**Exodus with Qita**

by Stella Miles

My devices bombard me with images of the struggling,

straggling mass of dispossessed humanity in war-ravaged Gaza.

A donkey, overloaded with a few precious possessions,

plods alongside a Jeep jammed with people and more things.

Women – properly covered of course – Allah demands modesty

even in wartime; children – some scared and crying, some

play fear away; men – trying to protect their families:

all forced to flee from impending doom with nowhere to go.

I spot an odd sight – a hijab-covered woman balancing

a small pet carrier on her head. It contains a qita (cat).

I hug my own feline friend more tightly as if to protect her

from that qita’s plight in the peoples’ flight.

This exodus is happening, I remind myself, because Hamas

attacked, murdered and kidnapped innocent Israeli civilians

less than two months ago, provoking predictable retribution

and retaliation from Israel.

It’s also a continuation of the Jewish/Muslim centuries-old conflict

over religion and real estate to determine which of their self-created gods,

Yahweh or Allah, has granted his chosen people sole right

to the promised land – that they are both destroying in his name.

To blunt my grief for the suffering people in Israel and Gaza

(and that qita), and lessen shame at my relief for my cat and myself

safe in the USA, I stroke my kitty and stream YouTube cat videos

and Christian Comedy.