

# FOREWORD

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When we initiated The Peacemakers project, our objective was to weave together the insights of Muslim, Christian, and Jewish viewpoints. Regrettably, we encountered a profound setback with the passing of Khaleel Mohammed, our author-scholar for the Islamic content. His departure underscores the very diversity we sought to embody. In honor of Khaleel's memory and in celebration of this diversity, we reached out to several Islamic scholars to ensure our selection of dialogues and narratives was thoughtful and respectful. This collaboration and its yield beautifully affirms that in art, there is truth. The interfaith collaboration at the heart of The Peacemakers stands as a testament to the book's essence.

Our initial deliberations veered between creating a scholarly work or weaving a tapestry of fictional dialogues that might better capture the essence of our intentions. The idea of using verbatim statements from notable figures such as Pope Francis and former Iraqi President Barham Salih evolved into crafting a narrative enriched with fictive exchanges aimed at fostering a universally acceptable dialogue. This decision was not taken lightly, especially given the complexities of accurately and respectfully incorporating holy scriptures and the diverse interpretations they engender. Our commitment was to tread this delicate balance with care, acknowledging the weight of tradition and scripture in religious belief.

The project grew into something far greater than any of us had anticipated, blossoming into an expansive vision, transforming The Peacemakers into something more multifaceted—the central graphic novel with the supplemental materials to serve as an interfaith curriculum ... seeds for a future harvest of trust, compassion, and love for all of God's children.

In channeling our insights, and through the development of enriching supplementary materials, this became a quest not just to illuminate the words and visions of those who came before us but to forge a path of understanding in a world often shadowed by discord.

This collective endeavor is a testament that faith can be a space where people come together, where dialogue and education can help us find the way toward peace and mutual respect. And, when it's authentic, dialogue becomes a mirror, one that reflects the very best aspects of our beliefs.

– Leonard Swidler, Moussa Serge Traore & Jennifer Wyman

# HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE PEACEMAKERS

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In March 2021, Pope Francis made history by visiting Iraq during President Barham Salih's term. The first-ever papal visit to Iraq conveyed a message of peace, tolerance, and fraternity to a land scarred by years of violence and sectarian strife.

The Pope's symbolic gestures aimed at unity included a meeting with Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani in Najaf, emphasizing the importance of unity and respect among different faiths. His visit to Ur, believed to be Prophet Abraham's birthplace, highlighted the shared heritage and values between Christianity and Islam, promoting peaceful co-existence.

Beyond Iraq, the Pope extended friendship and solidarity to the global Muslim community, catalyzing a broader dialogue between Christians and Muslims in a region plagued by religious discord. The visit also drew attention to the plight of Iraq's dwindling Christian population, advocating for the protection of religious minorities.

Pope Francis and President Salih's efforts fostered inclusivity, bridging centuries-old divides and inspiring peaceful co-existence in Iraq and the broader Middle East. *The Peacemakers*, a collaboration promoting open conversations between Muslims and Christians, echoes the spirit of the Pope's visit in its fictional account of dialogue and unity.

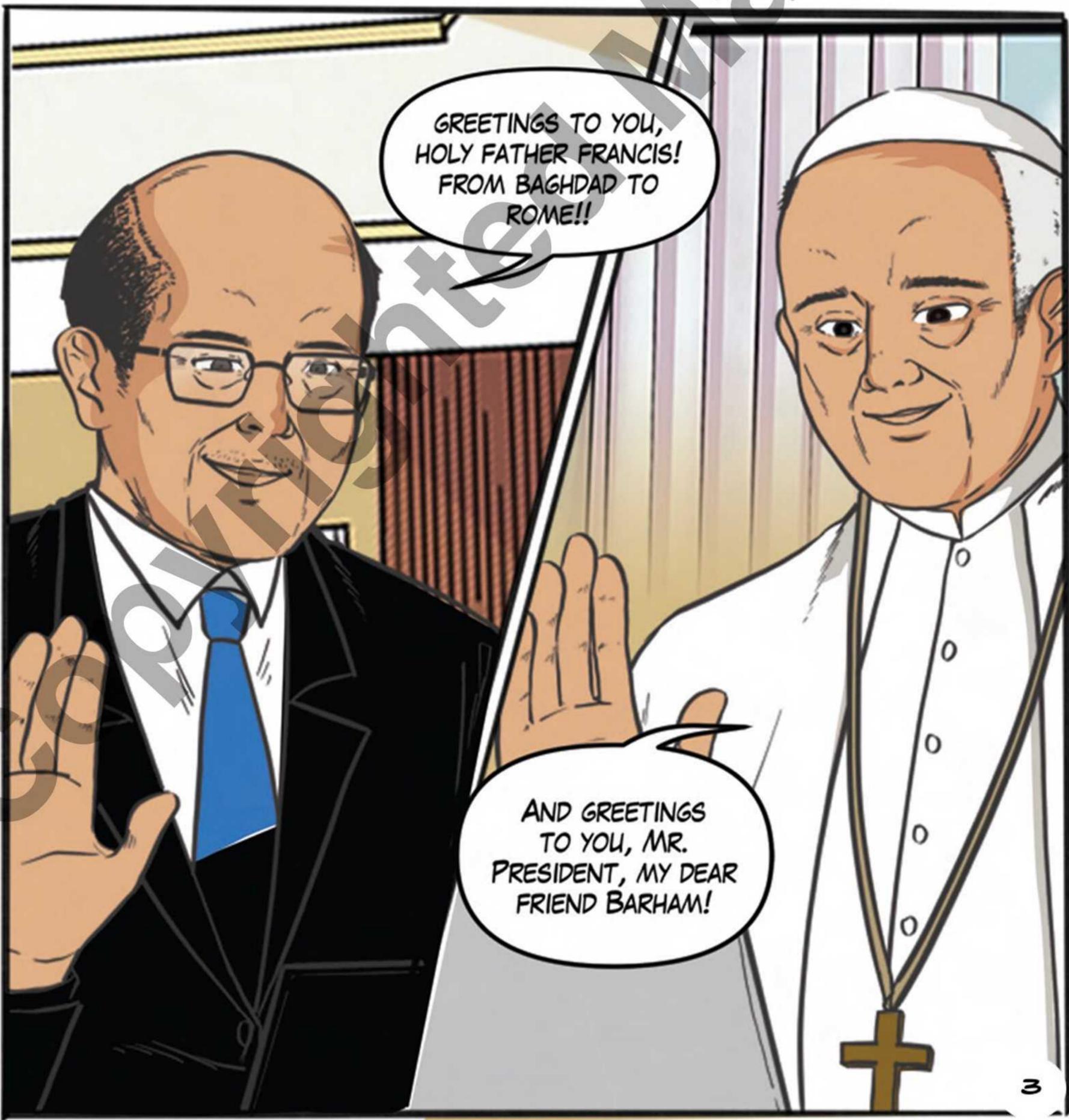
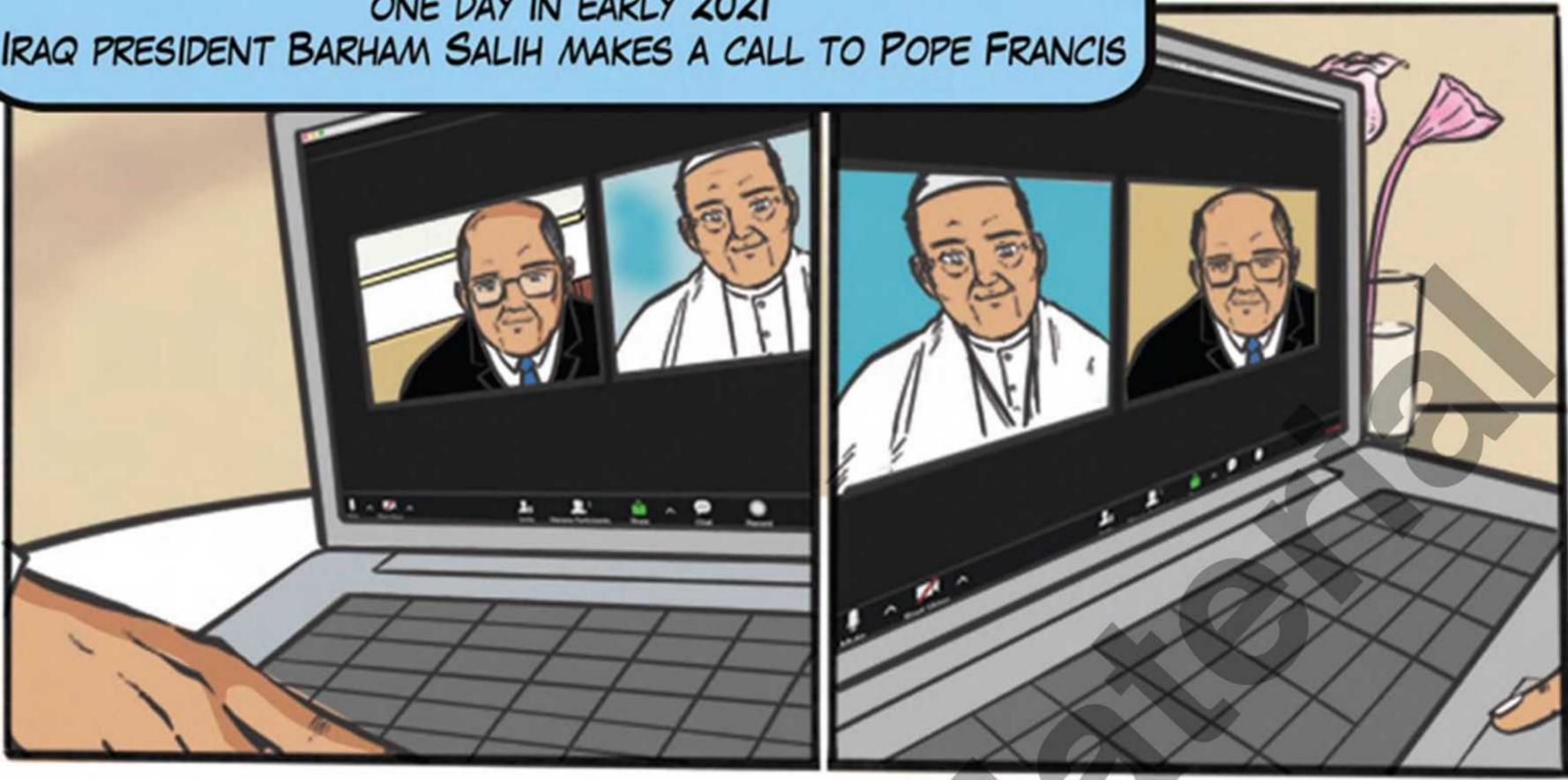
## TRANSLATIONS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE USED

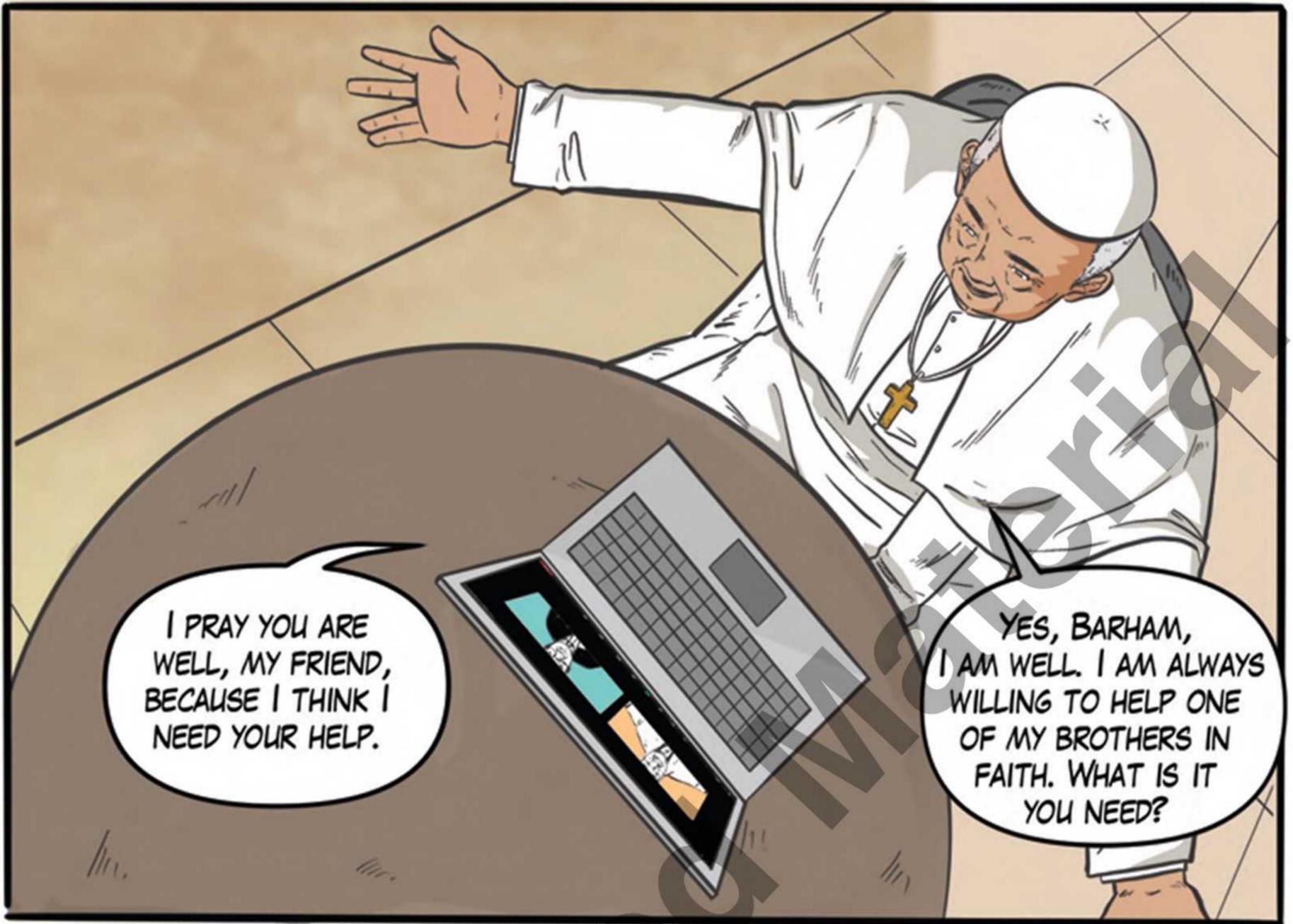
Jewish Bible – The New JPS Translation

Christian Bible – The RSVCE

Qur'an – The Clear Qur'an (trans. Dr. Mustafa Khattab)

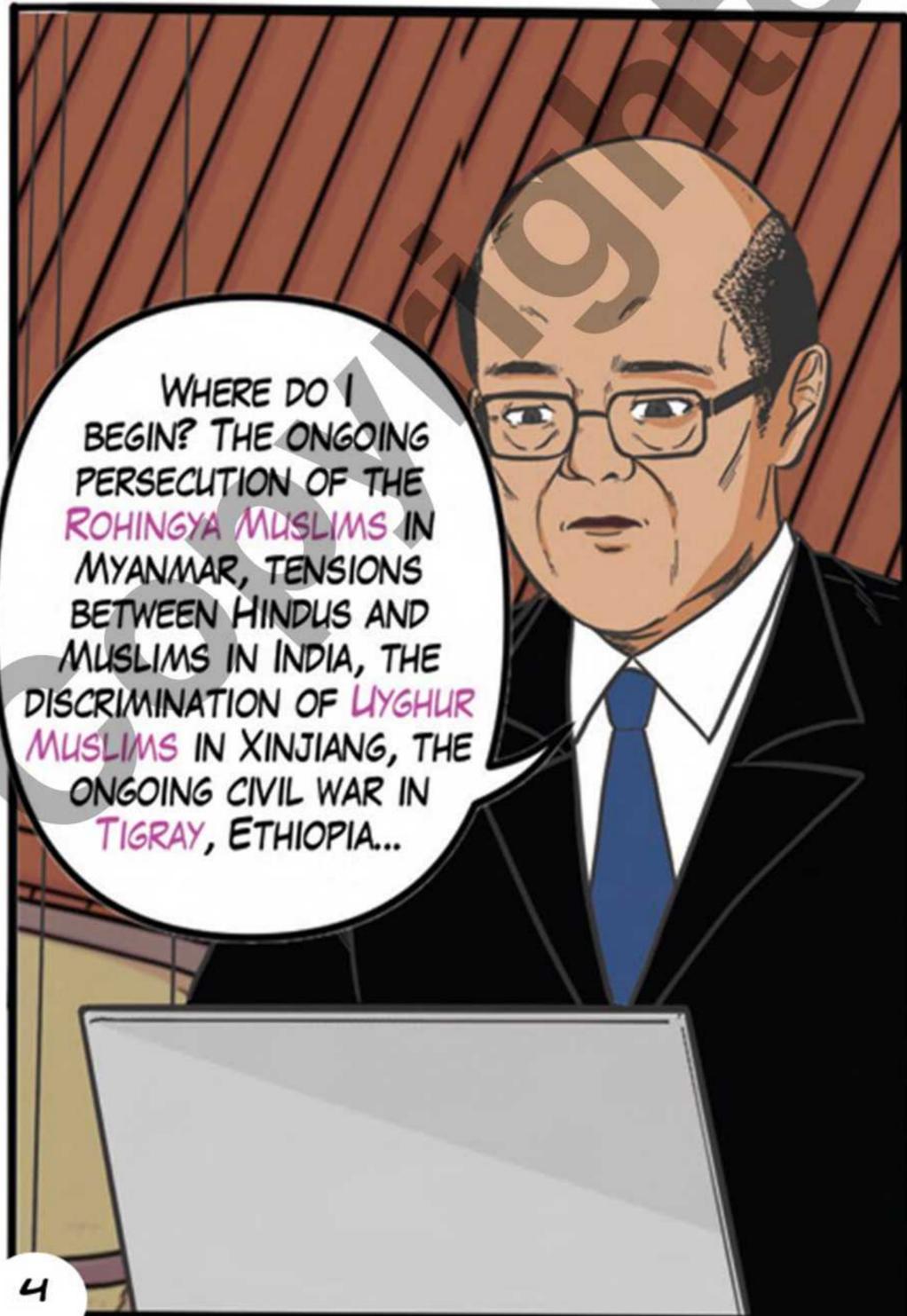
SCENE 1  
ONE DAY IN EARLY 2021  
IRAQ PRESIDENT BARHAM SALIH MAKES A CALL TO POPE FRANCIS





I PRAY YOU ARE WELL, MY FRIEND, BECAUSE I THINK I NEED YOUR HELP.

YES, BARHAM, I AM WELL. I AM ALWAYS WILLING TO HELP ONE OF MY BROTHERS IN FAITH. WHAT IS IT YOU NEED?

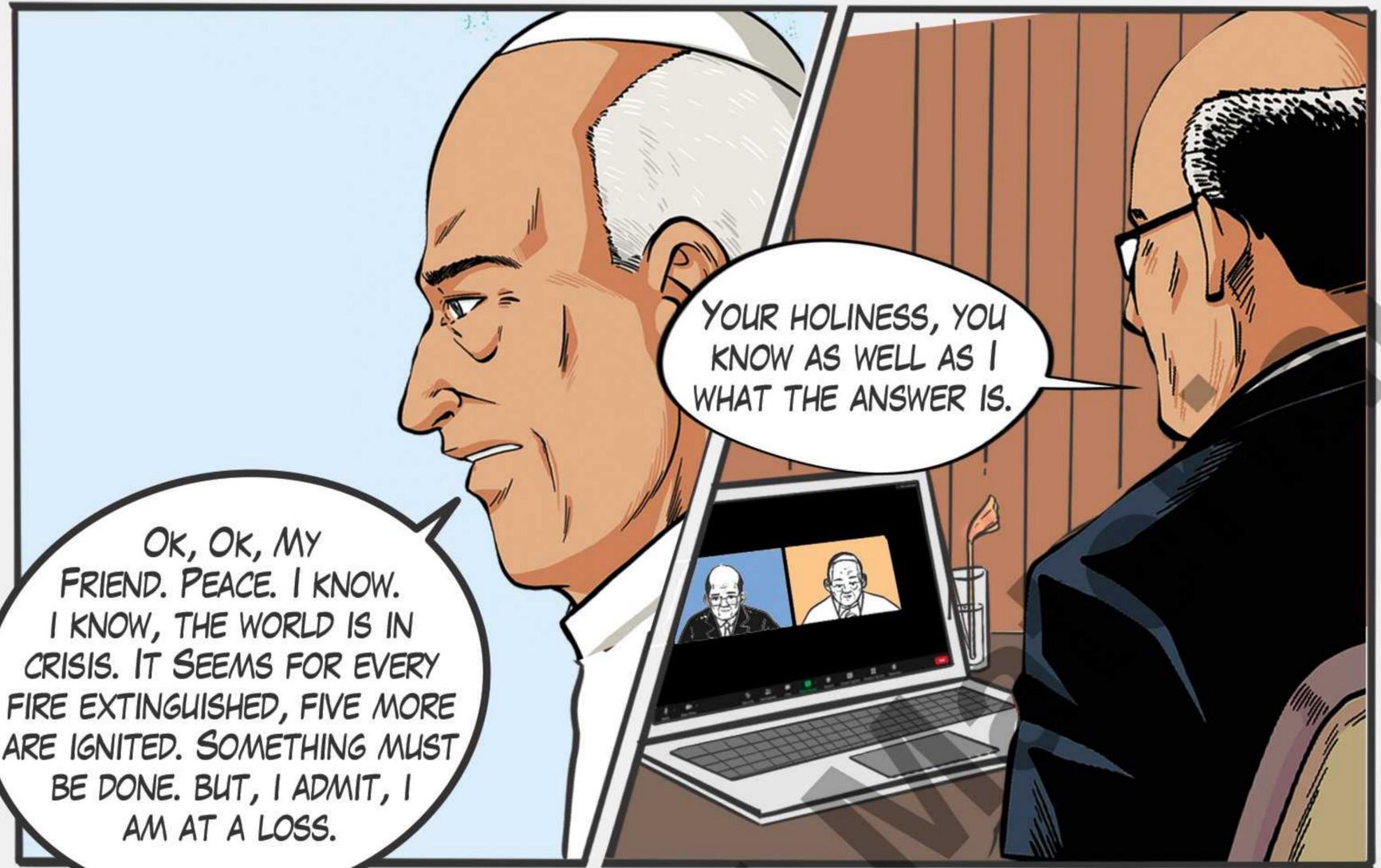


WHERE DO I BEGIN? THE ONGOING PERSECUTION OF THE **ROHINGYA MUSLIMS** IN MYANMAR, TENSIONS BETWEEN HINDUS AND MUSLIMS IN INDIA, THE DISCRIMINATION OF **LYGHUR MUSLIMS** IN XINJIANG, THE ONGOING CIVIL WAR IN **TIGRAY**, ETHIOPIA...



...VIOLENCE BETWEEN MUSLIM HERDSMEN AND CHRISTIAN FARMERS IN NIGERIA, **BOKO HARAM**, **GAZA** ...

...CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM IN THE STATES, THE **NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT**--



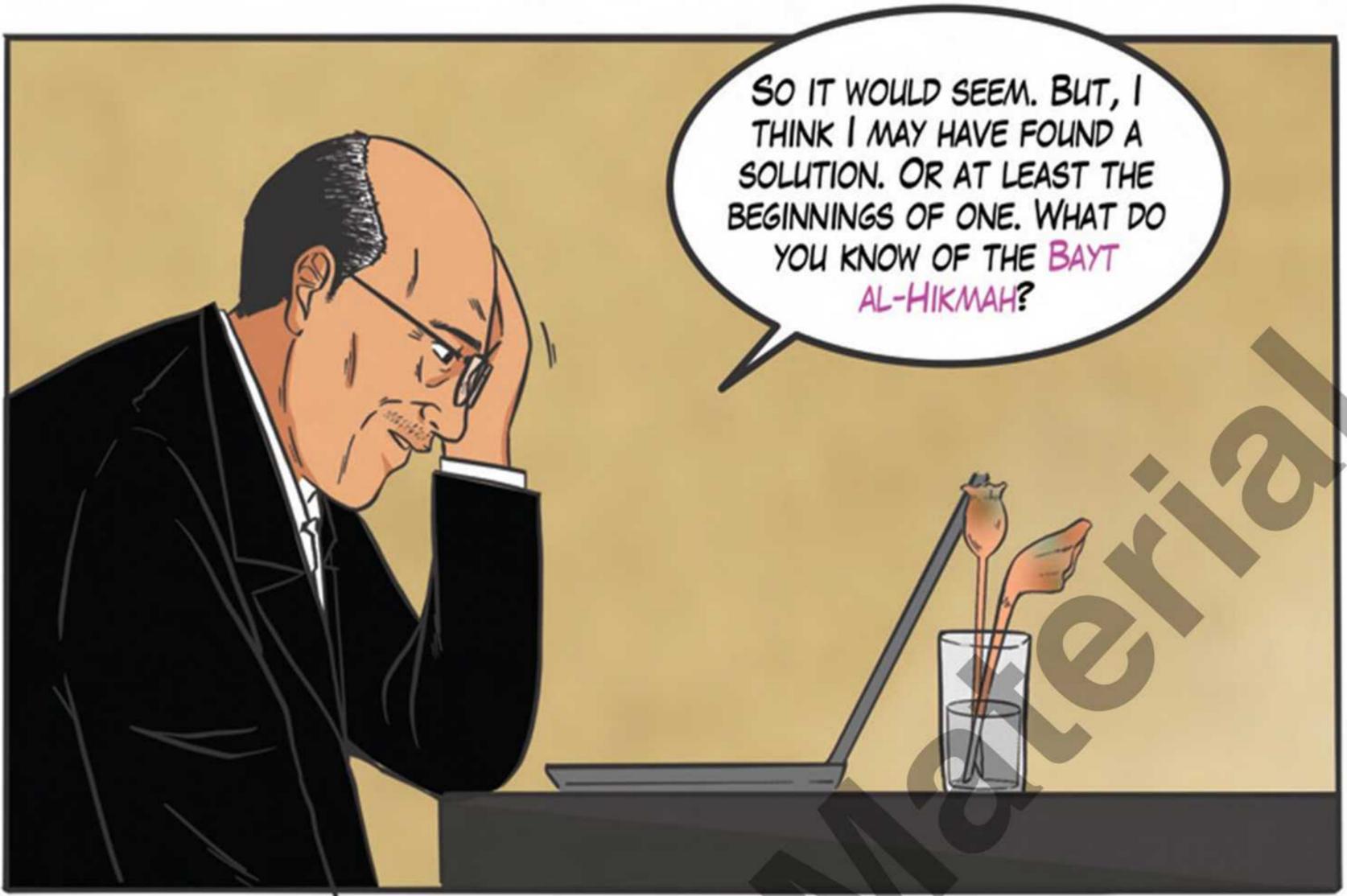
YOUR HOLINESS, YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I WHAT THE ANSWER IS.

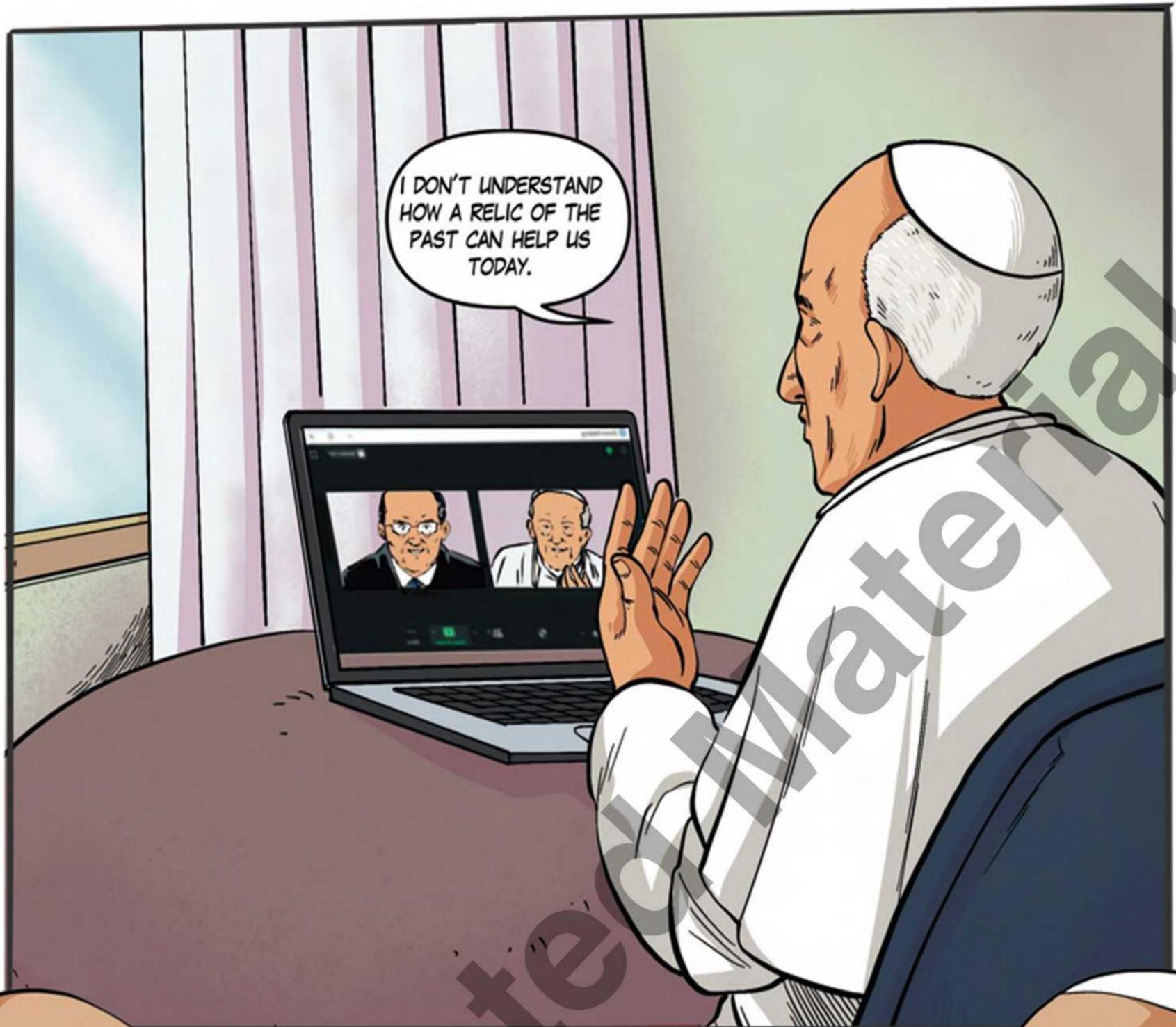
OK, OK, MY FRIEND. PEACE. I KNOW. I KNOW, THE WORLD IS IN CRISIS. IT SEEMS FOR EVERY FIRE EXTINGUISHED, FIVE MORE ARE IGNITED. SOMETHING MUST BE DONE. BUT, I ADMIT, I AM AT A LOSS.

AS YOU SAY, BARHAM. BUT, THE WORLD IS NOT THE ONE OF OUR YOUTH. THAT WORLD TURNED TO GOD IN TIMES OF TRIAL. THIS ONE? THIS WORLD IS TOO ENLIGHTENED FOR OUR GOD.



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I DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW A RELIC OF THE PAST CAN HELP US TODAY.



DO YOU MEAN WHAT DOES A 1,200-YEAR-OLD ISLAMIC CENTER FOR LEARNING HAVE TO DO WITH BROKERING PEACE IN THE NAME OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE?

COME TO IRAQ AND FIND OUT.

