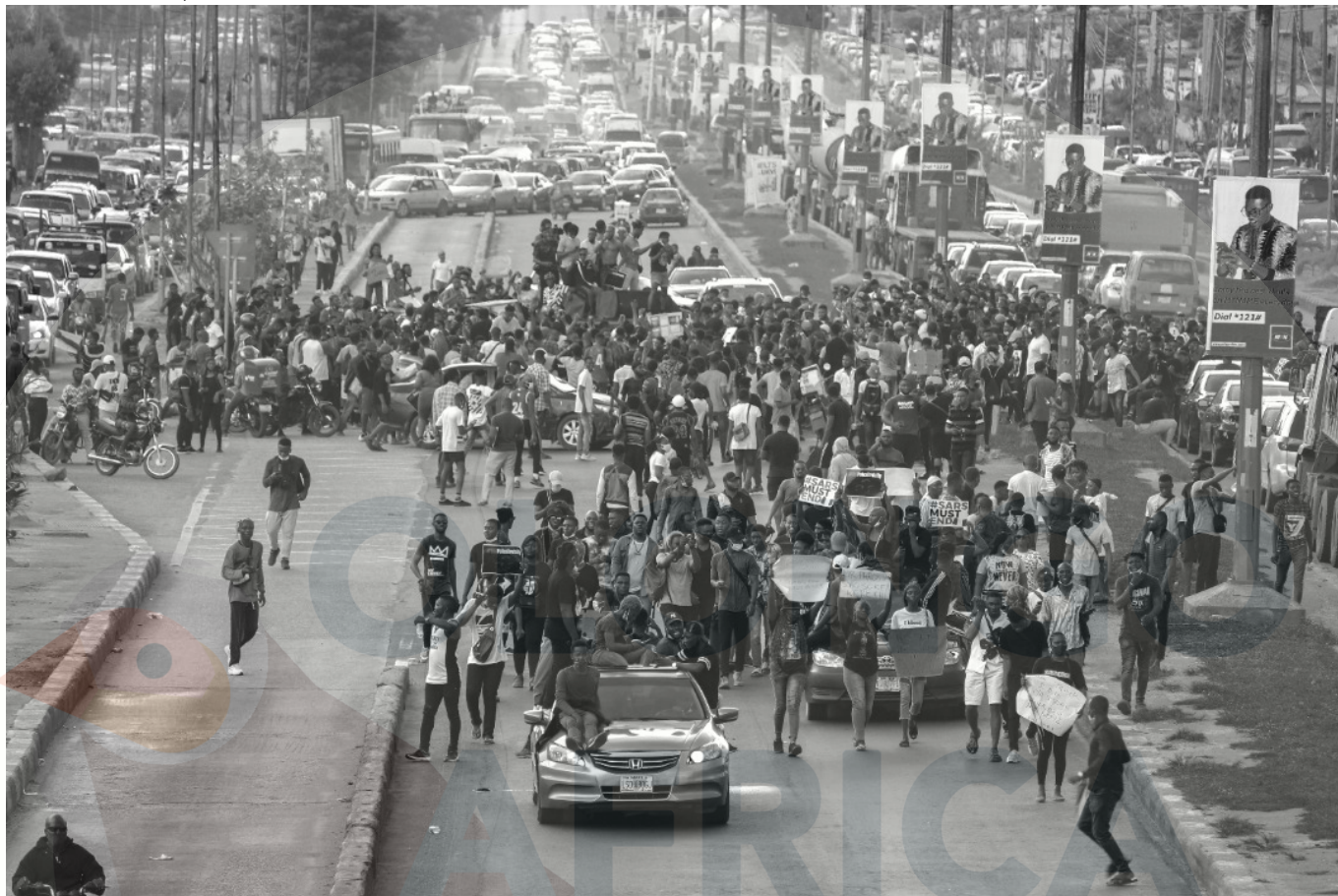


To Miscarry A Country

Salawu Olajide
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i ask that you return the dead, god, i ask that you turn
the bullets toward the hands that shot into the crowd

in Fagba, a bullet tears open the stomach of a
pregnant woman

i'd like to ask the drafting angel what it intends to do
with the stillborn

we can be stones here, be trees, because in this country
anything can die in a policeman's hand

i was counting myself lucky the night a bullet visited us
& smeared my brother's head, & spat his blood on the white wall.

is it the hand that carried the gun or mine rocking my dead
brother in my chest – is it the moon watching the anarchy

against Israel or the rapture of sound, the emissions of light
or the father of three whose wife will never hold in her bosom

a mother whose child was taken into custody for nothing

died 16 days after fasting for his release.

i loved the country you gave me before it started
to spit stars out of its foggy throat
before a group of policemen gathered innocent boys
& burned them for sports

what would you say about the captivities of zion now that
the valley is a pile of empty bones

at the toll gate, we sang & wrapped the flag around our waists
& cheered & danced & raised placards, & stuck two fingers
into the air to poke you

Adedayo Agarau is the third-place winner of the Frontier Industry Prize, 2020. His Chapbook, *Origin of Names*, was selected by Chris Abani and Kwame Dawes for New Generation African Poet (African Poetry Book Fund, 2020).



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