

nDossier: Sovu

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Cellule: Kigarama
Sector: Sovu
Commune: Huye
Age: 36 years old
Profession: Peasant farmer (In 1994 and presently)

It all started on Sunday, 17 April 1994. There were a lot of rumours going around in the area. As my wife was a Tutsi, she had fled to Sovu Health Centre a few hours earlier to join other Tutsi there.

They had just killed Jean Habinshuti up in Gako after burning his house down. Thousands of Tutsis were fleeing from Gikongoro, driving their cattle and carrying mats; they went to my house. They told us the government were supporting the Hutus. That night a lorry full of soldiers arrived, and found us on the main road, on patrol.

The next day, 18 April, at 11:30 a.m., one of the interahamwe leaders, Kamanayo, killed Rangira with hand grenades. As I had been without any news of my wife since we parted, I went to join her. They were panicking in the health centre after someone threw a grenade in. I took her, and we went to the convent, but the main gate was shut which was unusual for that place. The people inside helped us make a hole in the wall, and we got in. It rained that evening. A nun called Scholastique took pity on the mothers, and children, and asked Mpambara to open some rooms for the women and children. I was saying the rosary. The men stayed outside because the cellar was hot and cramped.

The next day, Rubayiza joined us, as a Hutu friend Kagina had told him that he was in danger. He had sent him to tell me that my house was still in tact but that if the Hutus knew I was in the convent with the Tutsis, they would demolish it. I took my bible and prayed.

When I left the convent that Tuesday at about 5:00 p.m., I came across some Hutus covered in blood from the cattle they had killed. Some of them even threatened me. I had to pay a fine of 500 francs to be allowed back among the Hutus; but I was distracted by the thought of my wife, Françoise Nyandui, thinking she was going to die.

On Thursday 21 April, the whole area from Kukinyana to Gihindamuyaga was full of people. They were acting like lunatics. It was all over. I called Ruvebana, and asked him to go and find my wife. I was near the convent. The Hutus were so fanatical that I realised that they would massacre the Tutsis. When she got out, I took her to Rushyana's house; he was a close colleague of Rekeraho. So she was in a place of safety. Meanwhile, Sister Kizito was taking away the Tutsi's spears and batons as the militia could be heard [approaching].

I chatted to a gang of militia who were going by, they told me that Sister Kizito and Sister Gertude were the only ones on their side, and they praised the sisters' 'virility' (*ubugabo*). I was not surprised by what they said because on Monday 18 April, while we were still in the convent, the bourgmestre Jonathan Ruremesha had arrived with some soldiers and had asked for Sister Kizito and Sister Gertrude alone, even though there were about 20 nuns [there]. They had long conversations, but I don't know what about.

In addition to that, on Tuesday 19 April the two nuns went to the health centre with the soldiers. When they came back they called us together, outside their chapel and tried to persuade us to leave the convent. Perhaps they did not want anyone to die on their premises, but in any case, in view of the situation, they must have known very well what would happen to the Tutsis. Besides, Kizito comes from this area and has relatives among the militia, and used to chat to them. They were always going out, especially Kizito. On Thursday, 21 April, when I went and asked for a mattress and a blanket, she was in a hurry, and said that she was going to the commune for an emergency meeting. She did not give me the bedding.

I also wonder why they did not give us any food—even to the young and sick, when they were hardly short of supplies. And yet they had had their names listed, [allegedly] for that reason.

After that, I had to guard my wife in case she was killed by a blood thirsty interahamwe in my absence. That meant I was no longer able to go around and see for myself what was really happening. I was told about it, and I could hear gunfire and grenades. It must have been horrible.¹

¹ Interviewed in Sovu, 28 May 1999.