



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

The first man who raped me kept me locked in a house in, Greater Kigali, and then gave me to a soldier as a gift. This soldier took me, then aged 22, as his wife and then left me with some fellow soldiers to look after me. They obtained false papers for me, saying that I was a home nurse for a child and took me to Kigali Central Hospital. This ruse kept me alive, but I was to pay a heavy price.

I was kept with other Tutsi women and girls at the hospital. Each day soldiers came to torture us sexually. All those who pretended to save my life raped me.

My soldier “husband” returned to search for me on his way to exile in Congo, after the defeat of the Rwandan Army (FAR), and he took me with him when he fled to a refugee camp. I was forced to live with him as husband and wife and I became pregnant, and the baby was born before I came back to Rwanda in 1996 with the huge tide of refugees. Since then I haven’t seen this man and I don’t know where he is. All these men made me suffer. Unfortunately, I don’t know where they are in order to bring them to justice.

Later, when I found someone I wanted to marry, a man whose first wife had died in the genocide, I told him everything. My husband understood, but my own attitude to the child born of the rape is more ambiguous.

Sometimes, when I think of the circumstances in which he was conceived and of his birth, I’m overcome with negative feelings and I wonder why I didn’t have an abortion, or why the child didn’t die at birth. But I calm myself down by confiding in God. I tell myself that it was God’s will.

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