



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

Recently married and living in Kigali with my husband, then aged 21, I was two months pregnant on 7 April 1994. That morning, in the immediate aftermath of the plane crash of President Habyarimana, soldiers searched my neighbourhood. When a group of six soldiers reached my house they demanded identity cards. And then - despite the presence of my husband and their neighbours - they instantly began to rape me. I lost consciousness after the first rape.

After a night in hiding, my husband and I returned home, believing calm would be restored with the appointment of a new interim president. But we were invaded, this time by the interahamwe.

They made my husband leave the house, and one of them injured me between the legs with his sword, while he was telling me to spread them. The other one also hit me with the back of his gun, and told me to take my clothes off. That day three interahamwe raped me. Others took my husband away, I don't know where, and I've still not seen him to this day.

I tried to hide in the abandoned homes of my neighbours, but I was soon found and again I was raped.

During one night, an interahamwe came to the house I was hiding in. He tapped on the door, but I didn't let him in. He broke the glass pane in the window of the bedroom that I was in. When he lit his torch, he saw me. He told me to open up, or he would open fire inside. When he came in, he said that I should make a choice, between death or doing exactly what he wanted me to do. I would have preferred to die, but he refused to kill me. He threw me on the bed and then raped me. Afterwards, he used his sword, still in its sheath, to torture me even further.

I have had no opportunity to pursue justice. Most of the men who raped me were soldiers and I didn't recognize them, while the militiaman, who I knew, left for the Congo and has not returned.

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