



For Gaza

Martha Collins

Poet, Translator, and Editor

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“For Gaza” by poet Martha Collins belongs to a sequence of poems she wrote in January 2009, when she was reading as much as she could about the siege of Gaza; her sources included the *New York Times*, *Guardian (UK)*, and *New Statesman*. The immediate impetus for this poem was a public reading by political writers and poets in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on January 30, 2009; many of the readings, including her own, featured poems by Mahmoud Darwish. Collins wrote the poem after the gathering, which was itself called “For Gaza.”

for the woman who cooks on a fire of sticks and boards beside her shell of a house, her
bag of clothes on a tree

for physician Awni al-Jaru, his wife cut in half, his year-old-son *turned to pieces*

for the 30 dead Samouni family members dug out of the rubble, for the living, including
children who clutched dead mothers

for the schools and mosques and thousands of homes destroyed by bombs, for the graves
disturbed by tanks

for the more than 1300 dead, including those who walked from their homes, as directed,
with white flags

for those going home to water their trees, lemon and almond and olive, and for those trees

for Gaza, for Palestine/Israel, for ourselves, for hope for peace

January 30, 2009

Martha Collins is the author of the book-length poem *Blue Front* (Graywolf, 2006), which won an Anisfield-Wolf Award and was chosen as one of “25 Books to Remember from 2006” by the New York Public Library. Collins has also published four collections of poems, two collections of co-translations of Vietnamese poetry, and two chapbooks of poems. Founder of the Creative Writing Program at UMass Boston and Pauline Delaney Professor of Creative Writing at Oberlin College until 2007, Collins is currently editor-at-large for *FIELD* magazine and one of the editors of the Oberlin College Press. In Spring 2010, she will serve as Distinguished Visiting Writer at Cornell University.