
LETTER TO FAMILY

Dearest Family,

If you are reading this, it means that something has happened to me in _____ - maybe I have been kidnapped or even killed. My heart is with you right now.

A few weeks ago, one of my neighbors here said, "We love you. Please do not break our hearts." I know that the present situation hurts you very much. I cannot imagine the pain you might feel if I suffer or die. Please, forgive me. All that gives me comfort is the belief that you can unite the suffering you feel with the suffering of people everywhere who have had to witness their loved ones' pain, and so offer it all as a prayer for peace and healing.

No matter what happens, and despite my own moments of doubt, I am grateful that I have been able to be here in _____, and I am so grateful for the love and care you have given me. I am sure both you and I will wonder if I made the right choice, but I did my best and hope you can forgive me.

It may help you to take any number of the following actions, as a way of responding to what has happened. Just a few suggestions that come to mind:

- Pray for peace and healing in the hearts of the kidnappers or whoever has harmed me. Pray for all people - _____, American, and others – who have lost loved ones in this violence.
- Call your Congresspersons, and tell them why I was here in _____. Encourage them to work for international policies of active nonviolence, risking friendship and understanding, dialogue and negotiation, rather than more violence. (You can find your Congressperson's phone numbers both in Washington, DC and in your home state by checking www.house.gov and www.senate.gov).
- Walk through your fear, in a specific way, to risk dialogue or friendship with some person or group who is different from you. Visit a mosque, a church, a temple, a synagogue. Or if you are a student, attend meetings of student groups who are different from you. Explore relationships with people of different ethnicities, religions, nationalities, ages, orientations.
- Learn about the use of nonviolent intervention throughout history. Here are a few sources:
A Man to Match His Mountains: Badshah Khan, Nonviolent Soldier of Islam: by Eknath Easwaran
Gandhi's writings
Stride Toward Freedom by Martin Luther King
A Force More Powerful by Peter Ackerman and Jack Duvall
- Forgive.
- And remember it's still OK to laugh and enjoy life.

I love you,
(signed)