

A CEASEFIRE CENTO

PALESTINIAN POETS WRITE A RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the house / next door no longer / stands. It's lying like an old carpet / on the floor of the earth, / trampled by missiles, fat slippers / flying off legless feet; and

WHEREAS, every time we leave the house, / it's suicide. / And each return a failed attempt; and

WHEREAS, a child who was shot by an Israeli sniper, or killed during an air raid enroute to school. Her picture was placed on her desk at school. Her picture stares at the blackboard, while air sits in her chair; and

WHEREAS, more missiles come flying in, / on the lookout for anything that moves. // Angels get hold of an infant niece. / We look around and find only / her milk bottle; and

WHEREAS, the grieving have only the unknown. / It's their only staple and inheritance. / Pain has no logic. All things redeem / the grieving except your rational questions; and

WHEREAS, for us, / the fear of dying before living / haunts us while we are still / in our mother's wombs; and

WHEREAS, the house has been bombed. Everyone dead: / The kids, the parents, the toys, the actors on TV, / characters in novels, personas in poetry collections, / the I, the he, and the she; and

WHEREAS, the houses were not Hamas. / The kids were not Hamas. / Their clothes and toys were not Hamas. / The neighborhood was not Hamas. / The air was not Hamas. / Our ears were not Hamas. / Our eyes were not Hamas; and

WHEREAS, the noose is tightening around the city's neck; and

WHEREAS, it's a barbaric era, / our loneliness, / one when none will stand up for us; and

WHEREAS, during the night airstrikes, all of us turned / into stones; and

WHEREAS, we're carrying our souls / right under our shoulders; and

WHEREAS, in Gaza, you can find a man planting a rose in the hollow space of an unexploded tank shell, using it as a vase; and

WHEREAS, those who win by killing fewer children / are losers.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that we, the poets, grant you refuge / in invocation and prayer. / We bless the neighborhood and the minaret / to guard them / from the rocket / from the moment / it is a general's command / until it becomes a raid. / We grant you and the little ones refuge, / the little ones who / change the rocket's course / before it lands / with their smiles.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that knives might eat / what remains of our ribs, / machines might smash / what remains of stones, / but life is coming, / for that is its way, / creating life even for us.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Justice / is the right of all who live / in the wrong places in this world

ULTIMATELY, BE IT RESOLVED, that Death goes home alone, safe and sound / so a dove might build its nest / and lay its eggs in metal helmets.

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Lines gathered by Carolyn A. Cushing from the poets **Mosab Abu Toha** (MAT) [from **Things You May Find Hidden in My Ear**], **Maya Abu Al-Hayyat** (MAA) [from **You Can Be the Last Leaf**, translated by Fady Joudah], **Hiba Abu Nada** (HAN) [from *I Grant You Refuge* and *Loneliness* translated by Huda Fakhreddine, killed in an Israeli air strike on October 20, 2023], **Saleem Al-Naffar** (SAN) [from *Life* translated by Muhammad Jihad Ismael, buried under the rubble after an Israeli airstrike on December 7, 2023], and **Mahmoud Darwish** (MD) [from *Mural* translated by Fady Joudah, regarded as Palestine's national poet, died 2008].

Some pronouns changed to we to make it a collective poem and connectives added to fit with the format of the resolution.

Order of lines: MAT, MAA, MAT, MAT, MAA, MAT, MAT, MAT, MAT, HAN, MAT, MAA, MAT, MAA, HAN, SAN, MAA, MD (2 lines combined).