

## Home

There is no greater loss than the loss of home. For it is not merely the loss of a protecting roof that causes the incurable pain of home loss; it is the disappearance of rootedness, dignity, and purpose, which home embodies, that leave the homeless in despair.

In reaction to the German Blitz on London during the Second World War, Churchill's friend and advisor, Professor Frederick Lindemann, sent the English prime minister a memorandum that subsequently became known as the Dehousing Paper. It proposed that German cities like Hamburg and Dresden should be reduced to rubble, stating that 'having one's home demolished is most damaging to morale. People seem to mind it more than having their friends or even relatives killed... there seems little doubt that this would break the spirit of the people.' Since then, it became a standard to weaponise the attack on home in wars; for the loss of home is a loss of hope.

I look at these pictures of different shelters to which people had to resort after losing their homes, and I see how they tried all their best to transform those makeshift places into something that resembles—however remotely—the memory of home. They carried fragments of their memories and lives in their pockets or around their necks, using these fragments to pave something meaningful and beautiful. Their places are clean, ordered and sensitive, as much as the hardship of reality allows. But home must be permanent, it cannot be temporary. A home also has to allow a person to grow attachments beyond the cocoon of protection. It is through productivity that the dignity of us humans is maintained. With her egg, Halima sets an example which testifies to this truth.

Half of the population of my own country, Syria, has been displaced. Countless people lost their homes. It fills my heart with great pain to see their faces in the pictures of their shelters, where they carried the beauty of their lands and put it up on the walls and deep in the soil. It is with the same sadness and pain that I watch the news of the erasure of Gaza as all the world does helplessly. However, pictures of beauty and resilience as those here, must offer us hope; because it is the love of home which will unite people with their places again.

Marwa al-Sabouni

*Writer and Architect based in Homs, Syria*



Hej!

Here's a holiday greeting from us. This package includes a model of a shelter turned cinema in Chad, an essay by architect Marwa al-Sabouni, and a preview of something I'm very proud of: a work-in-progress preview of a book featuring our photo project *What Makes a Home*.

This project captures life in our shelters across Syria, Chad, Türkiye, Brazil, and India, shifting the focus from adversity and trauma to brief moments of joy and dignity. *What Makes a Home* was first exhibited in New York in 2024 with more exhibitions and the release of the book to follow in 2025.

Marwa's text highlights a truth we deeply sympathise with: a shelter, no matter how well-designed, can never replace the sense of dignity, purpose, and rootedness that a permanent home offers. She writes, "The loss of home is not merely the loss of a protecting roof... it is the disappearance of rootedness, dignity, and purpose." These words reflect our own belief that no one should have to live in a temporary shelter for an extended period.

Her essay invites reflection on the complexity of our work. It challenges us to think deeply about our role while also affirming the necessity of what we do.

Your support allows us to continue this vital work — giving families the opportunity to rebuild, even when life feels most fragile. Together, we can help ensure that temporary shelters are not the end but a pathway to a real home.

Thank you

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Johan", with a long, sweeping underline.

Johan Karlsson  
Managing Director  
Better Shelter