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In April 1994, Rwanda suffered one of the most concentrated acts of genocide in human history. One million people were massacred in just one hundred days. Among those slaughtered were almost all my relatives: fifty members of my family.

One million people to most of you may be just a statistic, but to us its entire families - a brother, a mother, a father, an uncle, auntie, cousins, - and friends, and neighbors. Our identity shattered with no safety nets to fall back too.

I was lucky. I at least know where my family was slain. They were at the house of my grandfather. They had always sought refuge there in times of trouble. But this time, there were no safe sanctuaries. Along with other Tutsi families, they were savagely slaughtered in cold blood.

I was lucky. I had moved to the UK and thus I escaped the massacre and the nightmare that survivors face today. Had I been in Rwanda I would certainly have been killed too.

I can think the only reason I was spared was to help those, like I, who are living a legacy of genocide.

I set up a charity, the Survivors Fund (SURF), to make sense of the genocide, to rebuild a sense of humanity and trust for survivors. A vital part of my work has been to ensure that as many people as possible hear the voices of survivors. Voices that tell the whole truth, that warn us of what man is capable of, that remind us of the suffering that must never again be permitted to happen to anyone, anywhere in the world. In light of events in Darfur, and other regions around the world, this is more important than ever.

16 years after the horrific events, the fatal legacy of the genocide endures and the situation for many survivors today is still bleak. They face innumerable challenges. They are compelled to deal with trauma, poverty, homelessness, lost childhoods, disrupted education and injustice. They live next door to their killers, who have been given amnesty and continue to threaten their lives.

Thousands of skeletons still litter the grounds of Rwanda. The more fortunate are displayed in churches, schools, community centres, make shift tents with no decent burial. A constant reminder of the killing fields of Rwanda. Those who have visited Rwanda, see skeletons, but I see families with names and aspirations that didn't come to bear.

I have tirelessly listened and worked with survivors. In 2008, I expressed the hope to step down as Director of SURF after 15 years, to reflect on my life's work and to dedicate my time to speak about the world's indifference to survivors in post-genocide Rwanda.

The world turned its back on Rwanda, and gave the perpetrators freedom to kill my family. Like many survivors, I cannot easily forgive that. I certainly have not forgiven the perpetrators that killed my family – and neither have they sought forgiveness from me.

I returned to Rwanda in August 1994, to count my loss, whilst the international community shifted its attention to the Hutu refugees that fled to Zaire (now DRC) fearing retribution. Many of them were the same people that had committed the killing.

For 9 months, I watched as survivors tore their hair out in shock, wondering how they had survived. Searching desperately for families they hoped had survived. No one came to support and rehabilitate survivors, so I took it upon myself to do so through Survivors Fund.

I am not here to compare or downplay the pain of losing family and friends but forgiveness is very personal. I cannot say if it can:

- Heal the pain of a father whose son was dragged out by police and later shot.
- Or children who saw parents, father or siblings killed because they were perceived to be different and not worth of humanity.
- Nor the pain of a sister that watched a brother fall from the twin towers.
- Or a mother who received the last phonecall from her son, before the bus he was on exploded in Central London.

The reality though in Rwanda is harsh. To think that just 16 years after the genocide, I should be discussing forgiveness while released prisoners still threaten survivors, and are now back living next door to them, is unconceivable.

In the words of Martin Luther King:

“In the end we will remember, not the words of our enemies but the silence of our friends.”

For it is not the words of the murderers I think of now as I speak to you, but the silence of you, my friends, when my family was being murdered in cold blood, and the silence and lack of support for survivors over the last 16 years.

Yet, to be civil and to be seen as a Christian, I am expected to subscribe to the notion of forgiveness.

As an international “community”, to find an easy way out of our troubled world of crime and violence, doing nothing to prevent further violence is unacceptable:

- First, because of its shocking implication that the perpetrator is allowed to commit such acts, that we become complicit
- Second, such silence betrays the victims of yesterday, if we do nothing today

Yet you ask me to forgive?

No!

I believe forgiveness is a lack of will to face the fact that violence continues to increase, because we are not prepared to face the perpetrators and bring them to account. But only by doing so will justice prevail, further atrocities be prevented and the healing process for victims be able to begin.

Genocide may have stopped when men wielding machetes were stopped, but its legacy persists, as survivors are targeted and killed by released perpetrators because they are Tutsi.

On a personal level, I will not forgive the killers of my brother without justice. That would be a betrayal of my brother. I have no right to forgive on his behalf.

Forgiveness without justice is a betrayal of my family. Forgiveness is between me and my God. It is not a matter of national policy.

Individuals who have to deal with the aftermath of horrendous atrocities should not also be robbed of their independence to decide when to forgive or not.

Forced forgiveness is insensitive, intrusive and morally isolating. Those who choose not to subscribe to society's pressure to comply and be seen to forgive should be given that right to do so.

Violence can and is justified – not in revenge, but in defence. That defence for survivors is ever necessary today, as perpetrators continue and try finish what they almost succeeded in doing in 1994.

In Rwanda, the grievances of survivors remain unaddressed. They fear reprisal. A culture of impunity festers and encourages cycles of anger, self destruction, generalized aggression and severe trauma that is yet to be acknowledged. We are seeing today signs that this trauma is affecting children of survivors, an intergenerational inheritance.