



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

Before the war, everything was fine. We had our parents and we did not have any problems at home. On April 7 1994, after the president was killed, we hid in the bushes. The neighbors started to hunt us. They said the President was assassinated by Tutsis so we should also be killed. After four days, they found my father in his hiding place and they killed him. We were chased from the house in which we were hiding. The owners did not want to have their house demolished because of us.

On the run, we were attacked again, captured and taken to the place where we were to be killed. My mother gave the killers 10,000 Francs and they said they were going to give us a better death. They said they were going to give us acid instead of using a machete. The acid was a mixture of old batteries, poison normally used to kill mice. They had dug a hole in which we were going to be thrown after they had killed us. My mother was breastfeeding a child and they asked her to put that mixture on her breasts. We drank the poison and they came back to see if we were dead.

Though, we suffered a lot, we did not die. But they attacked us again, this time beating us and leaving us there. Our neighbors, who were survivors too, were thrown in a hole and buried alive.

I thank God because my mother and my brother and two sisters are still alive. We have a problem because one of my sisters, and mother, were raped by a man who died of AIDS. They are both HIV positive. We look after each other and have no problems apart from those common to all orphans and survivors.

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