

Out of the huts of history's shame

I rise

Up from a past that's rooted in pain

I rise

I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,

Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear

I rise

Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear

I rise

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من أكواخ عارِ التاريخ  
أنا أنهض  
من ماضٍ تأصلَ في الألم  
أنا أنهضُ  
أنا بحرٌ أسودٌ ، متوثبٌ وعريضٌ  
أندفقُ وأعلو و أشقُ طريقي في التيارِ .  
تاركةً ورائي ليالي الرعبِ والخوفِ  
أنا أنهضُ  
إلى فجرٍ جليٍّ رائعٍ الإشراقِ  
أنا أنهضُ  
(مايا أنجيلو) الولايات المتحدة 1978

The past few weeks have been extremely harsh for all of us. We have witnessed a cruel war on Gaza, a war that has claimed thousands of victims.

On the Israeli side, citizens are under permanent threat, particularly in the southern part of the country. This current aggression on Gaza was preceded by incidents of racism and violence inside of Israel. Over the past weeks this racism was increasingly ignited and supported by the political leadership and the media. As a result there have been acts of violence against Palestinian-Arab citizens of Israel and human rights activists in Israel. There has been incitement, assaults and threats to Palestinians and Jews who demonstrated against the war. In these moments we feel that our faith in partnership and solidarity is being tested.

We, the women of "Mahapach-Taghir," will not stand silent. We choose to question and doubt the inevitability of fighting. We condemn the killings, the incitement and the persecution that has become normal and are committed in our name. As activists in an organization that aims to create solidarity between communities in civil society, we, women and men, Jews and Palestinians, want to believe that a world that holds the value of life as supreme is possible.

We will continue with our activities and with dialogues within and between communities. We will continue our struggle for the right to life and dignity. As women acting together for equality and justice, we choose partnership. We choose life.

Within this shared space, we ache and worry about the recent events. Driven by our mutual sense of living under constant threat, we choose to proceed and act together. We hope to expose the "divide and conquer" policy that creates a factious society of "Us" and "Them." This policy nurtures the illusion that entrance to the Israeli society can be purchased through bloodshed and the sacrifice of life.

We, at "Mahapach-Taghir" wish to change the rules of the game. We wish to build an alternative that rejects the dichotomy of "us" and "them," confronts oppression and does

not accept it. We come with a proposition for dialogue which creates solidarity between communities. We choose to be partners and not enemies.

In this society, our basic rights to shelter, education, livelihood, health, welfare and identity are being withheld in exchange for loyalty. We citizens are being prevented from making decisions about our own lives, and are being cut off from the resources that belong to us all. We refuse to accept the role of the mourners. We insist, despite the difficulty and suspicions planted within our souls, on discussing the elements of our common life here, and to create an alternative to a system that is repeatedly causing mutual loss of life. We, the women of "Mahapach-Taghir" choose life and solidarity.

We demand that the government take responsibility, stop the killing, the siege and the occupation and shift the enormous resources invested in the war industry to initiatives that will promote true security for the residents of the south and the periphery. We demand that the government halt the political persecution of its citizens, rehabilitate Gaza following the destruction, and allow life for the women, children and men survivors.

We will not fall into the manipulations of escalation, which prepare the ground for economic edicts, privatization of public institutions and the weakening of entire communities within society. As corpses begin to pile up and opposition is met with political persecution, we, the women of "Mahapach-Taghir," choose life.

Through our pain, worry, fear and anger, we refuse to be helpless. We are not willing to obey orders to be silent, nor will we surrender to silencing. We choose to speak out our diverse voices, to take a stand regarding the separation, racism, hate and violence annihilating our routine life, particularly in times of war. We view all of these elements as part of a long-term discriminatory, institutional policy of neglecting communities in the geographical and social peripheries. In the face of the "divide and conquer" policy of a government that abandons its citizens and incites them against each other, we propose

an alternative. Our alternative is discussion and forgiveness based on recognition and respect for every individual's religious, national and ethnic identity.

As women who live this conflict and are not immune to the trauma and sacrifice, we refuse to replicate hatred through the generation. We choose forgiveness and empathy in order to restore, for ourselves and the others, our humanity and morality in order to restore influence over our own lives. This serves as a counter practice to society's racism, forcefulness and militarism.

Our duty as Jewish and Palestinian activists is to go on strengthening the dialogue that unveils the power relations existing in our society. Our duty is to go on dreaming of a society in which racism, killing, oppression and separation will seem like a distant memory.