

Hi, Lilit!

Thank you for your amazing letter! It was very interesting to read your opinions. You were very sincere, which is very important for me. You gave brief information about yourself and mentioned that you want to hear something about me. I am also a 20-year-old girl who moved from another city to the capital for studying. It seems, I got a letter from someone with whom I have a similar lifestyle. I do not miss that much my city as I stay with my family and I really love the architecture of this city where I live now. More than that, I feel very lucky. Unlike some of my peers, I can visit my motherland whenever I want. Some people have never seen the places where their parents used to live. I know you are familiar with this situation and you probably have such acquaintances. By the way, you mentioned that you are studying tourism. What a coincidence, I am a tour guide! I guide tourists in the city center as well as in suburb areas such as Gobustan, Ateshgah. Baku is amazing! Old city, Shirvanshakh Palace, Maiden Tower, etc. It also has an Armenian Church. It is not destroyed and our government preserves it until now. To be frank, my major is completely different. I do this work as a hobby. I love my job because I enjoy talking with different people from different countries. Probably my work helped me to be that much tolerant. We both are very lucky for that reason :).

I checked your motherland in Google. That place is very nice and it is great that you feel proud of your homeland! I also moved from a small city named Goychay. It is located in the central part of my country and famous with pomegranates. There are 40 types of pomegranates which are popular not only in my country but also in other neighboring countries. I also have some relatives from Gabala (we call this place the Switzerland of Azerbaijan). This is my favorite place, especially for summer holidays. You can look at photographs in Google if you want ☺ .

I suppose this is your first peace project. Probably, your first time contacting somebody from Azerbaijan. I feel proud for that! Even though I do not know you, I could change some stereotypes as you said that I changed you. In terms of myself, it is not my first peace project. I have participated in similar projects before. I was in Georgia a couple times because of peace building trainings and this is why I have many acquaintances from Armenia. Even with some of them, we can discuss some sensitive topics without any problem because we can understand each other, because we can tolerate each other. I hope we also will see each other and have a chance to know ourselves. You may not imagine how many similarities we have! Our mindset, beliefs, stereotypes, thinking style. EVEN WEDDING CEREMONIES! ;)

I hope you and me will be able to change something. It is not that easy. I am sure you also understand this. Nevertheless, I will try to change something since small things can cause big changes. It is hard because we are a minor part of society who think like that. This is why we should work harder and not give up! I know, you also have an enthusiasm for making changes. I have good news. You have already changed something in your society. You changed yourself! It is the biggest step for you. Now we should have an impact on others.

You mentioned about your worry for your brothers and close people. Believe me it is everywhere like that. Nobody wants war. Nobody wants to see dead bodies. Nobody wants to hear from news about how many people died. I was in Tartar (line of contact area) recently and

we had a talk with local children. They said that they could not visit a school for one month during April 2016. You cannot imagine how their faces were when those children described it. Almost every day they hear gunshots.

They are just small children but they experienced many tough moments in their short lives.

I think everybody knows that we are just tools in this war. We could solve this conflict years ago if there were not three sides. It is the biggest failure for both Armenia and Azerbaijan that we border on huge countries. To take an example, nowadays, about 30 million Azerbaijanis live in Iran, while this number is 10 million in my country. Even those people do not have autonomy there. We also were unlucky as we were part of the Soviet Union. I am sure you are also conscious about that. Other Post Soviet Union countries faced similar problems as well. In Georgia, Ukraine, etc. I noticed many similarities. For example, Ossetia and Ajaria make up

18% of all Georgia, as Nagorno–Karabakh and surrounding regions in Azerbaijan. There was a war in Donbass in April, and we had war in April too.

This is not that big of a problem if we look at it globally. We can find a solution! There are thousands of situations all over the world that show how people could solve such conflicts. Maybe you have heard about Aland Iceland in Finland. They also had such problem in 1917. You know, they could solve this conflict in four years. Can you imagine? We are struggling for 30 years! Peace is really possible! We can do it! I recommend you to do some research about that situation in Aland. It is exactly the same case as in Nagorno–Karabakh. As a result, they could solve this problem. Nowadays, Aland Iceland's local dwellers are the wealthiest people in all Finland. Now, they are very happy. This place attracts millions of tourists every year and is quite a safe place for everybody. I can give many examples where countries were enemies but nowadays, they are strong partners.

Now it is 02:43 at night and I am writing you this letter to the sound of piano music. I love listening to songs without words while I am typing something. Such songs do not contain words but they say many things.

They remind us of many happenings. They make us silent and they can make us aggressive. For example, songs can be used as a tool for making people enemies. In our occasion Sari Galin (Sari Astghik). Why don't people just listen to this song and continue their lives instead of arguing? Why should we prove ownership over a folk song?

I also recommend you to read my letter while listening to your favorite song ☺.

As you mentioned, I hear sad news as well. We could be very strong Caucasian countries as there are many opportunities for that. Caucasus is very rich with natural resources and if we did not have a war, I cannot imagine how strong we could be. However, it is not late! We can handle it! We can change everything. We can make many alterations for future generations, for our future, for the future of our countries. For me, human lives are crucial. We must think about future generations. I can empathize and understand the hardships of people who lost their

relatives. Exactly for that reason, we must stop the fighting! As you wrote, we are very strong and we can handle with these hardships. We are stronger together!

With love,

Zulfiyya

P.S. I wrote my letter in English in order to make accessible for you the original version of my letter. Maybe you would like to read without translation ☺