

Statement of Michael Stumo, Father of Samya Stumo

Good morning. My name is Michael Stumo and I'm Samya Stumo's dad. My wife Nadia woke me up early in the morning on March 10 to say that a plane crash happened in Ethiopia. I did not believe Samya could be on the plane. I could not lose another child.

But she was on the plane. I could not breathe. My son Tor paced and sobbed. We drove three hours to New York city to find the earliest airplane to go to Addis.

Twenty years ago, we lost a 2 year old child, Nels, to cancer. Samya and Nels were best friends. When my wife and I were in hospitals with Nels, Samya was frustrated that she was not being taught how to read. So she taught herself to read. She was four years old.

After Nels died, we bought a farm and moved to it because life, we discovered, is short. We home schooled Samya and our two sons. We needed to be together. Samya raised pigs at the age of nine, driving a tractor and a stripped down jeep across the fields to haul water to them. She eventually went to high school and graduated early.

She traveled the world from Peru to Denmark to Tanzania. But despite job opportunities on other continents, she pursued a job in Washington DC and was hired by ThinkWell, a global health nonprofit organization based there.

She wanted be nearer to us, and to her grandmother, her grandfather and her great uncle and great aunt. Just in case something happened.

Something did happen. But it happened to her. Her new employer sent Samya to Uganda to set up new offices. The Boeing 737 Max 8 drove itself and fully buried itself in the ground at hundreds of miles per hour, disintegrating into small pieces under the earth.

We flew there to bring her home. But we learned there were no survivors. Then we learned we could not bring home her body or even fragments of her body. I stood on that Ethiopian agricultural field, with my family, looking at the crater. Feeling her.

This should not happen to anyone again. That is why we are here.