

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

I was 15 years old. I was a student in my first year of secondary school. My life was spared by the killers, but I did not escape rape. After the genocide I went to live in an orphanage.

In my district, women and girls were not killed, only older women. The killers selected those between the ages of 7 and 35, strong girls and women, and packed them into huts. There was literally nowhere to sleep. At night the killers came, took us out of the huts and raped us. We would then be returned to the huts, one after the other, early in the morning. The killers often threatened to burn the huts down if we refused them.

After weeks of relentless rape, in early May, we were transferred to the national stadium in Cyangugu. Some of the women were by then pregnant. One of them went into labour when we were being transferred to the stadium. The killers boasted that if she had a baby boy they would kill the baby. Luckily the baby was a girl.

At the stadium, lists of men to be killed were read out. Every day, more men were taken in file to roadblocks to be slaughtered. We tried to conceal the men by dressing them as women. No one answered if their names were called. Refugees tried to put up a defence, when militia forced men out of the camp. But as time went on, more and more men were taken to be killed, and the killers brought more reinforcements with them.

Unable to easily kill refugees at the stadium, we were eventually taken to a camp. The camp was staffed by the Rwandan Red Cross, but people were still being taken to be killed and women were still being raped or abducted. There was a final call for all refugees to be smoked out of their hiding places and brought to the camps. The killers believed that this plan would enable them to surround and kill as many refugees as possible in one go.



Once the refugees were assembled, the killers then surrounded the camp. But thanks to a Colonel in charge who, knew the killers plans and had soldiers on standby to halt any killing, the final massacre was prevented. This was because, the French soldiers were due to arrive that evening to set up a safe zone for refugees, know as French Turquoise.

We were saved. But my mother had no means to bring us up, so we ended up in an orphanage. We now live with my mother, but our experiences have left us scarred forever.

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