

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

In Murambi, more than 40,000 people were killed. Tutsis who had stayed in their homes were killed immediately. Others who had hidden in bushes were found and killed. The remaining ones tried to reach Murambi. The camp was overwhelmed by people from various areas. We had been given the gendarmes to guide us. We thought that maybe we were going to survive. We realized that killings were organized. They would say we were their enemy, that the enemy had killed their president.

I was in Murambi with my parents, my brothers and sisters and neighbors. They would say we were snakes and that we were damned.

My testimony is going to tell of my life in the Murambi camp. I was still very young. To remember those atrocities puts me in a situation of desperation, I become traumatized, I fall. Murambi took from me my parents, my brothers and sisters, friends and neighbors. When I remember all of this, I become very sad. I have become an orphan and my parents had a disgraceful, dishonorable death. I hate myself and I feel that I do not love anybody.

After the president was killed on the April 6, they said on the radio that everybody should remain at home. The killings did not reach our commune immediately. However, it did start in our neighboring commune, Mudasomwa, and Tutsi refugees, many of whom had seen their houses burned, started to come. After that, the tension rose in our commune. We could hear the machetes being sharpened. The mayor of Nyamagabe had encouraged people to kill the Tutsis. According to him, we were snakes and had to be killed. We went to Murambi but some decided to look for refuge at the Catholic church of Gikongoro. Later they were brought to Murambi just like those who had gone to the Kigeme hospital.

The objective was to bring together as many people as possible so that it would be easier to kill them. In Murambi there were many people. All of the classrooms were full of people. Everyone who tried to go outside the camp was killed by interahamwe. The gendarmes had stopped three interahamwe attacks but interahamwe started to surround the camp. They cut the electricity and the running water coming into the camp. People were very thirsty, they could not have water, wash themselves or wash their clothes. We were all dirty and had lice. I remained in the same clothes.

On Wednesday, April 21, I will never forget that date; it was the worst day of my life. It was the day I lost my parents, my brothers and sisters. I understood that day that I would never see nor talk to them again. It was early in the morning, around 4:30, and I was sleeping. My father shook me awake. I did not know yet that we had been attacked. My father told me, "My son, wake up and come help us to bring stones. If you are to die, come and die with others. If you live, I hope you will live as a man." I then understood that we were being attacked. A few minutes later I heard explosions and gunfire. I was very scared and the land was shaking. It was my first time to hear gunfire and such explosions.

Interahamwe stormed in wearing bananas and eucalyptus leaves so that they could tell themselves apart from us. Our stones were not of any help since they had guns and grenades. The gendarmes were helping them. They had surrounded the camp so no one could escape. The women and the children had hidden in the classrooms. A neighbor who was alongside me was shot in his arm. My father asked me to go and hide on the floor above. As I made my way up, I saw many bodies. Some people who were screaming had lost their arms or legs. I could see interahamwe killing people with machetes and guns

I was in that room with my mother, brothers and sisters. Interahamwe were screaming, “You snakes, the government have given you to us.” I saw my mother and my sister macheted on their necks. Next came two interahamwe women. I could recognize them because they were our neighbors. They undressed my mother and my sister and went away with their clothes.

God was still with me. I was hiding behind a door under a body. I was strong though I was seeing people dying and a lot of blood. My little brother was crying. His arm was slashed with a machete. Another interahamwe woman came in and saw my brother crying. She said, “It is true snakes never die.” She left and came back with another man and finished my brother.

I was still feeling strong despite all of this. Some interahamwe came in the room, saw the bodies of my brother and my mother and said, “The blood of Tutsis will be against us.” I was still under a body and covered with blood. I realized that there were other people lying alongside me who were still alive. They were covered in blood. When they went outside I followed them. We then started to run. Interahamwe started to shoot at us. Andrew was hit on his leg. He tried to continue anyway but he fell down.

We continued to run. We made it outside the compound. We looked for the banana leaves so we would look like interahamwe to get out of Murambi.

It was still the morning. Later we found out that interahamwe were returning to the camp to look for survivors to kill. In the afternoon, they brought Caterpillars to bury the dead in a giant pit. I become very sad, angry. I get scared when I remember all of these atrocities. I wonder how a man can kill another without any reason. I feel I do not have any love for others or myself.

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