Episode #1. Hurricane Irma leaves dozens dead in the U.S. and Caribbean

Hurricane Irma devastated much of the Caribbean and parts of Florida last week and weekend, killing at least 61 people total and leaving thousands homeless. The storm was the second powerful hurricane to hit the United States in just two weeks, following Hurricane Harvey in Texas and Louisiana.

The damage was particularly severe in the Caribbean, where the storm brought torrential rains and winds as high as 185 miles per hour. On the small island of Barbuda, an estimated 95 percent of buildings were damaged and destroyed, and on St. Martin, around six in 10 homes are now uninhabitable. In Cuba, 10 people died and parts of Havana’s historic district were flooded with chest-high water.

European leaders including French president Emmanuel Macron, King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands, and British Foreign Minister Boris Johnson visited the Caribbean earlier this week, promising to rebuild. U.S. President Donald Trump is scheduled to visit Florida tomorrow. An estimated 25 percent of homes in the Florida Keys at the southern tip of the state were destroyed during the storm.

Joshua: They say that there are different stages of grief following a traumatic event. I don’t remember exactly what they are right now, but I think it’s shock, denial, something else, and then anger ... Emily, I am already at the anger stage.

Emily: I’m still in the shock stage... and very sad.

Joshua: I’m sad too, but I’m very upset. What I mean is: When will people acknowledge the role that global warming played in these storms, Emily?! Irma and Harvey are the first time that two Category 4 Atlantic Ocean hurricanes have hit the U.S. -- and they’ve happened within two weeks! You know why?

Emily: Global warming, you say?

Joshua: I say! Isn’t that obvious? Global warming will only make these kinds of storms more intense, and more frequent.

Emily: You’re probably right ....But, I think now it’s time to focus on helping people to rebuild. We’ll have plenty of time to discuss the root cause...

Joshua: No! This is exactly the time to have these discussions! If these storms don’t focus people’s attention on climate change, what will? It’s exactly as the pope said this week: that those who deny climate change should go to the scientists and ask them.

Emily: Joshua, unfortunately, I suspect that people will look for reasons to downplay the role of global warming in this. Some will say that the hurricanes happening so close in time is just a coincidence, and unrelated to climate change...

Joshua: And that is exactly what makes me angry... and sad.