



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

I was born in Kibuye. At 19 years old, I lost my parents and most of my siblings in the genocide. After, I was forced to live in an orphanage. My brother and I are the sole survivors of our entire family.

Our house was set a light on the 12th April. I managed to escape to a family friend, who hid us in an empty house and locked us in. There were more than twenty other people hiding there. Unfortunately, we were discovered. Killers came and forced us out of the house, beating us and making us take off our clothes. Because there were many of us, I managed to slip away from the crowd in the chaos. I hid in the bush. From where I was hiding I could see the attackers leading some people towards the lake. I was found shortly afterwards. I was driven to the lake as well, and raped by three men known to me. They were my neighbours whom I knew personally. I went to school with their children. I considered them as parents. They did not beat me or speak to me. After raping me they left me for dead to go and find more people to kill.

I managed to crawl back to the house of the friend that originally hid us. He was afraid of hiding me any longer, so he took me to the bush. Each day, he would come to bring me food. He also brought me bad news too, that my mother, younger sister and grandmother had all been murdered and thrown into the lake. I came to learn also that my father had been hit and died during an attack on our house. His body, along with other people killed in the region, was thrown into a pit – that had been made into a mass grave.

For nearly two weeks, I stayed hidden in the bush. Other people joined me there. Soon we were found and forced to leave the hiding place. While escaping at night, we were sighted by a group of killers. They massacred all the men and children in our group, and raped the women.



One of the men said he would protect me if I agreed to be his wife. I had no choice. He had already raped me and could keep me if he wanted to. I stayed with him until the end of genocide, when he escaped to the Democratic Republic of Congo. I have never seen him again.

I am afraid of having being infected with HIV. I have wounds which leave me ill at ease. I constantly worry that I will die of AIDS.

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