

# ZAHRA

A POLICEWOMAN  
IN AFGHANISTAN



**OXFAM**

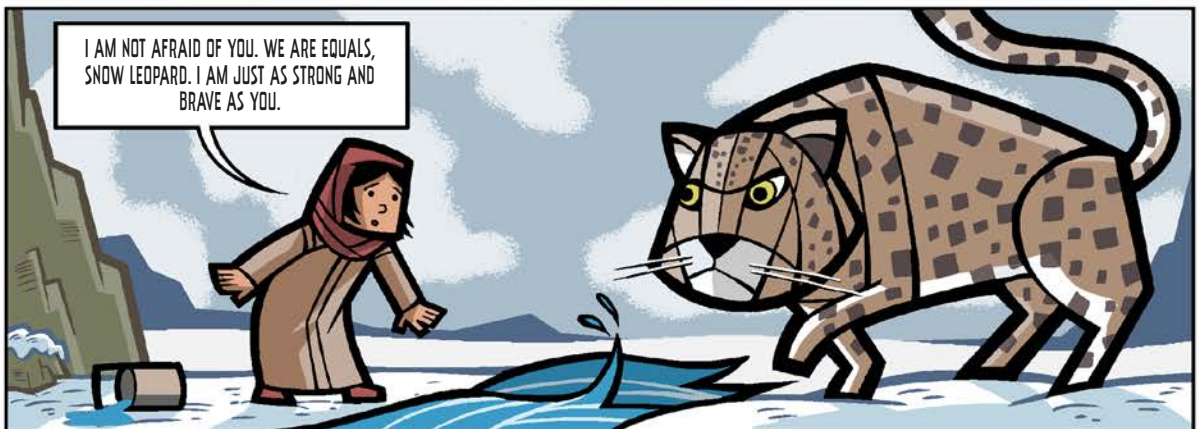
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**BANG**



A FEW YEARS LATER.



YOU HEARD ME, MOTHER. I WANT TO STUDY TO BECOME A POLICE OFFICER.

POLICE OFFICER? HA HA HA, POLICE OFFICER!

YOU ARE CRAZY, MY CHILD. A WOMAN AS A POLICE OFFICER! THAT IS NOT A JOB FOR A WOMAN.



WHY NOT? I HAVE WORKED HARD, I HAVE GONE THROUGH SECONDARY EDUCATION IN KABUL LIKE WE AGREED AND I FINISHED WITH GOOD GRADES.

NOW MY COUNTRY GIVES ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO CHOOSE WHAT I DO WITH MY LIFE...

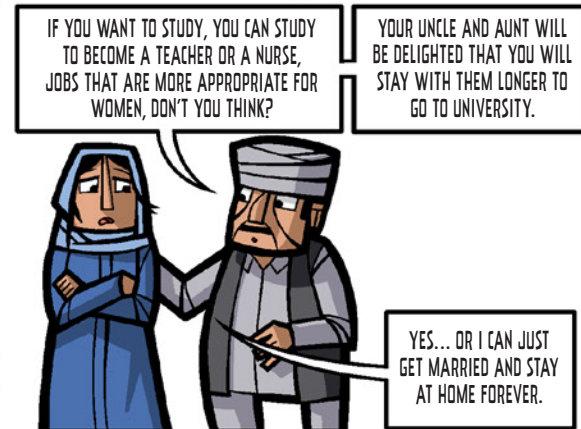
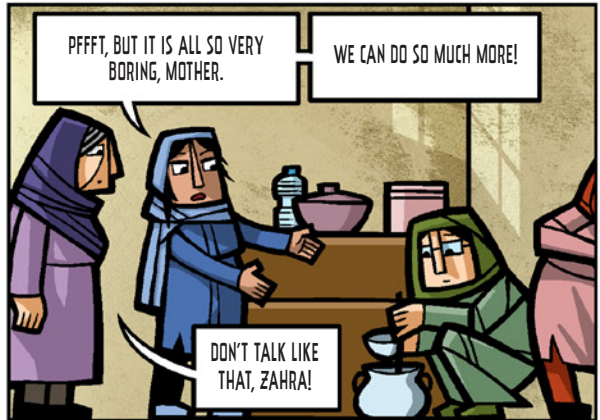
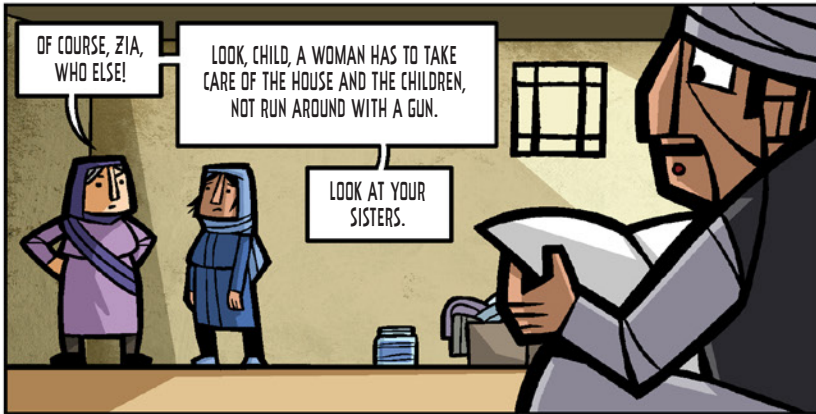
... AND I AM NOT GOING TO WASTE IT!

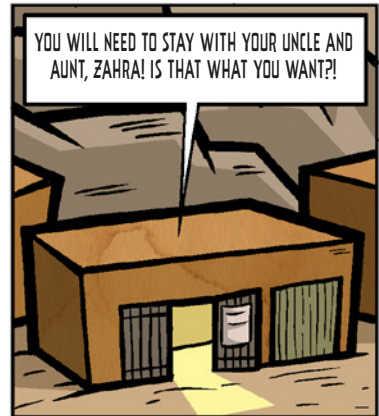
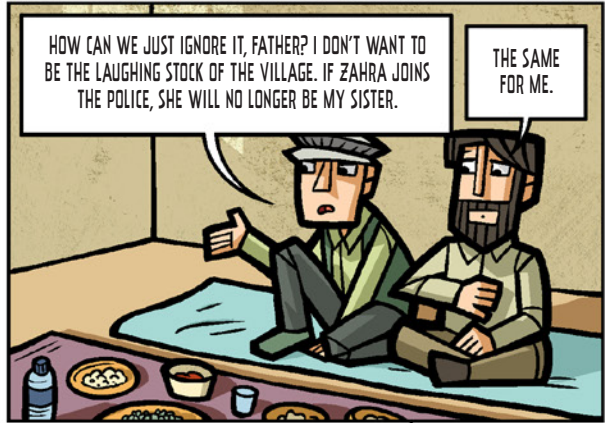


BESIDES, IN KABUL IT IS NOT LIKE HERE; WOMEN ARE WORKING IN BANKS, IN OFFICES, IN A LOT OF PLACES.

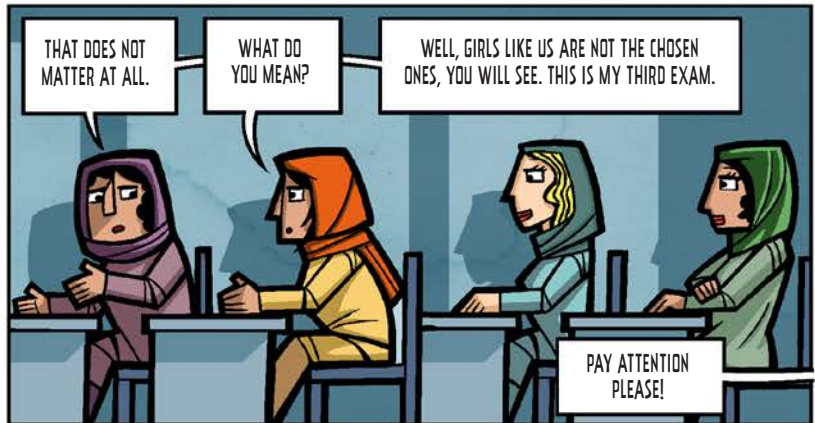
I HEARD THAT THERE ARE NOW POLICE-WOMEN AS WELL.













YOU, YOU AND... YOU, COME WITH ME.



BU... BUT, WHAT'S THIS? HE JUST SELECTED THE MOST HANDSOME GIRLS.

YOU SEE NOW WHAT I WAS TRYING TO TELL YOU?



NO! WE CANNOT ACCEPT THAT. AFTER... AFTER ALL THAT I HAVE GONE THROUGH TO GET HERE... COME WITH ME! WHAT IS YOUR NAME?

MA... MANAL.



I DON'T... I DON'T KNOW IF THIS IS A GOOD IDEA. WE COULD GET INTO TROUBLE.



COME IN.



WHAT DO YOU WANT, YOUNG LADIES?



ARE YOU THE SUPERVISOR? IN CHARGE OF THE SELECTION PROCESS?



THAT'S RIGHT. HOW CAN I HELP YOU?



WE WANT TO REPORT AN IRREGULARITY...

MONTHS LATER IN THE TRAINING CENTER ABROAD.



THE UNIFORM FEELS LIKE THE SKIN OF A SNOW LEOPARD.

I CANNOT WAIT TO RETURN TO AFGHANISTAN, START TO PATROL THE STREETS, PUT THE CAR SIREN ON, HELP OUR PEOPLE.



WE ARE THE LEOPARDS.



POLICE CENTER, KABUL.



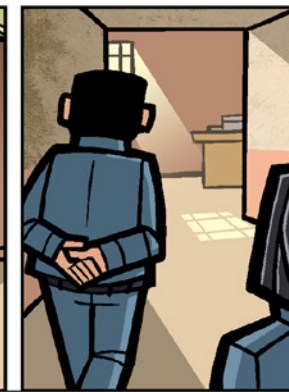
GOOD AFTERNOON COMMANDER, I AM ZAHRA.

AH, YES, THE NEW ONE. WALK WITH ME.

I AM VERY EXCITED, COMMANDER.



I REALLY WOULD LIKE TO START PATROLLING. YOU CANNOT IMAGINE WHAT IT TOOK FOR ME TO GET HERE.

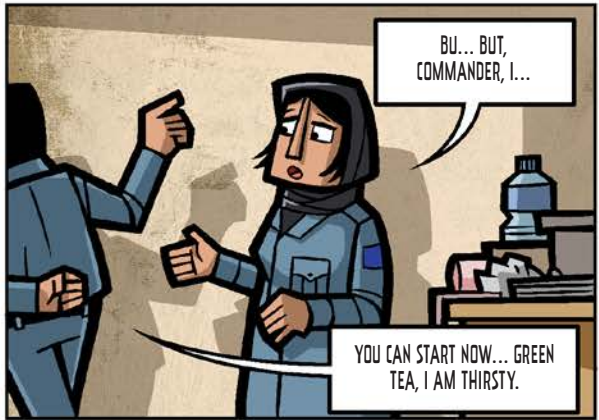


THIS IS YOUR DESK, YOUNG LADY. TRY TO KEEP IT CLEAN.





FOR THE MOMENT, YOUR FIRST TASK IS TO BRING ME TEA EVERY MORNING AND EVERY AFTERNOON.



BU... BUT, COMMANDER, I...

YOU CAN START NOW... GREEN TEA, I AM THIRSTY.



RIING



HE... HELLO?



ZAHRA. IT'S MANAL! WE FINALLY DID IT MY FRIEND!

SPEAK FOR YOURSELF, MY DEAR, THEY HAVE PUT ME ASIDE ON A TABLE IN THE CORNER.

HOW AM I GOING TO HELP PEOPLE FROM BEHIND THIS DESK? FROM THIS CORNER?



THE DAY AFTER.



BYE, UNCLE AND AUNT, I'M GOING TO WORK.

HAVE A GOOD DAY AT THE BANK, ZAHRA!



ANOTHER DAY OF WAITING BEHIND THIS DESK.



I FEEL TERRIBLE HAVING TO LIE TO MY UNCLE AND AUNT ABOUT MY JOB.



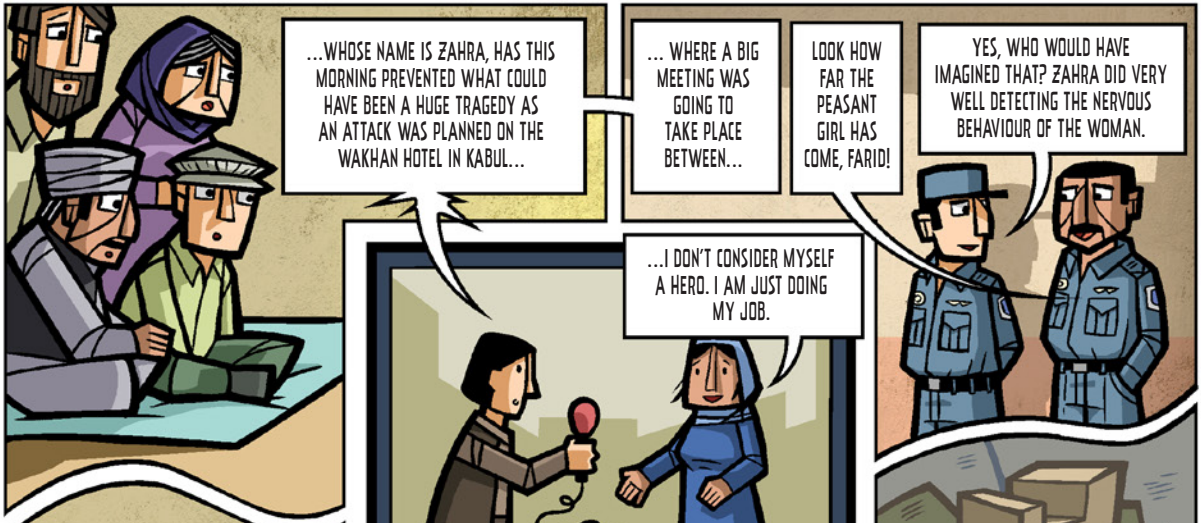
ALTHOUGH THE LEOPARD'S SKIN FIRST MADE ME STRONG, PERHAPS WHAT IT REALLY MEANS TO BE A SNOW LEOPARD IS TO BE ENDANGERED AND ALONE.







COME! COME QUICKLY ALL OF YOU!



...WHOSE NAME IS ZAHRA, HAS THIS MORNING PREVENTED WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN A HUGE TRAGEDY AS AN ATTACK WAS PLANNED ON THE WAKHAN HOTEL IN KABUL...

... WHERE A BIG MEETING WAS GOING TO TAKE PLACE BETWEEN...

LOOK HOW FAR THE PEASANT GIRL HAS COME, FARID!

YES, WHO WOULD HAVE IMAGINED THAT? ZAHRA DID VERY WELL DETECTING THE NERVOUS BEHAVIOUR OF THE WOMAN.

...I DON'T CONSIDER MYSELF A HERO. I AM JUST DOING MY JOB.



OUR... OUR ZAHRA?



HAMID, GO GET ZIA, QUICK.



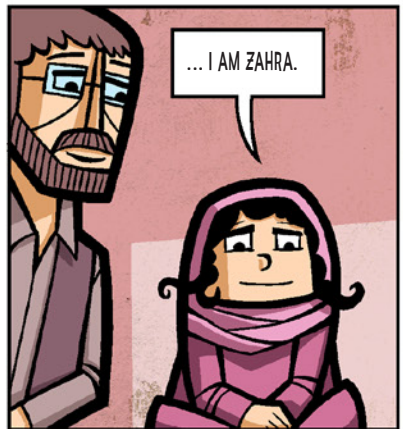
HE NEEDS TO SEE THIS.



SOMEWHERE, IN ANOTHER VILLAGE OF AFGHANISTAN.



I AM...



... I AM ZAHRA.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This graphic story is part of the Oxfam campaign that supports the inclusion and meaningful participation of women in the Afghan police. It was developed within the Strategic Partnership project 'Towards a Worldwide Influencing Network', funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. Many thanks to all the colleagues, Afghans and internationals, who supported the development of the story with their comments and suggestions.

### **About the authors**

Jorrit Kamminga has been supporting Oxfam projects in Afghanistan since 2014, with a special interest and passion for the integration, protection and meaningful participation of Afghan women in the police and army. For more information or with questions or comments about the story, contact Jorrit at: [jorritka@gmail.com](mailto:jorritka@gmail.com).

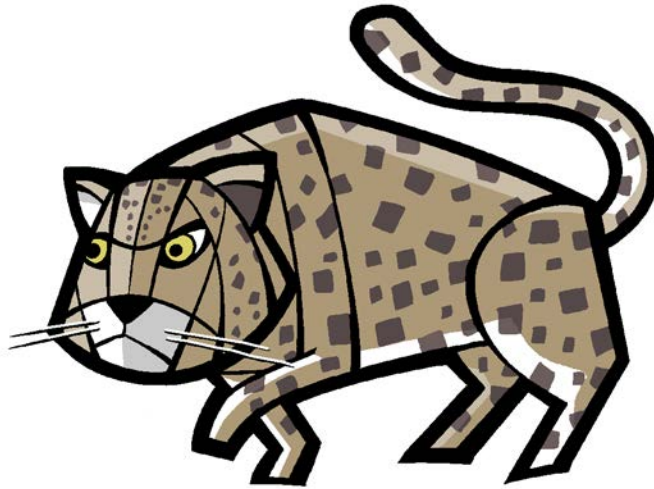
Cristina Durán and Miguel Ángel Giner Bou are graphic novel artists from Valencia, Spain. Ever since they opened their studio LaGRÚAestudio in 1993, they have dedicated themselves to what they are most passionate about: drawing and telling stories. In 2019, they won the Spanish National Comic Award. For more information, visit <https://lagruaestudio.com>.

### **About Oxfam**

Oxfam is an international confederation of 19 organizations networked together in more than 67 countries, as part of a global movement for change, to build a future free from the injustice of poverty.

For more information, visit [www.oxfam.org](http://www.oxfam.org).





No animals were harmed during the making of this graphic story. The endangered snow leopard lives in the so-called Wakhan corridor, a narrow geographical corridor located in the northeastern province of Badakhshan, which connects Afghanistan with China. Although they are wild animals and their space should be respected accordingly, a snow leopard being aggressive towards humans is exceptionally rare. The authors strongly support the cause of raising awareness about and protecting the rare snow leopard and its habitat.



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