

Hello Pr. Gerald,

I understand you have told me to stay out of this whole UJV situation, which I have never really been a part of. I am sorry to say I know Ken, Mike and Marike have called me a liar and trouble causer but I am not going to defend myself on that. Those words really do not hurt me one bit because I know the Lord is my judge and I am standing for truth and justice. People may question why I am standing up for these children. Some may think because of my job or an advance in position. I can assure you all that neither one of these could be further from the truth. The real reason why I am standing up for these children is because I have a heart and deep love for each one of them. Why does my heart burn for these children so much? After you read my testimony you all will know why I have a passion and desire to see each one of them grow up in a good environment and succeed in life.

What I am about to tell you now is extremely disturbing and this is what thousands of children in Northern Uganda have been through including many of our UJV children. To many of you in North America this may seem drastic and disturbing but this has been every day life for the last 23 years of a northern Ugandan child.

When I was nine years old, I was captured by the Lords resistance army (LRA) in a place known as Pajimu. It was in the evening after school when we went to get fire wood for cooking, we heard a loud shout "RUN RUN RUN THE REBELS ARE HERE" we waited for the second shout but did not hear it again. We stood still and kept silent going down and looking for thicker bushes to hide in when one of the girls got shot right on the forehead in front of us. We laid there with our hearts as silent as the dead itself, remembering that my younger sister MIRANDA was at home and my grand parents were not home I could not go on I had to find a way of going back home even though it seemed they were already in my home area.

I finally got home and took my sister with me to hide in a better place for the night; it was raining and lightening striking with sharp lights. It was cold, children were crying and this would put us in high risks of being caught since they would report the areas where people were hiding. We could hear gunshots all over the place and the rebels were calling out " WE WILL FIND YOU WHEREVER YOU MAY BE". A few minutes later there was silence as they moved backwards because the army was coming closer. Unfortunately they passed where we were lying and one of the rebels stepped on Miranda. She screamed and they stopped, as I closed her mouth, using their lights I moved so they could see me instead and not her, and yes they did recognize her but took me, this was the start of my one year in the bush with the rebels till I was ten years.

We started to move with hands tied and each child was given big luggage to carry on your head as you walk and yet we were expected to walk as fast as the rebels. I was given a burning charcoal stove to carry on my head while it boiled with dry maize for the commander's food for dinner that night. This is pain beyond hell; my whole middle head was burnt by morning and full of sores. Too much headache stronger than migraines probably but yet I could not say a thing. Anyone could not speak

because if you complained they would stop the team beat you with pangas and metallic logs, or get another person to cut off your body parts which ever they chose to. Many children died along the way, mothers were told to kill their own children and axe them if not they would be shot, I remember one lady gave birth and her child was thrown on fire to burn. The cry of that baby has never left my mind to this moment.

We stayed in the bush for three months and my head had healed, my legs were sore from the thorns and wounds from the beating and flogging by the rebels. One day we went to raid a village that is in the north of Kitgum in a place called kona Kilak, the people who were captured from that areas were forced to cut off their mothers ears, lips, tongues, arms and legs, this was one of the most painful days of my life for the whole time I was in the bush and reminded me of how the rebels burned my uncle to death by melting a Jerri can of gas on him. If they refused they would be shot right away. Why am I not mentioning men, all the men were killed instantly, big boys were also killed, mothers were raped, abused and killed if not then they were forced to brutally kill their children in order to choose life. This is why there are very few men in northern Uganda, many women and few boys.

Five months down this hard dark road I was getting to adapt to the situation of living and surviving in the bush. I was forced to do many terrible and horrible things to so many people that to this day I still cannot talk about.. I had to or else I would not live. I was appointed to be the head cook and getting the commanders what they needed. They would sleep with young girls day in day out, rape was a daily thing and they would go for the youngest girls possible. I thank the Lord for my height I grew so fast that I looked much older than the rest of the girls, this was the only way I escaped the rape, they would line up all the girls and the commanders pick out their wives like I said they should pick the youngest of all, we could hear girls crying and the ones that were badly injured never survived, I did not understand that then seen as how I was young and thought they just died after a few days but now I do. This went on and became normal; out of the sixty-three girls we were by the sixth month we were only around twenty-four.

We moved closer to Sudan and this is the final destination where it was told if you enter into Sudan you would never be able to return to Uganda alive. It took us longer because the army kept interrupting the rebels this particular group I was captured in, I clearly remember one time we were caught between fire, the rebels were caught unaware and they would make signs and run away ordering the captives to stay put, if anyone moved they would shoot them instantly. When the helicopter arrived always they would shoot the captives and kill them instead of the rebels, this is why many people started to hate the government saying that it's their own government killing them. I can not go through every thing and expect you people to understand me, its total madness, painful moments of anger, fires, fighting, killing, flogging, rape, murder, its different from the news we read, its different from when we hear it being told.

When they were preparing us to move into Sudan, we gathered at the Imatong hills in Northern Uganda, this is where the mountains separate the boarder from Sudan. We started to plan to escape before the ordination to Sudan, here they give you things to drink, pray over you and smear you all over with some mixed oil and sleep with all the girls as each commander wishes them troop them off into Sudan in the night, return to Uganda and plan which area to attack next. That evening we went to get water and make fire place for the big ordination ceremony, when a group of bees stung our escort he fell so I picked the gun and we went on, we ran so fast but since we were a big group we had a big risk of being tracked down, we continued and entered right in the ambush of the rebels in another camp. I started shouting at them and claiming they were running and trying escape, this helped us a lot as they did not think we were all escaping. Some girls died in that spot, one of them tried to explain that I was the one trying to escape but she was shot dead before my very own eyes.

We moved and were tied up on a tree. These rebel group went to eat and the one left to keep us slept and we slowly escaped from them. I tell you every day is either death or life, Hope has never been so real in my entire life than this one year in the bush. We ran and before we could reach a clearer area we got into a fire that had just stopped as we rushed into a cave, gun shots for as long as I can remember, we only realized someone was shot by their screams and shouts for help. One girl was stung by a scorpion and another bitten by a snake while in the cave, they both did not survive. Later when we came out, little did we know that the rebels had hidden right behind that cave. We were caught and it was late in the night. Seven girls left as they asked us where each one comes from. One girl said from around there and she was shot there and then another girl too, when it reached my turn, I lied I told them I am from Gulu I was just brought to Kitgum to visit and now I can not even reach home, I hated my parents for bringing me there and now all I want to do is kill them, this was good news that saved my life, later they called the people at the base and they were told not to kill us but to return us so we can be the examples to those who will want to escape the next time.

This is what they would do to those who attempt to escape they undress you, all the commander would rape you in the open and then they would pick the best child soldier leader to chop you piece by piece. This was to teach the others a lesson. One guy came and stood there for a while and pointed to my best friend from my village with whom we had come back from school and went to get firewood and later that night were captured together in the same area. She stood up and he undressed her and started to rape her before us, all the other commanders now wanted to do the same, it was one of the most painful thing knowing I would be in the same situation the next morning at the camp. She was brutally raped by four commanders and later I went close to her she could not say a word, she could not cry. I thought she was mad and angry but NO NO NO, I was wrong she was badly injured. Much later I went back where she was raped just feet away and she was very cold, I knew she would not make it and wanted to be in her position, I cried and slept back on the grass, Knowing my friend had just been raped to death. THIS NIGHT I MADE A PRAYER

AND SAID, "GOD I KNOW YOU EXIST AND YOU ARE POWERFUL. I DO NOT KNOW HOW BUT IF YOU CAN SAVE ME FROM THIS I WILL FOREVER TELL THE PEOPLE AND SERVE YOU".

I guess God heard my prayers that night, I almost had slept off when I woke up all of a sudden and saw the commanders playing cards, immediately something told me you rather die escaping than go through such situation the next day. I slipped slowly did not let the other girls know and was crawling on my elbows and slowly moved away from them in a way they would not realize I am moving further away. When I got behind a tree I got up and hid behind it, untied the ropes in my legs using a stone and ran as fast as I could ever remember running in my whole life. Later I heard grass noise behind me little did I know that the other girls had seen me move away and had followed me. We reached a place and removed our clothes and continued naked we then climbed a big fig tree and stayed there till we were safe, one girl saw a road ahead so we climbed down got some leaves for our body and run towards that road where we ran into a man running away from the rebels and he thought we were the rebel. Yes we looked just like them and were for one year but we pleaded and said we had escaped and can help him too. He then hid us in a place ahead and continue and promised he would come back during the daytime to get us and told us not to move from that spot. He showed up later on that day with some world vision workers who took us and they started to ask us of our families.

I look back now and say GOD IS A GOOD GOD, AND HE USES WHOEVER HE CHOOSES TO SAVE, BLESS, RESCUE, RESTORE, RENEW HIS LOVE FOR US ALL. Just like the bees stinging the commander, the guy's playing cards, these were very small things but those were the greatest moments he used to rescue me.

I could go on to explain the details of each day that I spent in the bush with the rebels because each day is as clear as the stars in the quiet night, it sounds to new and these memories will never leave my heart. I thank God that he can use this to restore and heal many children who were once like me. Every day in that bush I fought with every strength I had in me. This is how I survived to survive the vipers we need to be strong and this is my life, my way, and my thing, my being. I am a fighter for truth justice for the voiceless.

All I want is truth and justice for these children. If anyone ever questions my motives my heart for these children and why I have always fought for them passionately, IT IS BECAUSE I KNOW WHAT THEY HAVE GONE THROUGH AND I UNDERTAND THEM WELL ENOUGH THAT ANY ONE ELSE.

I am sending this email to you "THE BOARD LEADERS" "SPONSORS" "PARTNERS" AND FRIENDS OF THE UJV. This is the platform for the many things that I have to say later on from this day concerning the UJV "situation". I do this as an individual and " ABSOLUTELY NO ONE CAN DOUBT MY HEART AND MOTIVE FOR FIGHTING FOR THESE CHOLDREN".

When I finally came back I promised to always stand for anyone who could or might be in such a similar situation. I say it now I am not ready to keep quiet for the sake of these kids. You know why? The Lord has given me a miracle, too good to be true and I am not about to break that promise now.

Blessings Jennifer Mitchell.