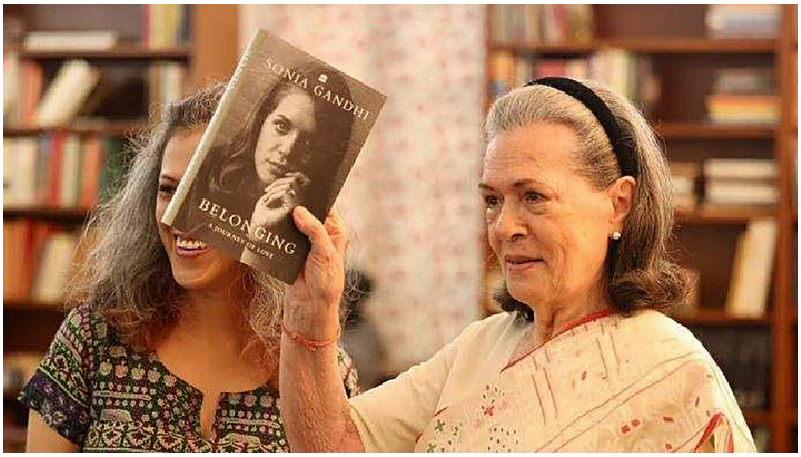
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Sonia Gandhi recalls pleading with Rajiv not to become PM after Indira's assassination: 'They will kill you'



CHENNAI – 8 Nov, 2026 Sonia said she was overwhelmed by anger and anguish at the prospect of Rajiv taking over as prime minister, fearing that he too could become a target.

Former Congress president Sonia Gandhi pleaded with her husband, Rajiv Gandhi, not to become India's prime minister following the assassination of his mother, Indira Gandhi, on October 31, 1984. In an edited extract from her memoir published by The Guardian, Sonia recounts the emotional moments after Indira Gandhi was shot dead by her bodyguards at her 1, Safdarjung Road residence in New Delhi. Rajiv Gandhi was in West Bengal, attending a political rally, when he was informed that a serious incident had taken place in Delhi. He rushed back to the national capital and landed at around 3.30 pm before being driven straight to the hospital. Recalling their meeting at the hospital, Sonia said she longed to be alone with her husband for a moment. However, she soon realised that Rajiv was about to tell her something she did not want to hear.

"We held each other, and as he spoke to me, it sunk in that he was saying something I didn't want to hear. 'I have been asked; They want me to be sworn in as prime minister,'" she wrote.

Sonia said she was overwhelmed by anger and anguish at the prospect of Rajiv taking over as prime minister, fearing that he too could become a target.

"I felt as if a knife had been plunged right into my heart. I felt a pounding in my chest, a rage welling up deep inside me. I was about to explode. I attempted to hold it in," she recalled.

She said she questioned why Rajiv had been asked to take up the responsibility and pleaded with him to refuse.

Sonia recalled bursting into tears and begging Rajiv with folded hands not to accept the position, warning that his life could also be in danger.

No, no, you can't think of it. You have to stop them, you must refuse, you must say no, for the children's sake, for yourself. You can't do this to us. They will kill you; they will kill you, too!" she recalled telling him. According to Sonia, Rajiv responded: "They will kill me anyway."

She said the exchange left her overwhelmed by pain and fear as she tried to persuade her husband against taking over as prime minister.