

CY, O'NER

comics as eyewitness

October 2020

Sri Lanka

Armenia

Iraq

Mauritania

Colombia

front line defenders



Iraq

Women Human Rights Defenders

Ordinarily, Front Line Defenders would be naming the Iraqi woman human rights defender who has been recognized as this year's Middle East and North Africa regional award winner. She is a fearless and courageous campaigner for women's rights and intercommunal peacebuilding. But over the last couple of months, a series of targeted, brutal murders of HRDs, especially WHRDs in her hometown of Basra, have forced her and other WHRDs to go underground. And in order to protect her security, we have agreed that Front Line Defenders would honor Women Human Rights Defenders in Iraq with the award.

The story presented here had to be adapted after initially being developed to tell the story, so that it could reflect the larger experience of WHRDs. Adaptation is a strategy of HRDs, and especially WHRDs, confronting threats, intimidation, harassment and violence. In this case, as with others in this edition, the story of the story is as informative as the story itself.

Artist : Mays Yasser is an Iraqi Comics Artist, Illustrator and a Copywriter.
[Instagram](#)



Piece by Piece

A Few
Pieces



When I am alone my mind starts to wander... I go back to all the things that lead to where I am today.



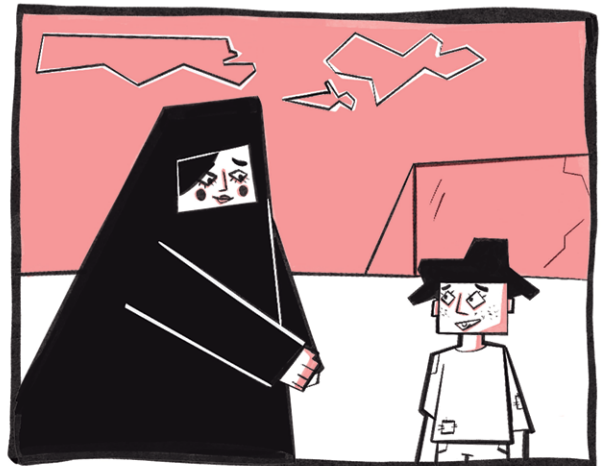
To the reason I started doing this in the first place... For those who desperately need a voice.



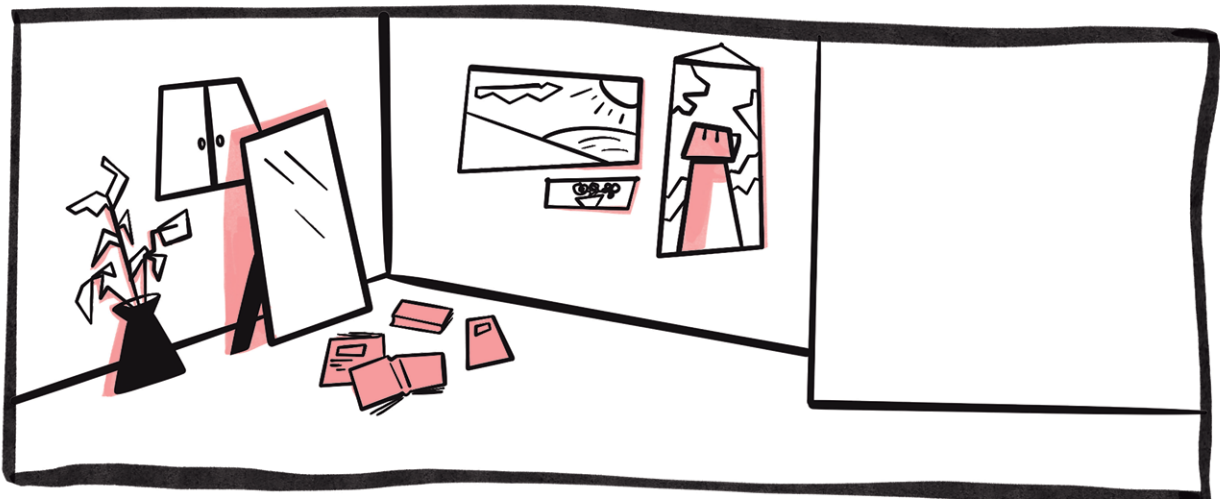
I think about it all the time, I felt like my soul was trapped. I needed to do something for those



who can lose their future, hopes and even lives due to them leaving schools to join deadly wars.



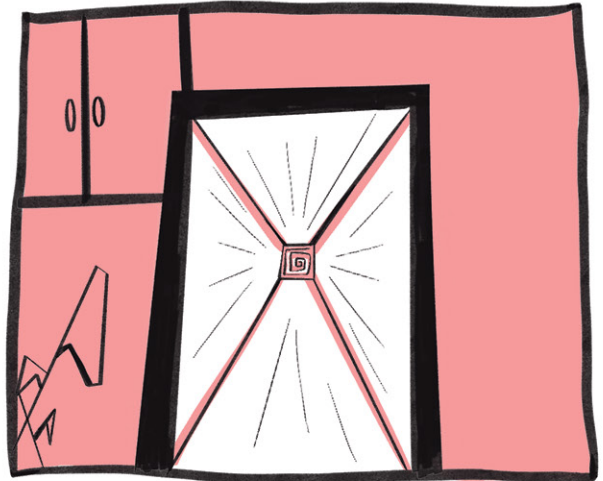
This was my space, my sanctuary and my home... I needed to speak up, to act and put up a fight.



I needed to fight for myself first,



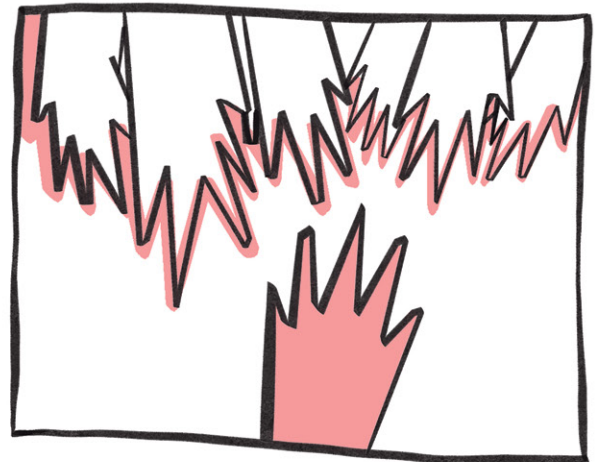
to find my voice, seek the right path. No matter how hard and scary the unknown feels.



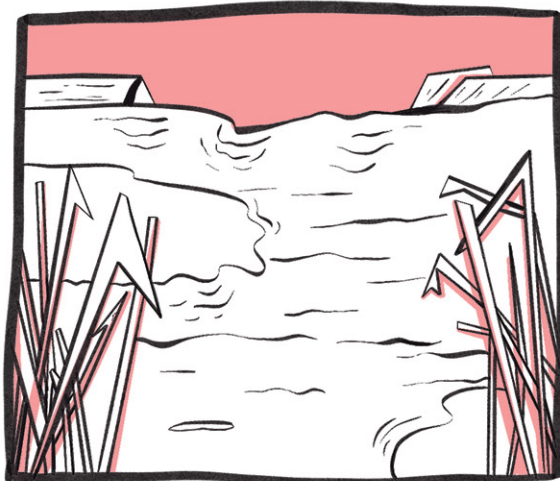
It's all worth it eventually.



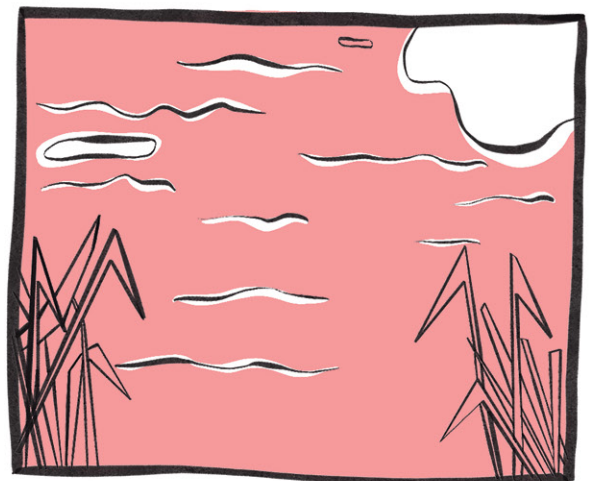
Reaching out to whoever needed was my life's purpose.



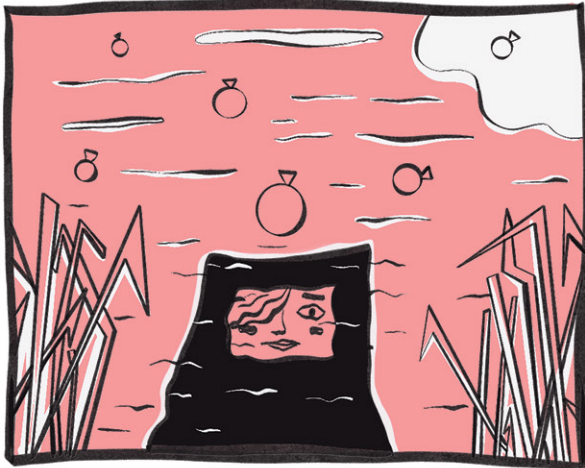
I remember one time, in the marshes...



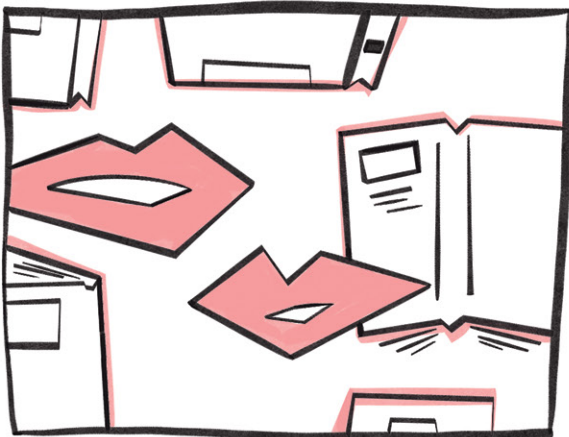
I felt as if the water was speaking to me.



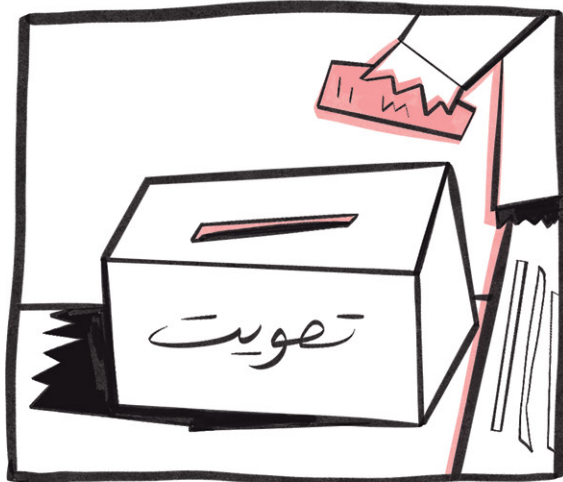
It talked to me about all the stories it witnessed on the lands. About underaged marriages and screaming injustices.



All they needed was someone to lead them to proper education. It is powerful the way learning can give a voice its biggest impact.



understood the importance of voting and what one voice can do.



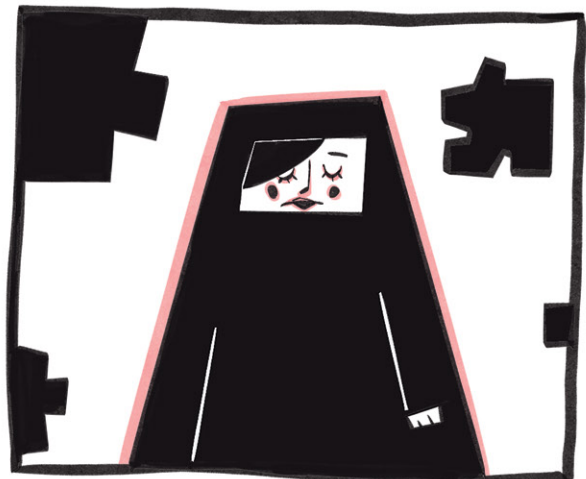
To all those who are voiceless...



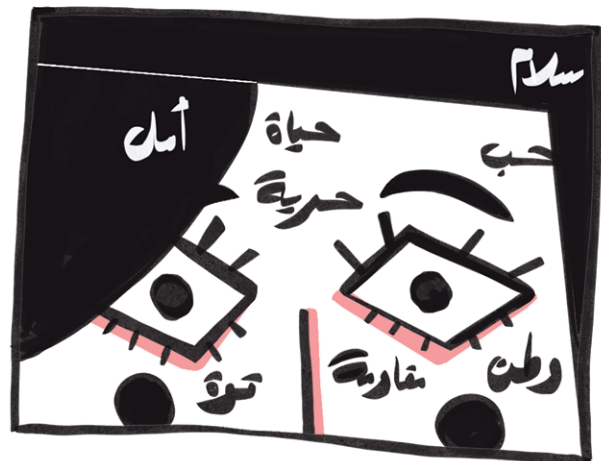
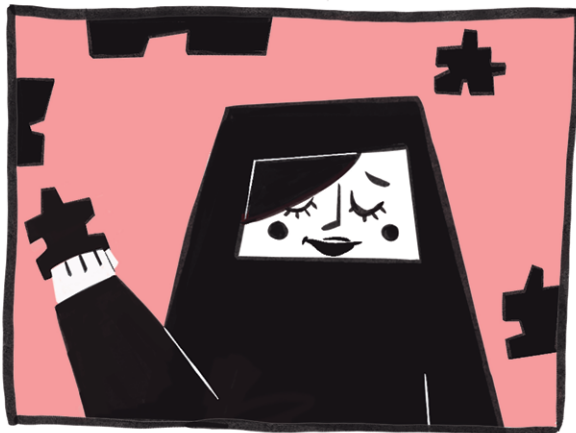
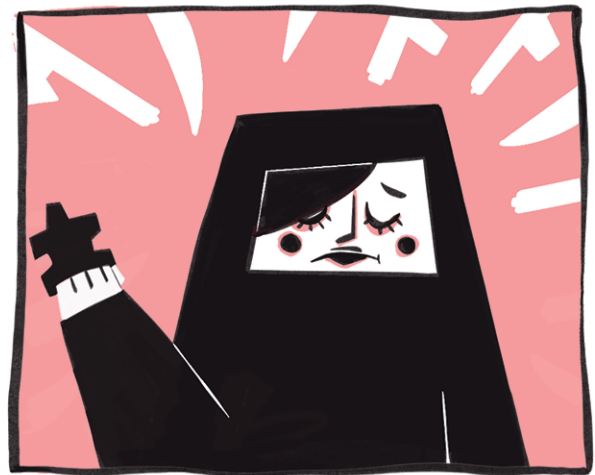
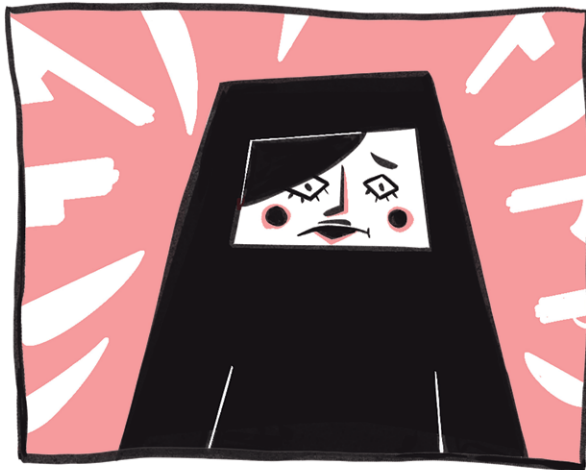
And they are learning indeed. They started new lives, escaped cages of forced marriages,



I reflect on all of this. The things I was able to do for them, and how grateful it made me feel.



The pressure can be overwhelming... the threats and silencing forces. But then I remember what I am a part of. I go back to what motivated me in the first place, and it gives me the strength to move forward, and give more.

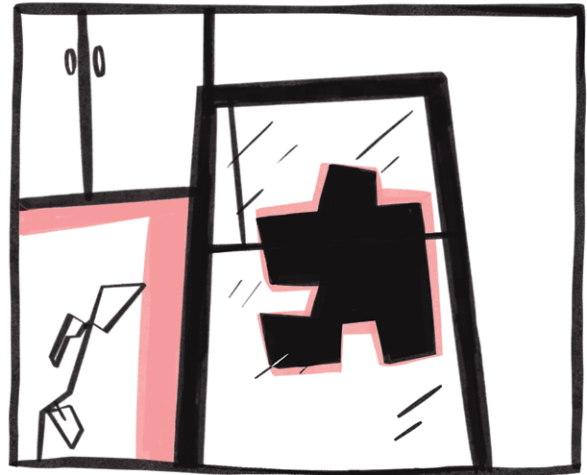
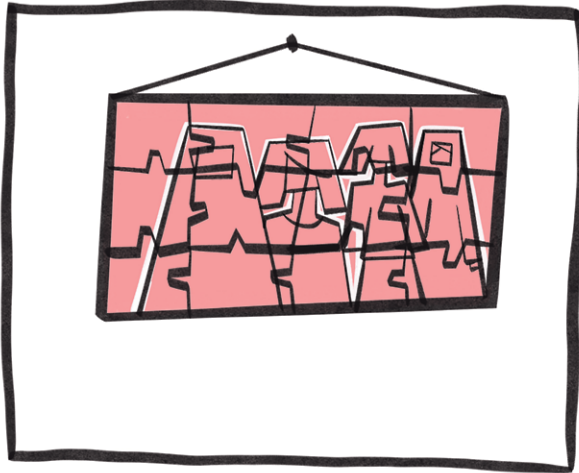


خطوة تلو الأخرى

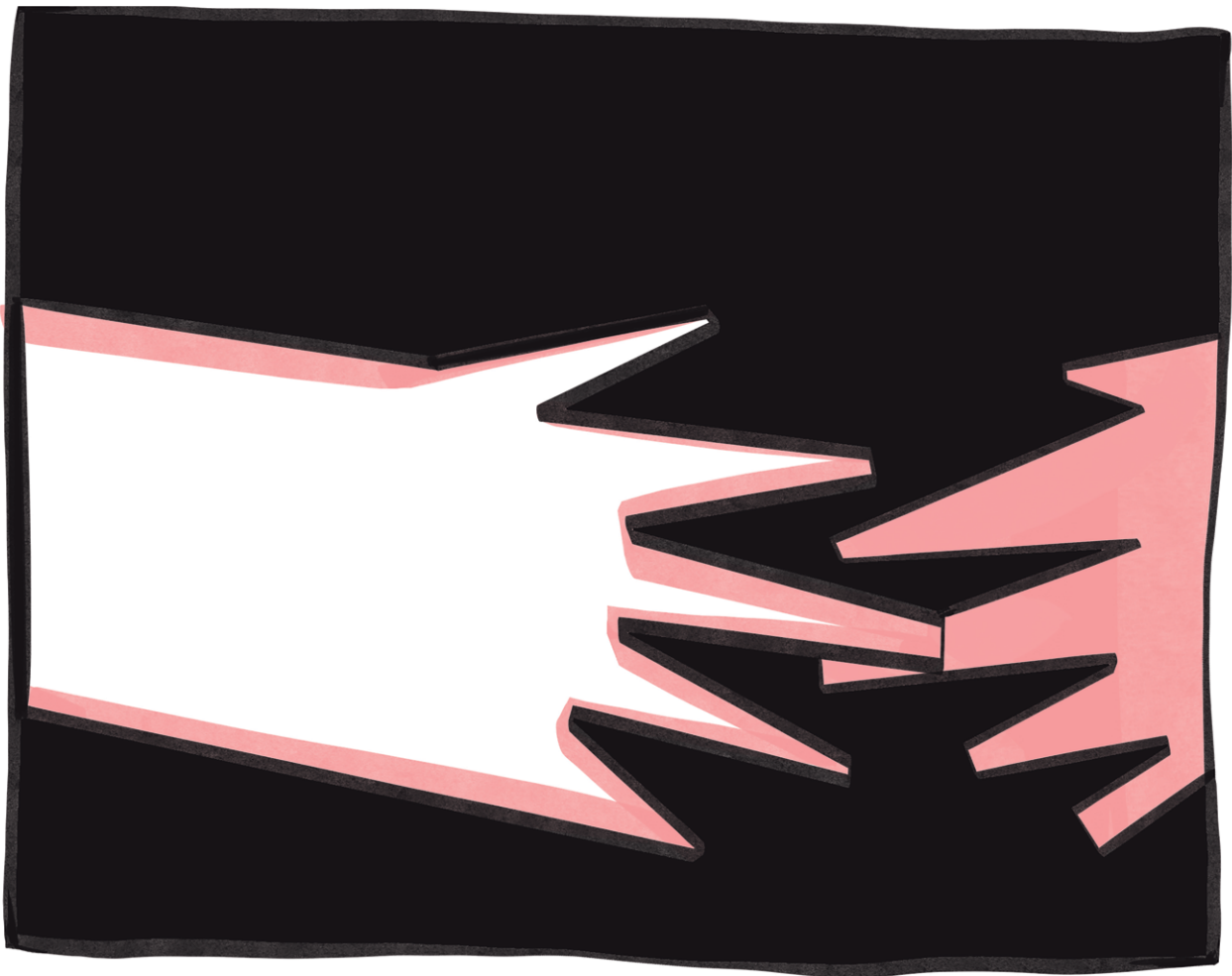
And it takes me back to where it all started, I remember that the path is long, and the fight is big and I need to take it one step at a time.

We are all parts of a puzzle, and that puzzle needs each and every one of us to complete the bigger picture.

Each part is extremely crucial.



I found my peace in dedicating my life for these causes, helping others reach their full potential, improve their lives and become part of the cycle so they can help others as well. Thinking of how big it all really feels... it's fulfilling. The day I quit is the day I die, and not a day earlier.



The end.

النهاية.



Find us online



frontlinedefenders.org/cypher

