



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

My parents, as well as my seven brothers and sisters were killed at our home in Butare in April 1994. I was then only ten years old. Left to fend for myself, I hid in the fields, then turned to family friends for help. I was taken in by one, a Hutu woman who was married to a soldier. She asked me to work as a maid, to help her look after her three young children.

Several weeks later, the soldier returned and urged his wife to flee from the advance of the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA). I was taken with them to Cyangugu where soldiers had set up a camp in a secondary school. Although they were on the run, the soldiers remained committed to the genocide. I was subjected to the threats and violence, first at the camp at Mururu secondary school, then at a second camp.

Even in this refuge, they continued to kill. They wanted to know who was a Tutsi in order to assassinate them. The family I was with didn't want to hand me over because I was useful to them. The soldiers came to take Tutsi girls to rape them. I was well known to everyone because of this family who had given me asylum. We spent a week at this place; then we went to the secondary school in Gihundwe. There too the soldiers continued to rape young Tutsi girls. They came every day; those who came in the morning were different from those who returned in the evening. They raped us when they wanted to; no one had the right to refuse. If you did, you would be hit hard as well as raped.

I was raped several times by two men who were guarding with the military. I didn't know them beforehand and I don't know where they are now. They told me that I was also old enough to be raped like the other Tutsi girls who were there. In fact, I was the youngest of all of them. They told us that our time was up, that we should give in to their desires. These men hurt me. They were violent.

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