

This is the testimony of Jossiane, a survivor of the Rwandan genocide

In my village, trouble actually began before the killing of the President. Many people were just awaiting the orders to kill. On the 7th April our village was attacked. The children and women ran off to the bushes to hide. People knew to avoid churches, because a Tutsi priest had already been killed there. Nowhere was thought to be safe.

Meanwhile, the men of the village managed to get hold of some weapons and tried to put up a defence. The men fought for about a week, until the militia sent reinforcements for the *interahamwe*. Then the men fled.

We decided that we should all congregate together in three homesteads next to one other, help each other, and if necessary die together, instead of running away in different directions. So we did just that. But after not long, we were found. Our houses were torched and as people ran out to escape the blaze they were chopped down with machetes, one by one. There were too many *interahamwe*, and therefore there was no escape. I was hit on the head, but the killer was stopped from killing me by a man who said he wanted to keep the women for spoil.

My family were then all killed as I watched. The men who killed my family gave me to an *interahamwe*, and even gave me an identity card of a Hutu. This man took me to his home and raped me every night, saying, I deserved all I got. This man brought more women to the house as spoils of the genocide. At one time, there were three of us sharing a house. One girl aged 19 years was killed because the man thought that she was too educated. This man then sold me to another man. He took me to his home, where he had a wife who at the time was heavily pregnant. The next day he brought my ten-year-old sister as well.



I knew this man as he was from the same neighbourhood as me. He said that he was kinder than all the other men. He believed that although he had bought me, the killers who had sold me to him would come back for me again. So he tried to keep me, and my sister, happy. But when the genocide was nearing an end he took us with his family to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Luckily his wife went into labour while we were on the road. He was so distraught and there was such chaos around us as there were so many people on route to exile, that my sister and I managed to sneak away. We ended up walking back to Rwanda. But we were happy, as we had finally managed to escape our captors.

Today's Reading of the Testimonies marks the 15th Anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, in support of survivors like Jossiane.