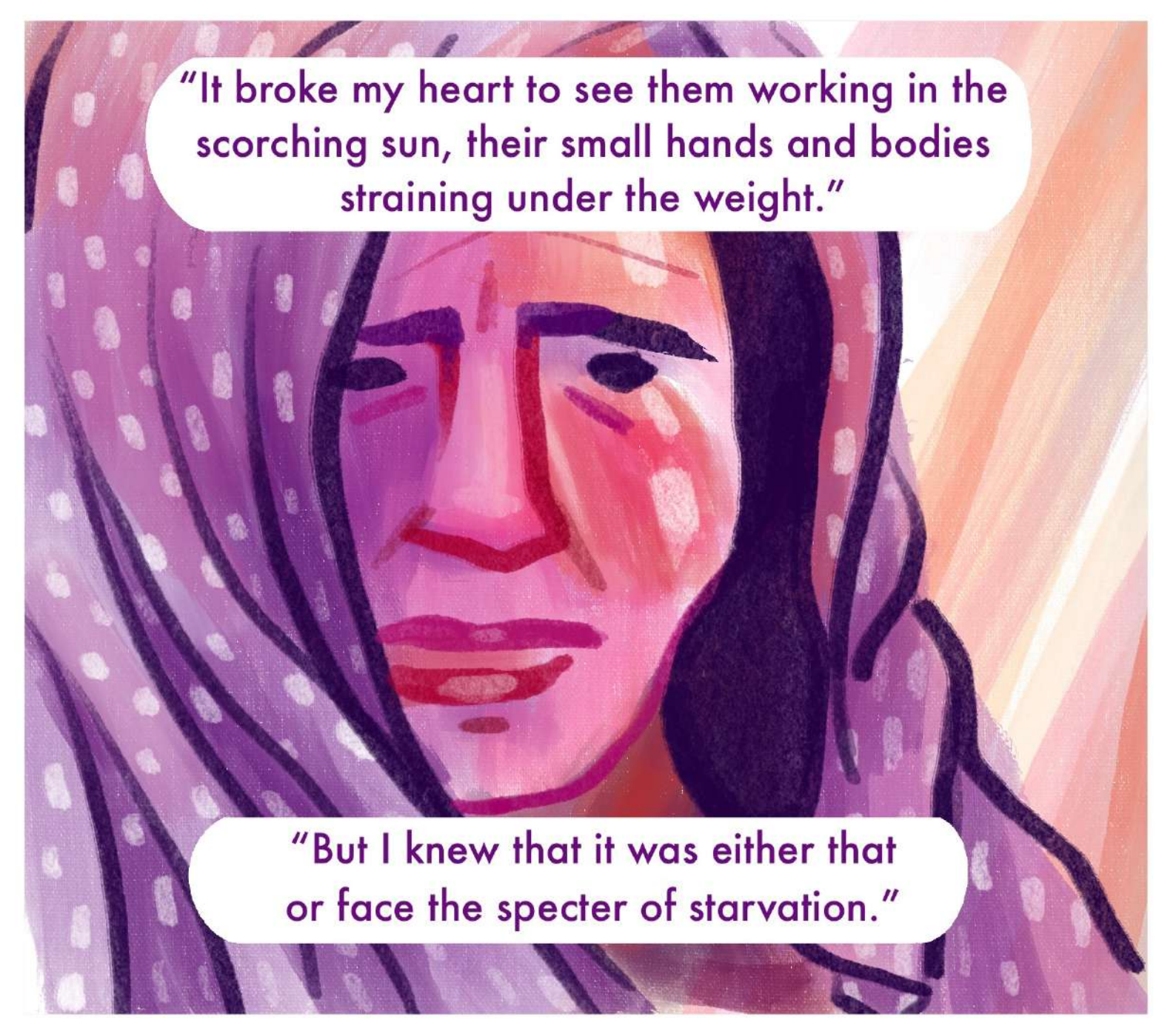


NO POWER BUT INCREDIBLE STRENGTH

- THE STORIES OF AFGHAN SURVIVORS -



While other people's children are still playing with blocks, Zaheda had to watch her children struggling to lift bricks.



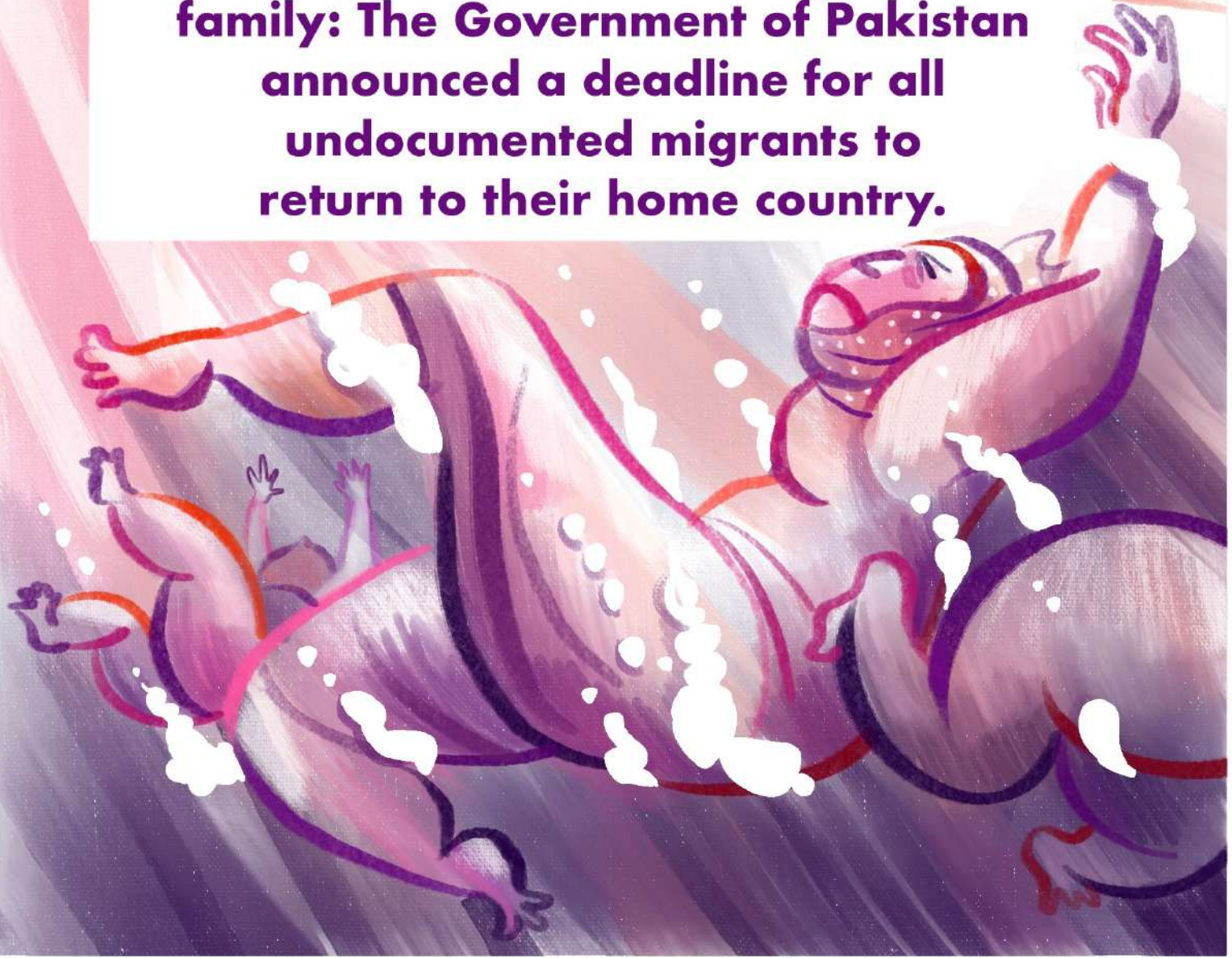
"It broke my heart to see them working in the scorching sun, their small hands and bodies straining under the weight."

"But I knew that it was either that or face the specter of starvation."

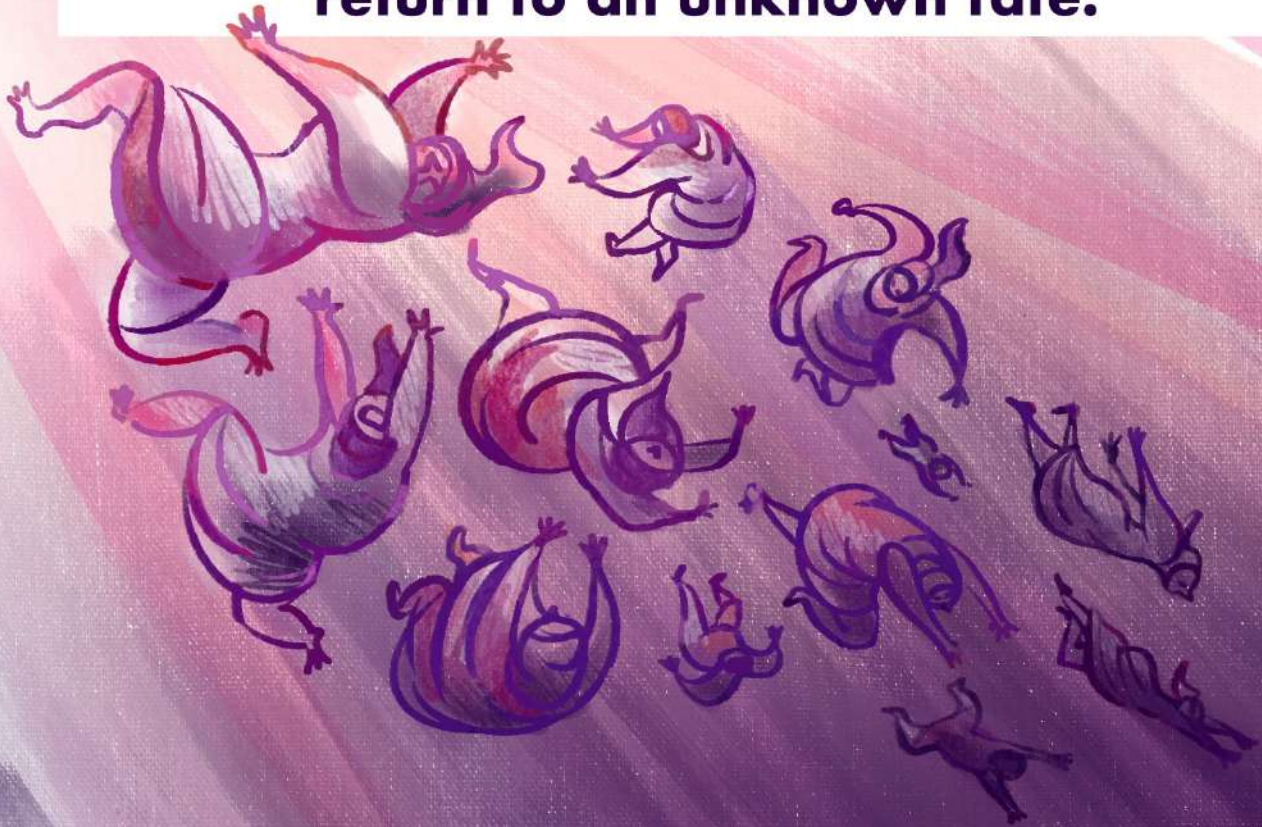
Zaheda faced six years of unrelenting struggles, battling to provide for her six children.



Then, one day a tidal wave hit her family: The Government of Pakistan announced a deadline for all undocumented migrants to return to their home country.

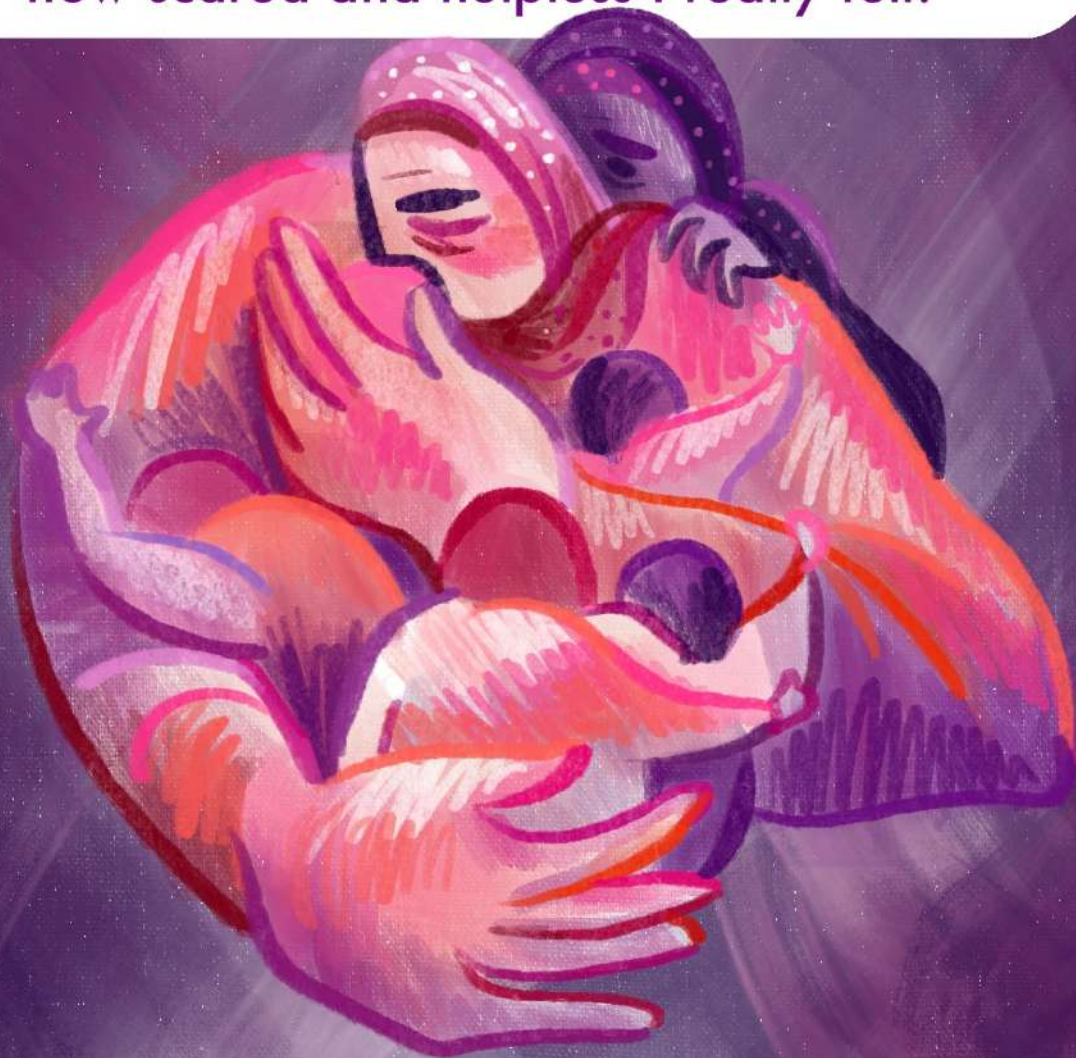


Many Afghan women had fled to Pakistan due to persecution or war and now had to return to an unknown fate.



"We had no choice but to move to that country, seeking a better life, and now we were being punished for it."

"I knew that I had to stay strong for my children. They looked up to me, and I couldn't let them see how scared and helpless I really felt."



As Zaheda makes her way to Afghanistan, the earth continues to turn. The wind, with little care for borders, blows across the land and deep, deep down in the soil something is shifting.

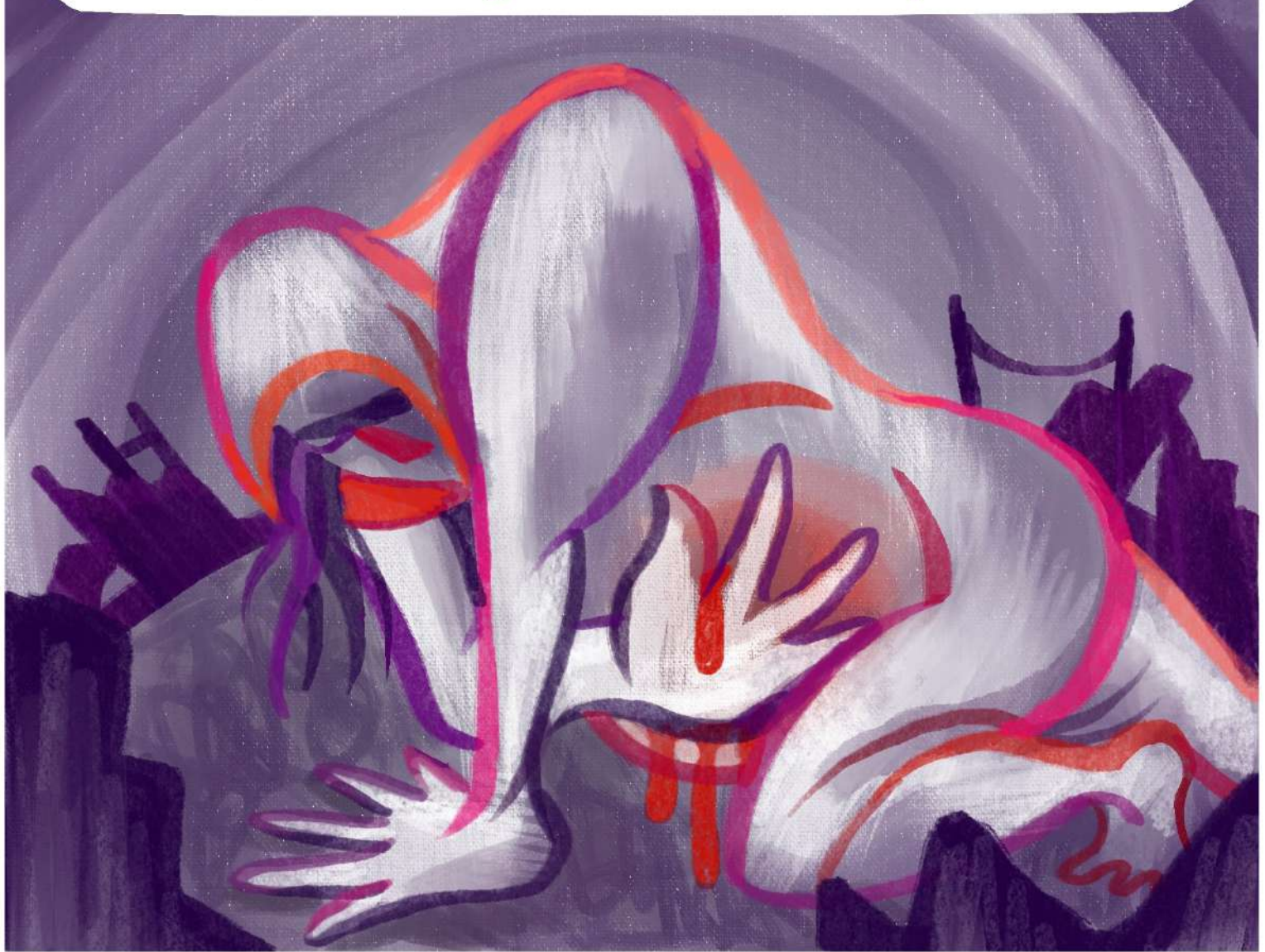




In Herat, Sayeeda was a month from bringing a baby into the world, when her world was torn apart.

"The ground was shaking in a strange way, almost like waves crashing into me, and I had no way to escape."

"Moments later, the earth settled, and I felt an unusual warmth, even though the location was quite cold."



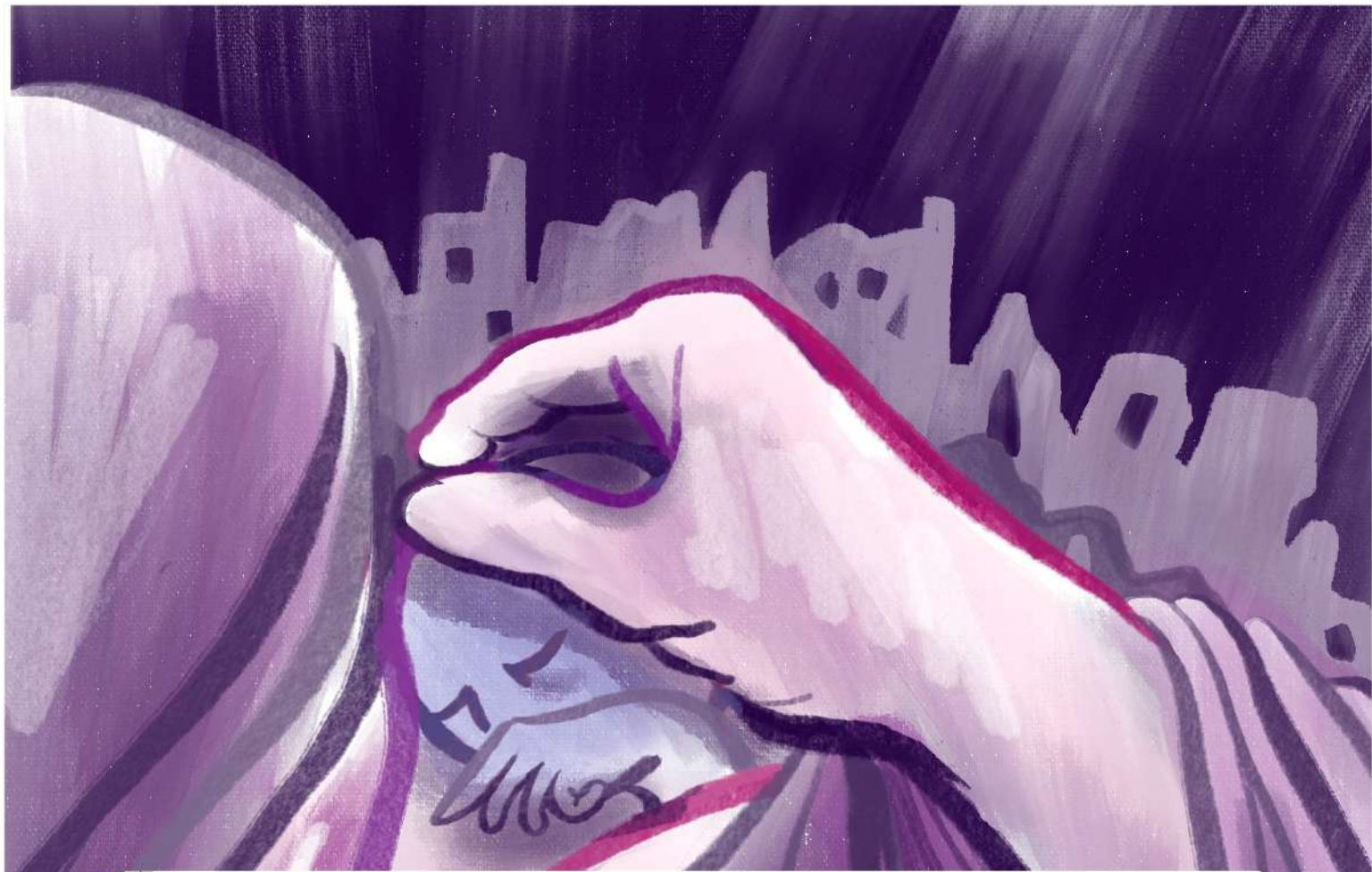
"Rain started to fall as my child was coming into the world in this chaotic desert."



"After four hours, I finally gave birth. Holding my newborn, I was overjoyed, and I could finally call myself a mother."



"But I had nothing to cover my newborn. I used a part of my own clothes to wrap my child and gave her my breast, which was a very pleasant feeling for me, making me forget all the hardships."



"However, my baby began to weaken gradually, and a bluish colour started appearing around her mouth. Eventually, my newborn's breath was taken away due to the extreme cold, and I, who had just held my beloved in my arms, lost her forever."

Paktica also lost a child in the earthquake.

“It was like the world had ended
and the earth had clashed with the sky.”



“I felt every bone in my body break.”

A stylized illustration with a dark red and purple color palette. In the center, a large hand is shown holding a smaller child's hand. The background is filled with jagged, flame-like shapes in shades of red and orange. The overall style is graphic and expressive.

"After almost two hours,
I was rescued."

**Her three-year-old
daughter's body
was later found.**

“Losing a child is the most painful pain I have ever experienced. I wanted the mountains and the sky to know that a part of me had died.”

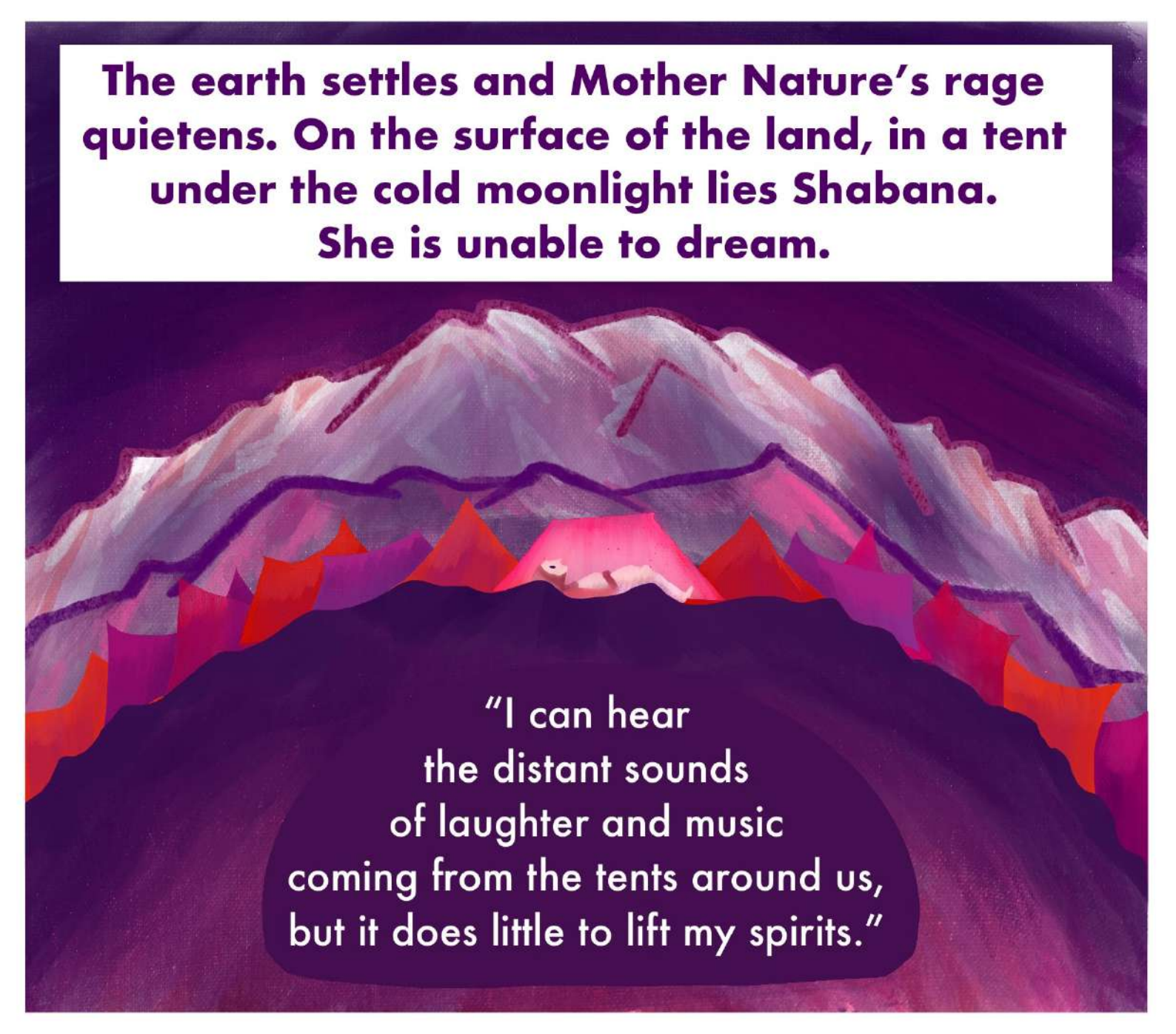


An illustration of a woman with long, wavy hair, wearing a purple and orange patterned garment, holding two children. The child on the left is a toddler, and the child on the right is a baby. The background is a dark purple night sky filled with white stars. The woman's face is partially visible, showing a somber expression. The children are also depicted with somber expressions. The overall mood is one of grief and despair.

**Then, Paktica received news
of her husband's death.**


"In an instant, I had lost everything; there was no protection for me. Now, I have two children aged two months and one and a half years, and a world of despair with the images of the earthquake burned into my memory."

**The earth settles and Mother Nature's rage
quietens. On the surface of the land, in a tent
under the cold moonlight lies Shabana.
She is unable to dream.**

A stylized illustration of a mountain range. The mountains are rendered in shades of purple, pink, and white, with dark purple outlines. In the foreground, a dark purple, rounded shape represents a tent or a cave entrance. The overall scene is set against a dark purple background, suggesting a night scene under a cold moonlight.

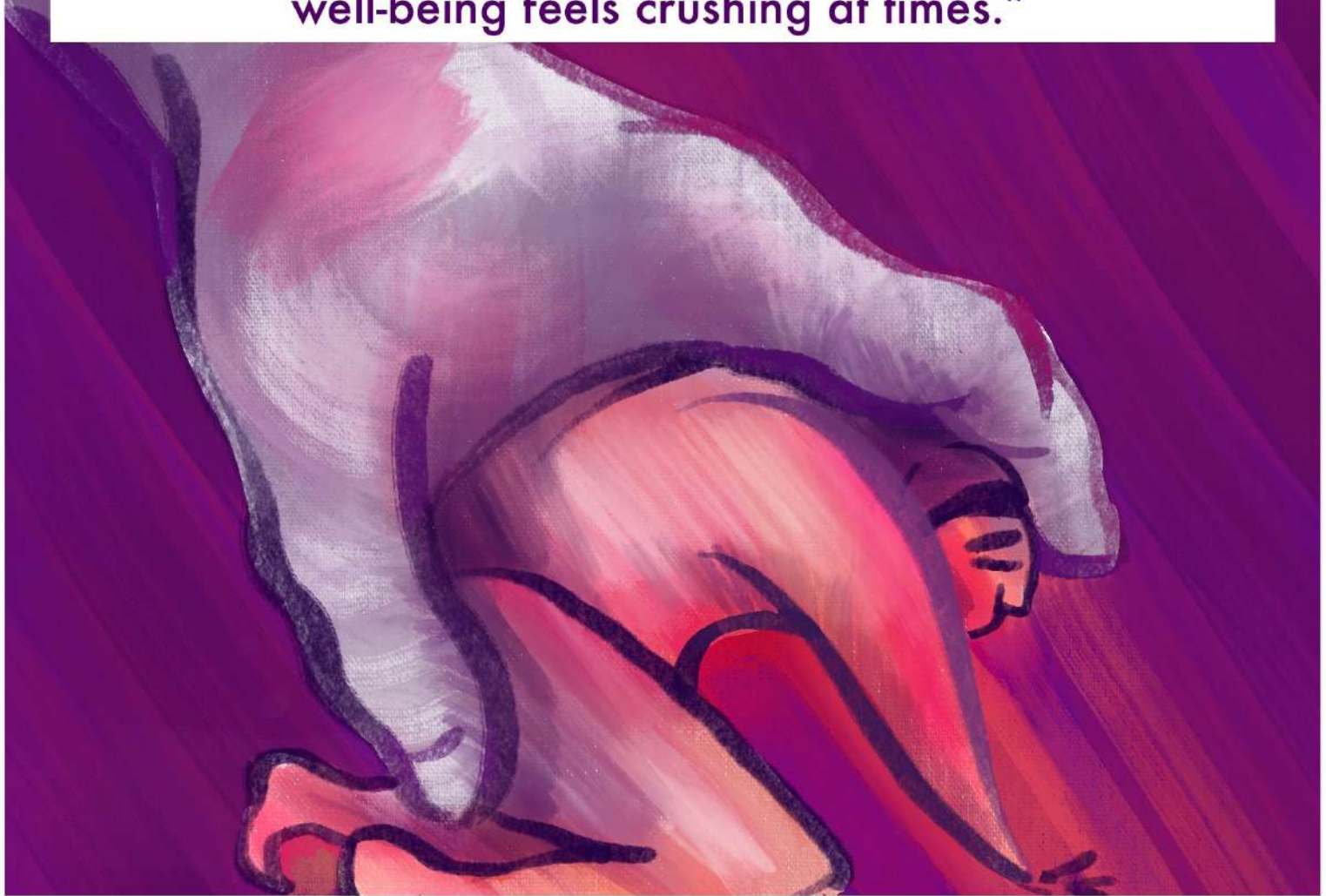
**"I can hear
the distant sounds
of laughter and music
coming from the tents around us,
but it does little to lift my spirits."**

Shabana, aged just 23, is trying to survive, one day at a time.



"The thought of starting over again, of having to rebuild our lives from scratch, is almost too much to bear."

“I try to push these thoughts away and focus on breathing, but they keep haunting me, like a persistent shadow. The weight of responsibility for my family's well-being feels crushing at times.”



"As I lie here in the dark, listening to the sound of my family's soft snores, I can't help but wonder what the future holds for us. Will we be able to find a safe place to call home?"

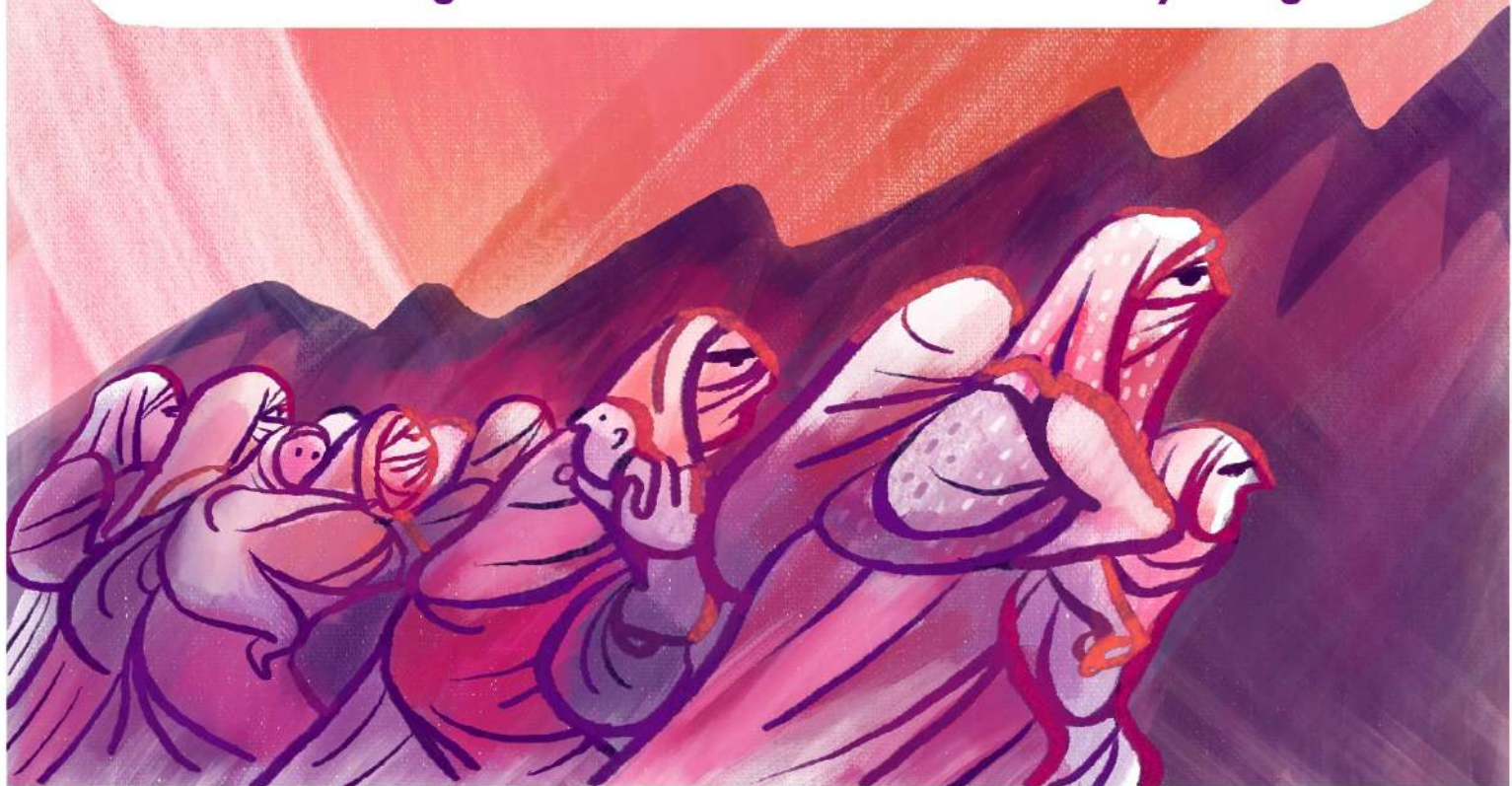


"The uncertainty of it all is exhausting, both physically and emotionally. But even though I may not be able to control the situation, I know that I must keep pushing forward, for the sake of my family and our future."



Zaheda's family is also the thing that keeps her going.

"We arrived in this strange new land, filled with hope and fear, knowing that the road ahead would be long and difficult. But also knowing that we had each other and that together we could overcome anything."



**Each morning the sun rises over Afghanistan,
another day begins and these women rise
once again to continue their fight.**



**We will not read their stories in the media
or see their names in history books.
But we must not forget them.**

**Listen to Afghan women and girls
and support their struggle.
Their fight is our global fight.**

For more stories about Afghan women visit
www.afteraugust.org

* Names, locations and course of events have
been changed in this comic to ensure the safety
of the Afghan women featured.



unwomen.org/en



afghanistan.iom.int