

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

When the war started, I was at home; I was not studying. I was not given the chance to enter a public secondary school, and my parents could not afford a private school. Though I was old enough, I had not paid attention to ethnic matters. I had five older brothers. They had not been able to carry on their secondary studies too. They had gone to Kigali to look for jobs. They were selling clothes in the main Kigali Market. They were in Kigali when the war started and were all killed in Kigali. I had stayed at home with the younger children and my parents.

In my area the killings started on April 10. I was fifteen years old. On that day, our parents suggested that we hide in the bushes outside and wait to see what was going to follow. Some of our Tutsi neighbors had already been killed. Among them was my teacher and his sons. It was on that day that we went to hide. Those killings happened during the night, so we would pass the day at home and spend each night outside in the bushes.

On April 18, the *interahamwe* attacked our home while I was in the toilet. Our toilets were not in the main house; they were outside. I could see what was happening through the window. They beat my family with machetes and swords. I saw everything without being able to intervene. There were about forty *interahamwe*. I only returned inside when they finished what they had wanted to do. I saw all of my family on the ground; they were all dead.

I sought shelter with a family I knew. They did not want to hide me but I refused to leave. They finally agreed to hide me, and I stayed in their house for two weeks. They sent me away when they heard that the *interahamwe* would kill anyone who was hiding Tutsis.

I went to the family of Jeanne. She was a Tutsi married to a soldier. I knocked on their door. Their house girl opened the door, asked me who I wanted and I said Jeanne. Jeanne came to the door, saw me, and shut it in my face. I stayed in front of their door and her husband came. He asked me what I wanted and I replied that I wanted Jeanne to hide me. He said that his house was not a hiding place. He suggested that I go to the roadblock about fifty metres up the road from there. "Go there; all you need is to be killed," he said.

He closed his door and went back in the house. I sat on their doorstep and a few minutes later he came and told me he was going to kill me himself. He took his pistol

and loaded it so I had to run. I was surprised by Jeanne. She was usually friendly to me. I see her nowadays but I never talk to her about that day. I do not know why.

I went to the hospital of Nyanza. I sat outside. I did not know what to do. A doctor came and asked me what I was doing there. He asked me to leave the hospital. He also asked me to go to the roadblock. He is still working at the Nyanza hospital. I remember a wounded Tutsi child he refused to help. He said that they were told not to treat that kind of patient at the hospital. The child was finally helped by a nurse named Anastasia, a Tutsi woman who was later killed. She was killed with another woman by soldiers and *interahamwe*. They both were raped first before they were killed.

I saw them when they were taken to be killed. It was a Wednesday. I do not remember the date but I know it was early May. I had managed to stay in the hospital. I always avoided the doctor because he had sent me away. During the day, I stayed with the relatives of the patients. They helped me. During the night, they would sleep in the rooms with their relatives and I had to spend my nights in the sorghum field of the hospital. One time, a girl called Pelagia who had been hired to clean the hospital came and told us that she knew that there were people hiding among us. We all knew that but everybody remained silent. She left and some hours later an *interahamwe* attack came. I knew some of them; they had machetes, swords, sticks and clubs.

I saw them when they were still far from the hospital. I decided to run off to another Hutu family I knew. It was risky but I went there anyway. Luckily, when I arrived they agreed to hide me. After two weeks, they told me that we had to go to Gikongoro because the war was approaching. I told them I would not be going with them. They left me alone in the house.

Many killers were fleeing the region. I managed to stay until I was rescued. I was taken to a camp in Nyanza. Nobody knew each other in the camp but we were all happy because the horror had ended. In the camp, they gave us food and water. I stayed in this place until I met a family there that was willing to adopt me. They lived in Kigali and they helped me to return to school. I have now finished studying and I live in Kigali. I do not have a job but I am hopeful because God is on my side.

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