



Pain . . .
Sadness . . .
Fear

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The
CENTER for
VICTIMS of
TORTURE

I lived in a village in Sudan, a very beautiful village; it had trees and sand. It was a very lovely place before the war. I lived a happy life with my siblings and family. We went to school and I got to high school. I wanted to go to university but I didn't have the chance.

I lived there my whole life and left it in the war.

My village in Darfur was very beautiful. I lived all my life and childhood there with my family and siblings. I had 10 siblings: six sisters and four brothers. Our life was good and we lived together as a family with our neighbors. We lived a simple life but the war ruined it.

I worked in planting before the war with my family. It was very beautiful, we didn't need anything. My mother would sell things in the market and life was good. We did most of the planting in autumn, all types of seeds. We all went to school. I am the youngest child in my family.

I had a wonderful family. We had good neighbors. I feel sad when I think of them, I miss them all. The war started in March 2003, and it continued until 2014.

The war had a terrible effect on my village: the houses were destroyed. The people who worked in planting were afraid of explosions. There wasn't enough food. We ate dry bread and we'd put some water on the bread so we could eat it. The market was closed and we couldn't buy things. We stayed like this for eight days then they brought us bread from Fasher, and the bread was distributed to families for one month's supply. They would also distribute flour and sugar. People started to be scared because they were afraid of dying, they would hide under the beds because shots came through the ceiling and on the bed. We slept under the beds.

I felt a lot of fear. When I remember it I get scared. The Janjaweed forces would raid the village. They would kill and rape the women, and my mother said that there was no way for me to stay.

We had to leave. All of the neighborhood left.

In the beginning we all left to another area called Fasher. It was 2014. We were there for three months and then we left to another area called Kafout, a five- or six-hour walk. We went to it at night because if we left in daytime and they saw, they would have killed us.

We walked until we got to a place where there were big trucks, and then we got into the trucks and went to an area called Batekha, and we were surprised that Janjaweed forces were there. They hit the tires of the truck. The truck stopped.

I was not with my family but I was not alone in the truck: there were seven girls with me and there were also two guys.

Remembering the situation is very difficult. I don't want to remember this.

They tied up the guys and they beat them with the bottom of the weapons they carried. Then they made us get down from the truck and walk towards a valley. They asked if we had anything of value. I had a small phone with me that my uncle gave me so I could call my family. They took it.

Then it started to rain and they were beating us. There were mountains and there was sand. It was exactly 1:30 in the afternoon.

There were three of them. You can't really describe them because they wear masks to cover their faces. You can't see them, you just see their eyes. Their eyes were full of evil. They wore military uniforms and masks and they were tall. I remember things about them. They were carrying guns, and I was so scared, I thought I was going to die.

Two of the attackers went with me and the other seven girls, making us walk, leading us to the valley. They beat us as we walked with the bottom of their guns. We had difficulties walking because we were scared and they were pushing us. They told us, "You were leaving town, but we will show you." They were cursing and swearing and they used very bad language until we reached the valley. They had a Sudanese accent, similar to mine but slightly different, not like we talk.

They kept beating and pushing us until we reached the valley. Then other Janjaweds came by car, wearing the same uniform and their faces were covered. They made us wait in the valley. Then they searched us, they took phones and money, and then they started to rape the girls in all ways possible.

Each man would take a girl, and then they started beating us. We were screaming and no one could save the other. They were beating us with their weapons.

I pushed the man who was beating me and when I pushed him he dropped his weapon. He took his knife and cut me. I couldn't feel anything but I was bleeding. After he beat me and cut me with his knife, I fainted. I don't remember what he did to me next.

I wasn't aware that I was being raped. But I knew I was raped because I couldn't walk when I woke up. There was blood on my legs.

I was not aware of my surroundings for four hours. My whole body was numb and I did not feel anything at that time. When I stood up and wanted to walk, I couldn't walk. A girl came near me – her name was Abedah. She was my neighbor. She told me "I am here with you and you are here with me."

We could hear screams coming from far away and there was a car sound and it started to rain. Then we walked until we reached the truck that brought us here. They had removed the tires of the truck. It was raining heavily.

Abedah was also raped and she was awake when it happened and she told me about it while we were walking towards the tree. She told me that they beat her. Abedah told me that she saw the man who raped me.

We sat under a tree in the rain, only me and Abedah. We could hear the others screaming but we didn't know where they were.

At sunset a car came. The driver saw us and stopped because we were standing in the street. He was surprised and he saw that the truck was broken. We told him the story and about the other girls, but he thought that if he were to look for the other girls, then the same thing that happened to the truck driver would happen to him. So we got in the car and he took off and drove away. It was a long way. We went to Alobaid and he took us to a hospital. They sutured my wound and they took care of us and they told us that we are fine. We stayed in the hospital until we felt better. There was no medical report. I was scared and I didn't know about these things. Then we went to Khartoum.

This same thing happened to many people from my village, killing and rape.

I never shared my story with anyone. I was so scared and isolated; shame was with me anywhere I went, but after I saw the experiences of other people I felt a bit better. I continued with my life and I didn't stop. I was very isolated and scared and I thought that people are bad. I was scared all the time, but that changed.

CVT helped me a lot. After the sessions I stopped judging people, I used to judge people before.

In the past I didn't like talking about my problems. I didn't want my life. When I came here the first person I met was a CVT counselor and I told her my problem. Then another counselor contacted me and I also told her about my problem and joined the group.

It made me stronger. I was not scared anymore and I heard about the others' problems and I forgot my problem. It helped me a lot. I never told my problem with anyone before that. Zozo, my Jordanian neighbor, is the closest one to me and I didn't tell her about my problem. But after I joined the group in CVT I told Zozo about it.

I remember the problems of the group members; we are still in touch. We are like a family. I used to be alone and I only had Zozo as my friend.

I thank CVT. My sessions were on Tuesdays and Wednesdays and I used to eagerly wait for the sessions; I used to be the first to arrive to the sessions. I was very committed to coming to the sessions and I never missed any. There are exercises I like to do when I don't feel comfortable, like those we used to do in a circle.

But it took me a long time to get to Amman and to CVT. I remember that after the rape, when I went to Khartoum I slept in the market. I met a woman named Kawthar, and she asked me about where I came from and what was my story. I told her that I came running away from the war. She let me stay with her for a few days.

An old man told Kawthar that his mother was sick and asked if I could come with him to his house to take care of her. I was scared because I didn't know anything about Khartoum, and I didn't know if Kawthar trusted the man and if I should go with him.

But I went to his house and I met his mother; she was a lovely, kind woman. I sat with her and she was sick; she couldn't move or go to the bathroom on her own. I would bathe her and cook her food. I stayed with her for a year and a half. Then the shooting started again in my village and my father died and my brother was killed and I wanted to go to my family but they told me not to.

So I stayed in Khartoum and continued communicating with my family.

Then the woman I was taking care of died and then her son told me that I can't stay with them because I was a girl and that he was concerned of what neighbors would think. He told me that he can help me if I wanted to move outside of Sudan, to Egypt or to Jordan. I didn't have any money, and I knew that I could not go back to my family because it was not safe. He said he would help me get a passport and a ticket.

So he got me a passport and my ticket and told me that I should leave to Jordan the following day. I came from Khartoum to Jordan by plane and the old man gave me \$100.

I didn't know anyone here.

So when I arrived at the airport in Amman, I told the taxi driver to take me to downtown. I had written it on a paper "downtown." He dropped me in downtown and I gave him the \$100 – that is almost 70 Jordanian dinars (JDs). The taxi driver gave me back 20 JDs. He told me to stay where I was and that someone will come and I can ride with them. So I stood there in the street.

I guess he thought that someone was going to come pick me up and that it would be easier for me to stay where he dropped me so I won't get lost; he dropped me near Hashim restaurant.

I didn't want to explain my story to him, so I was standing there in the street and the people were coming and going. A Sudanese man came and he said hello and we started talking. He asked me where I was from, and I told him that I am from Sudan and just arrived here. He told me to come with him – he lived with other seven guys in a one-bedroom apartment. So I stayed with them; they slept in the living room and they gave me the bedroom. Really – they all slept in the living room and gave me the bedroom. He was good to me.

I would sit with them sometimes but I would just listen to them. I didn't share anything with them. Then the guy who helped me told me he'd take me to the UNHCR, so we went together and I registered. I lived with them for three months. In the morning they would go to work and so they needed to use the bedroom to get dressed; I would get out of the bedroom until they got dressed and leave.

At one point, one of the guys told me he knew a woman from my hometown, and he suggested I go live with her. But she lived in a one-room flat with her husband and three kids, so I told the guys that I would rather stay with them. I told them I would cook for them and do their laundry and they agreed.

It was like that for one year, and then they told me to look for a job. Four of the guys left the apartment, and the landlord told us he needed his apartment and he wanted us out. Then I got a job in the Istishari hospital for 150 JDs per month, and I rented an apartment for 120 JDs. I would spend the 30 JDs on transportation and I would end up with no money. It was then that I met Zozo and I told her my problem.

She was my neighbor and she saw me and noticed that I left every day at the same time. I told her that I work in a hospital and they gave me a small amount of money. So Zozo talked to the hospital and told them to increase my salary.

They started to give me 200 JDs. Then I started to suffer from asthma because of the smell of detergents so I had to stay at home and the hospital hired someone to replace me. It was winter time and the UNHCR gave me the winter assistance, and then I got better and I started working again and it's been like that until now.

I am registered in the UNHCR also applied to travel for resettlement. Now the landlord is pressuring me to leave. I told a CVT social worker and she told me that she will talk to the UNHCR to try and solve it. The UNHCR came to a home visit but they couldn't do anything.

I want to thank CVT because I was lonely and I had no one with me and now I am stronger. I used to be scared and stay up at night, and I suffered from a lot of problems, such as anemia because I didn't eat or sleep. But I got better after I came to CVT, a lot of things changed in my life after the sessions. Life didn't stop, I liked the sessions about the river of life because life truly goes on.

When I think about what was done to me, I think the Janjaweed targeted me for being a girl, and I was not targeted alone, many girls were targeted just like I was. I think the Janjaweed did what they did in Darfur, beating or killing males because they didn't want their female relatives to be raped. It was not for their religion or their political opinion. They do it out of ignorance.

My family knew what happened to me. My relationship with them is very good; they made me leave the village because they wanted to protect me but I couldn't be safe.

But for myself, I felt disgrace and that I lost the most precious thing I had. I don't see myself as a complete person but I try to help myself out of this circle.

I feel that I am not complete. I feel that I am missing something.

What was done to me was the most difficult incident for me, but there are more incidents that are traumatizing, like witnessing someone getting killed in front of you. And there are other difficulties. In Jordan when I first got here and I was living with the guys, I had nowhere to go. I only left the house once to go to the UNHCR. So I used to stay at home most of the time but when I started to go out later on, I would hear people calling me "dark skinned" and they would throw stones at me. Boys in the street did this and I would go home and lock the doors and cry. It hurt me. I would start to think of why I came here.

Today I work and I pay the rent and I spend the rest. The salary isn't enough, but it is better than before. I feel that nothing supports me here in Jordan, but I am strong and I give myself the strength. I support myself.

Coming to CVT helped me a lot psychologically and spiritually, and it also made me a stronger person. I was weak and lonely and scared of people even the people in the UNHCR. I thought that everybody was a bad person but I changed how I look at people. I even changed the way I treated myself, it really helped me.

Things are good, but I just want to leave Jordan and get resettlement. To get justice, I need to leave this country and work and help my family. To me, justice means to be fair and not to be unjust. I wish that there was justice.

Justice would be to feel safety and stability. But what happened in the past is in the past. I don't think anything can be done about the past. Allah will hold them accountable.

For my future, I wish to settle down and have a family. I hope someday to be married and have children and to work and help my parents and to help the ones who are needy.

My wish is just to travel and settle down, that is the most important thing. I wish that the world can help – I wish the world could help others to achieve safety and help the people in Sudan and Darfur achieve safety and stability. People should know about the violations and the tragedies.

**The author chose this pseudonym and changed other people's names for security and confidentiality.*