

Dear Gohar,

I'm glad you honor me with the title "friend". Reading your letter, I realized that we have similar mindsets and a similar desire for peace.

You've already mentioned the outcomes of peace: peaceful sky, joy, happiness and prosperity. Azerbaijan and Armenia are neighbors. The nations that are in such a difficult political situation are deprived of certain privileges: we're not able to travel. Both Armenia and Azerbaijan have beautiful places that should be seen. Some of us can't even visit our birthplaces.

We're also deprived of friends. People who see each other as enemies now were once friends and can be friends in the future, too. It will take years before we can trust each other again. I'm from a small region where Armenians used to live as well during the Soviet years. The population lived peacefully until the events of the 1990s which created hatred. Armenians left Azerbaijani lands, leaving the houses where they had dwelled for decades, though not all of them did so; some changed their names staying in their native land.

While looking at my mom's school photos, I found a few where the faces of some children were torn. Later I learned that there had been Armenian kids at my mom's group who had once been perceived as her friends, but she tried to remove them from her life and memories. She did it because of the events of 1989–1990s that changed the mindset of the teenager; she lost trust in the people she knew.

As we're at war, we're also deprived of gaining knowledge. Exchange of experience is the best way, but we're unable to share our knowledge with a country that is so close geographically and ethnically.

We spend too much money on weaponry, defense, and border protection. It's not difficult to imagine how medicine, education and other areas will be transformed if that money isn't spent on ARMOR.

What are the roads that lead to peace? This is a question in your letter that is difficult to answer. I think the people have a key role. We've built the first road, and I'm sure there are many others like me and you. You mention stereotypes. Unfortunately it's so difficult to break them. My friend's father was one of the last people who left Kelbajar. Her sisters told him that they were not going to leave the native lands and left for the mountains, and there has been no news from them so far. How can that family break stereotypes? How can they believe in peace? How can they accept those (Armenians) who have been living in their houses for 20 years already after they left Kelbajar? These people still keep the keys to their houses in Kelbajar, hoping to return one day. It's difficult to persuade these people that peace is possible.

I'm sure you have many similar stories, too, dear friend. Breaking the stereotypes and accepting and trusting each other are the greatest challenges we face. But it's temporary, and I'm sure we're going to accomplish it with honor. The next generation isn't going to communicate via

letters, but will be able to talk to each other personally. Peace is freedom of speech, mind and mobility. Peace is reconciliation and serenity. Peace is joy.