

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

After the death of President Habyarimana, we left home to hide from inevitable attacks, in the bushes. A car in which the local mayor was travelling came and discovered us. The soldiers accompanying the mayor in the car had guns. They were about to shoot at the young men that were with us, but they changed their minds because there was such a crowd of people. At that moment though, I was separated from my family. From that moment on, I was to experience the most terrible events of my life.

I left the bushes and went to my grandparents' home. They were lying on the floor where they had been killed. There were others in the house too, and some were dying. I tried to hide in the house but I couldn't find anywhere suitable so I decided to ask a neighbour, an old man, for refuge. He gave me water, but a short time afterwards we heard whistles which signalled the arrival of the *interahamwe*. The old man told me to go out back by the gate. So I went and sat there.

The *interahamwe* came and looked for us in the house. They did not find us. But they came out back to the gate. When they saw us, they told us that they were going to kill us. One of them stopped them before they did, saying that: "The mayor has told us that we can do whatever we want with you". So, along with a group of 100 people, I was taken to a sorghum plantation. Whilst waiting there, one man chased away other the *interahamwe* and took me with him to a little house, probably his own. There was a small bed in the house, and he told me to lie there. I resisted and he kicked me badly. I didn't have the strength to hold him off any longer, and he raped me. He did some horrible things to me. The man used to go and kill outside then come back to his home. There were people guarding it, to prevent me from escaping.



Three days passed with me living in these conditions. On the fourth day, I was rescued and taken to the hospital because I was injured. All these things happened when I was just 16 years old. I now have two children but the doctor told me to stop having children because of my condition, caused by the rape, it may be dangerous for me.

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