

Dera Milena,

I've read your letter and had mixed feelings. Among these feelings was gladness that a 16-year-old young lady is so peace-loving. On the other hand, I had a feeling of regret that you praise your nation and your people. I will now explain my feelings in this letter.

Milena, I live in Baku and I am Azerbaijani. But if you'd like to give a name to my status, I'm an internally displaced person. My family was violently expelled from their lands in the past. I don't want to speak about the reasons for that incident because beyond my status and your being Armenian is our being humans created by God. I want to talk about the values of peace and humanity.

I was especially attracted to your letter among others. Dreaming of peace at 16 and being willing to help the injured without differentiating between them is truly noble. I want to ask you for a favor -- if you want peace, want it with all your heart. When you feel peace, just be Milena and not a representative of the Armenian nation. I will do the same. When I wish for peace between our states and for the whole world, I become just a girl who wants to see peace and help achieve peace. Then I try to forget about national identity and past incidents. It's very pleasing that under the same blue sky, you and I wish for a happy and peaceful life for both sides and for all humanity. Let the two of us, you and I, let "US" seek peace.

All human values -- like justice and humanism -- are more important than egos, national identity, revenge, and hatred. I write this letter with a deep sense of responsibility, and I wish that both of us keep the value of peace in our hearts. There is one thing that I want you to remember. You are not Armenian Milena to me. You are Milena, a 16-year-old peace advocate with a compassionate heart and good intentions, and I wish you to always stay that way.

Best regards,

Gunel -- a young girl seeking peace