

SOMETIMES, DEATH JUST HAPPENS

Both the White House and Kayla Jean Mueller have released statements confirming the death of the young humanitarian worker.

Here's the White House:

It is with profound sadness that we have learned of the death of Kayla Jean Mueller. On behalf of the American people, Michelle and I convey our deepest condolences to Kayla's family – her parents, Marsha and Carl, and her brother Eric and his family – and all of those who loved Kayla dearly. At this time of unimaginable suffering, the country shares in their grief.

Kayla dedicated her life to helping others in need at home and around the world. In Prescott, Arizona, she volunteered at a women's shelter and worked at an HIV/AIDS clinic. She worked with humanitarian organizations in India, Israel, and the Palestinian territories, compelled by her desire to serve others. Eventually, her path took her to Turkey, where she helped provide comfort and support to Syrian refugees forced to flee their homes during the war. Kayla's compassion and dedication to assisting those in need shows us that even amongst unconscionable evil, the essential decency of humanity can live on.

Kayla represents what is best about America, and expressed her deep pride in the freedoms that we Americans enjoy, and that so many others strive for around the world. She said: "Here we are. Free to speak out without fear of being killed, blessed to be protected by the same law we are subjected to, free

to see our families as we please, free to cross borders and free to disagree. We have many people to thank for these freedoms and I see it as an injustice not to use them to their fullest.”

Kayla Mueller used these freedoms she so cherished to improve the lives of others. In how she lived her life, she epitomized all that is good in our world. She has been taken from us, but her legacy endures, inspiring all those who fight, each in their own way, for what is just and what is decent. No matter how long it takes, the United States will find and bring to justice the terrorists who are responsible for Kayla’s captivity and death.

ISIL is a hateful and abhorrent terrorist group whose actions stand in stark contrast to the spirit of people like Kayla. On this day, we take comfort in the fact that the future belongs not to those who destroy, but rather to the irrepressible force of human goodness that Kayla Mueller shall forever represent.

And Mueller’s family:

We are heartbroken to share that we’ve received confirmation that Kayla Jean Mueller, has lost her life.

Kayla was a compassionate and devoted humanitarian. She dedicated the whole of her young life to helping those in need of freedom, justice, and peace.

In a letter to her father on his birthday in 2011, Kayla wrote:

‘I find God in the suffering eyes reflected in mine. If this is how you are revealed to me, this is how I will forever seek you.’

‘I will always seek God. Some people

find God in church. Some people find God in nature. Some people find God in love; I find God in suffering. I've known for some time what my life's work is, using my hands as tools to relieve suffering.'

Kayla was drawn to help those displaced by the Syrian civil war. She first traveled to Turkey in December, 2012 to provide humanitarian aid to Syrian refugees. She told us of the great joy she took in helping Syrian children and their families.

We are so proud of the person Kayla was and the work that she did while she was here with us. She lived with purpose, and we will work every day to honor her legacy.

Our hearts are breaking for our only daughter, but we will continue on in peace, dignity, and love for her.

We remain heartbroken, also, for the families of the other captives who did not make it home safely and who remain in our thoughts and prayers. We pray for a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Syria.

Both statements appropriately salute her life, emphasizing what a tragedy her death is.

But neither statement includes any agent with her death. The White House has "learned of the death of Kayla Jean Mueller." Her family confirms she "has lost her life."

Amid ISIL's allegations that she was killed in a Jordanian bomb strike, the utter lack of an agency here seems to suggest those claims are correct. When ISIL kills a hostage, agency is at the forefront. When a bomb kills a hostage, no one is to blame.

None of that justifies ISIL's hostage taking, nor does it absolve them of guilt in Mueller's killing. But the language here deserves notice.

Update: Her family has released this heartbreaking, but inspiring letter, from Mueller:

I remember mom always telling me that all in all in the end the only one you really have is God. I have come to a place in experience where, in every sense of the word, I have surrendered myself to our creator b/c literally there was no else... + by God + by your prayers I have felt tenderly cradled in freefall. I have been shown in darkness, light + have learned that even in prison, one can be free. I am grateful. I have come to see that there is good in every situation, sometimes we just have to look for it.