFIRE...!

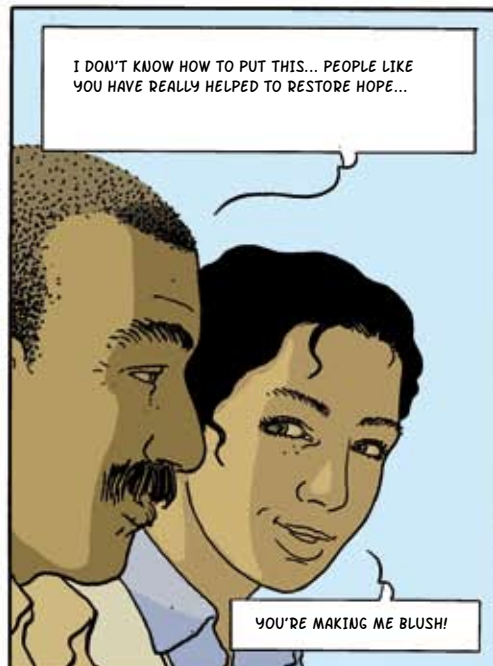
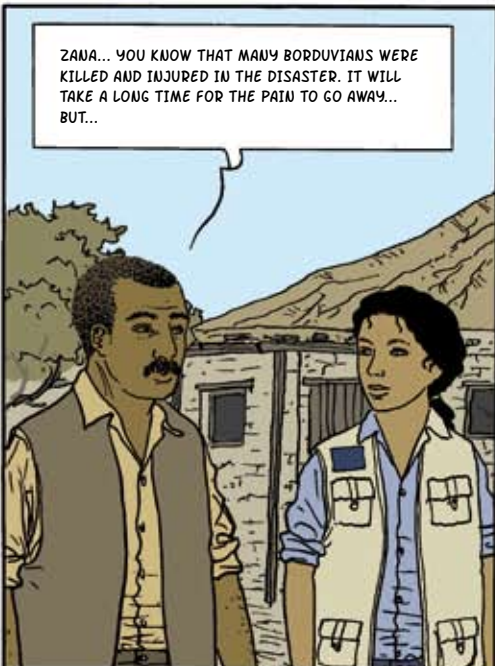
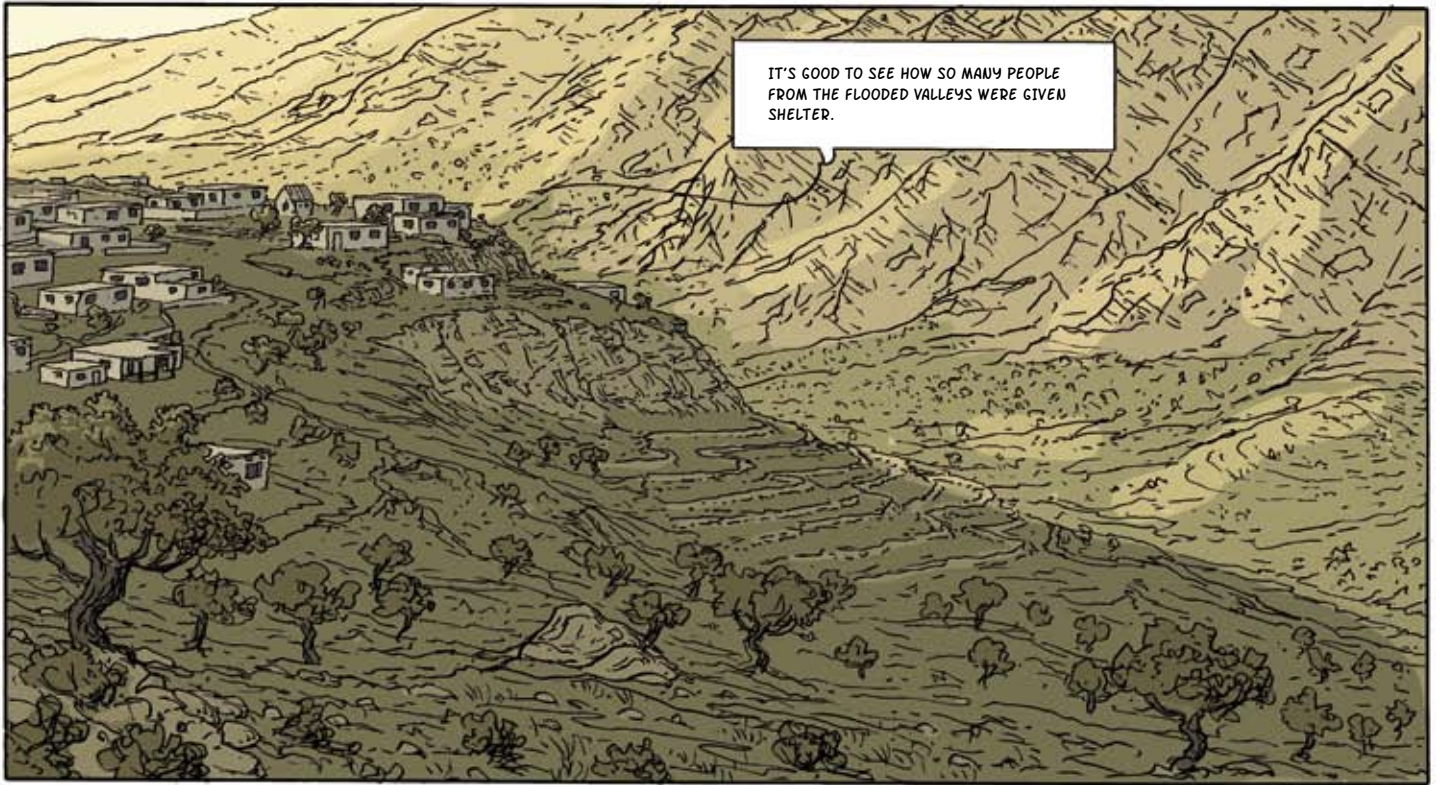


WELL...IN THAT CASE...

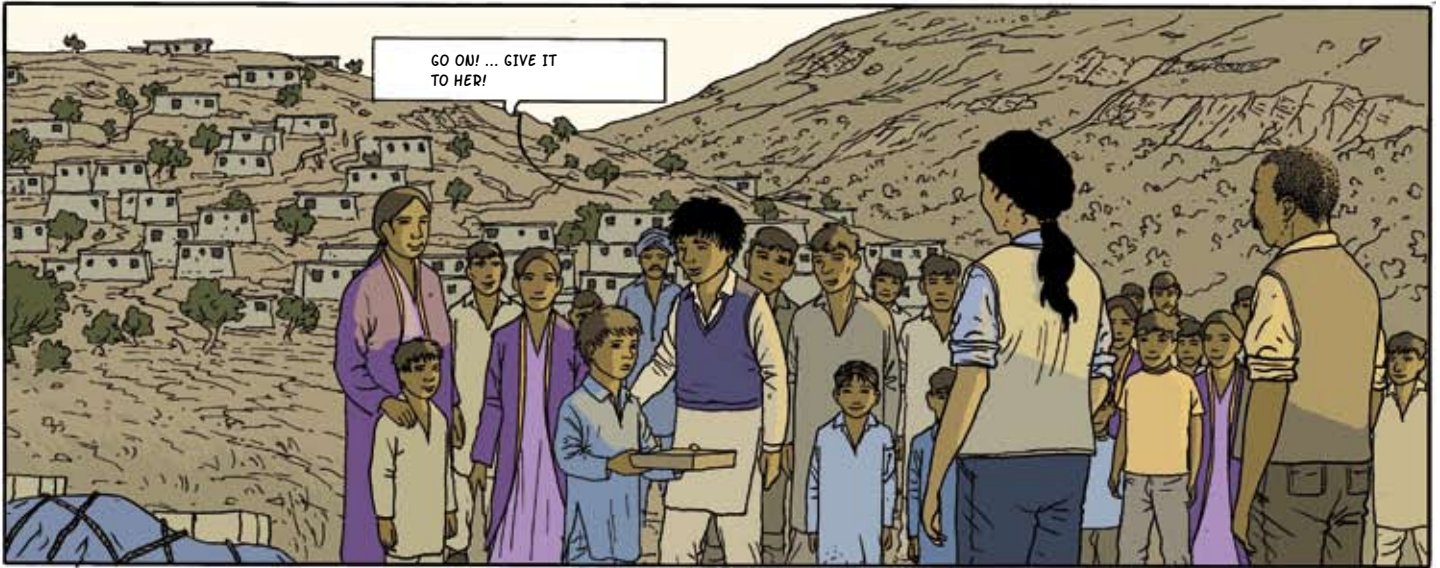


MR. AMBASSADOR! ANY COMMENTS?

NATURALLY, OUR GOVERNMENT WILL COOPERATE WITH THE INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES BRINGING RELIEF TO BORDUVIA AFTER THIS TERRIBLE TRAGEDY...



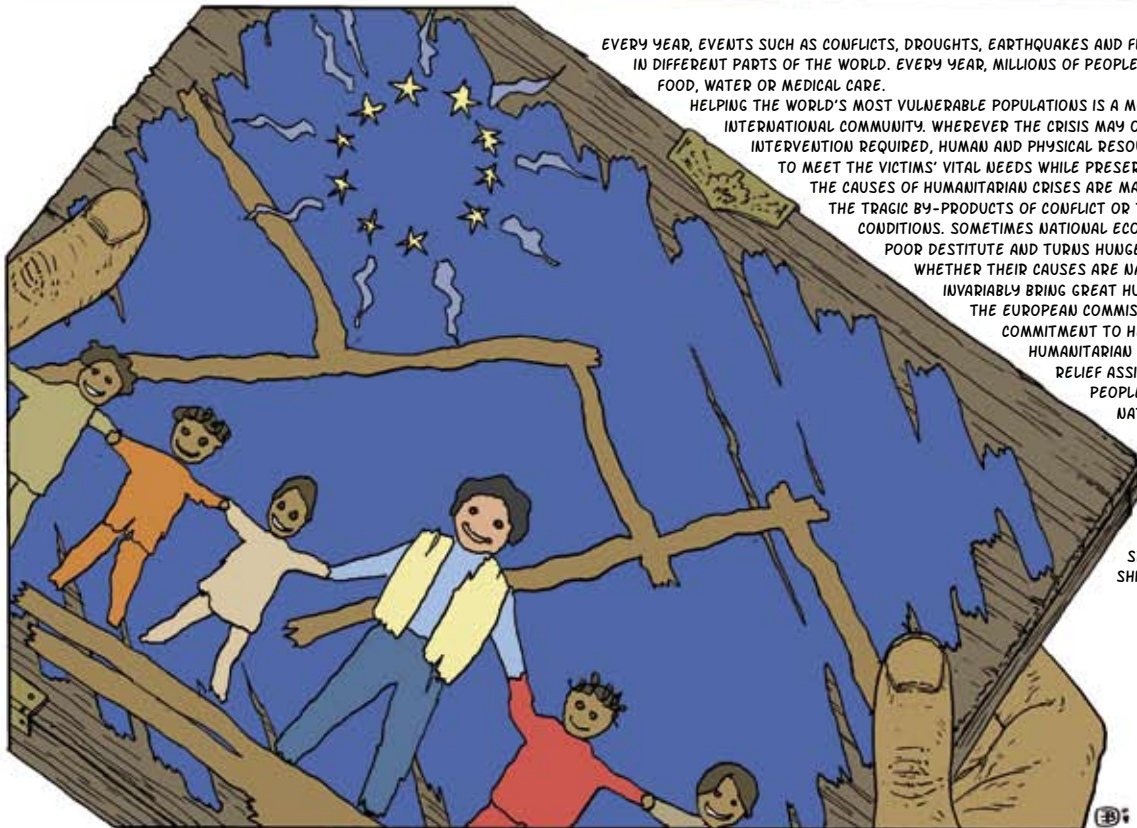




GO ON! ... GIVE IT TO HER!



THE CHILDREN IN MY GRANDFATHER'S CLASS HAVE A GIFT FOR YOU. THEY HAVE MADE ALL THE ITEMS IN THIS BOX THEMSELVES. IT IS A TOKEN OF THEIR APPRECIATION. THEY WANT YOU TO TAKE IT BACK AND SHOW IT TO ALL THE OTHER PEOPLE WHO HELPED US.



EVERY YEAR, EVENTS SUCH AS CONFLICTS, DROUGHTS, EARTHQUAKES AND FLOODS TRIGGER HUMANITARIAN CRISES IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE WORLD. EVERY YEAR, MILLIONS OF PEOPLE FIND THEMSELVES WITHOUT SHELTER, FOOD, WATER OR MEDICAL CARE.

HELPING THE WORLD'S MOST VULNERABLE POPULATIONS IS A MORAL IMPERATIVE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. WHEREVER THE CRISIS MAY OCCUR AND WHATEVER THE TYPE OF INTERVENTION REQUIRED, HUMAN AND PHYSICAL RESOURCES NEED TO BE RAPIDLY MOBILISED TO MEET THE VICTIMS' VITAL NEEDS WHILE PRESERVING THEIR DIGNITY.

THE CAUSES OF HUMANITARIAN CRISES ARE MANY AND VARIED. THEY ARE OFTEN THE TRAGIC BY-PRODUCTS OF CONFLICT OR THE RESULT OF EXTREME WEATHER CONDITIONS. SOMETIMES NATIONAL ECONOMIC MISMANAGEMENT MAKES THE POOR DESTITUTE AND TURNS HUNGER INTO FAMINE.

WHETHER THEIR CAUSES ARE NATURAL OR MAN-MADE, SUCH CRISES INVARIABLY BRING GREAT HUMAN SUFFERING.

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION HAS A LONGSTANDING COMMITMENT TO HELP THE VICTIMS OF SUCH CRISES. ITS HUMANITARIAN AID DEPARTMENT (ECHO) PROVIDES RELIEF ASSISTANCE THAT GOES DIRECTLY TO PEOPLE IN DISTRESS, IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR NATIONALITY, RELIGION, GENDER, ETHNIC ORIGIN OR POLITICAL AFFILIATION.

WORKING WITH ITS PARTNERS IN THE FIELD, ECHO ACTS SWIFTLY TO SUPPLY AID WHEN DISASTER STRIKES AND CONTINUES TO HELP STRICKEN REGIONS EVEN AFTER THE MEDIA SPOTLIGHT AND POLITICAL INTEREST HAS SHIFTED ELSEWHERE.

THE
END

At a glance



Humanitarian crises

Humanitarian crises include both natural disasters and conflicts. The majority of crisis victims are civilians, with vulnerable communities in developing countries likely to suffer most. Displaced people and refugees, who have lost their homes and possessions, are particularly at risk. Providing aid to those who are most in need is a concrete expression of the universal value of solidarity.

Humanitarian actors

National authorities are responsible in the first instance for helping their people in a crisis. Sometimes, the scale of a disaster can be overwhelming, however, and this is when international solidarity is vital. The European Union is the world's largest humanitarian donor, with funds channelled through the Commission's Humanitarian Aid department (ECHO) as well as bilateral support from individual EU countries. ECHO works with around 200 implementing partners: specialised United Nations agencies; the Red Cross/Crescent movement and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The aid goes impartially to the affected populations, regardless of their race, ethnic group, religion, gender, age, nationality or political affiliation.



Humanitarian space

The situation in crisis zones is often chaotic. A "humanitarian space" is essential for the safe and secure delivery of relief assistance but, in many places, aid operations are hindered because of violence and insecurity. It is increasingly difficult for humanitarian agencies to reach out to people in desperate need.

International Humanitarian Law (IHL) exists to protect non-combatants and ensure the delivery of life saving aid in war zones. Those who attack the humanitarian space are breaking the law.

Humanitarian principles

The European Union has a strong commitment to uphold and promote the humanitarian principles. The respect for them is essential for humanitarian actors to be able to work on the ground.

<h3>Neutrality</h3> <p>Humanitarian aid must not favour any side in an armed conflict or other dispute.</p>	<h3>Humanity</h3> <p>Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found, with particular attention to the most vulnerable. The dignity of all victims must be respected and protected.</p>	<h3>Independence</h3> <p>The autonomy of humanitarian objectives from political, economic, military or other objectives must be respected. The sole purpose of humanitarian aid is to relieve and prevent the suffering of victims of humanitarian crises.</p>	<h3>Impartiality</h3> <p>Humanitarian aid must be provided solely on the basis of needs, without discrimination between or within affected populations.</p>
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An illustration of a refugee camp or settlement. In the foreground, there are several white tents, some with a red cross on them. In the background, there are more tents, small buildings, and people. The landscape is hilly and arid.

European Commission

Hidden Disaster

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union

2010 — 40 pp. — 21 x 29,7 cm

KR-31-09-144-EN-C

ISBN: 978-92-79-13380-0

doi: 10.2795/11166

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