

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT
OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTOR

WITNESS STATEMENT

WITNESS INFORMATION:

Last Name: OPOKA ACAN Gender: Female
First Name: Helen Father's Name: OTTI Petero
Other names used: N/A Mother's Name: URIYA Aol
Place of Birth: Luker Passport / ID number:
Date of Birth/Age: Unknown/60 Nationality(s): Ugandan
Ethnicity: Acholi Religion: Protestant

Language(s) Spoken: Acholi
Language(s) Written: None
Language(s) Used in Interview: Acholi, English

Occupation: Subsistence Farming


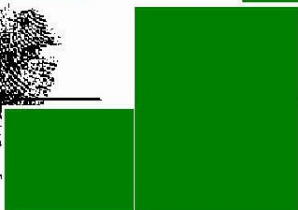


Place of Interview: Gulu, Uganda

Date(s) and Time(s) of Interview:

30/08/2015 12:44 – 13:32; 13:40 – 14:45
31/08/2015 09:10 – 09:33; 10:47 – 11:35; 14:35 – 16:00

Names of all persons present during interview: Helen OPOKA ACAN (contacted person) [REDACTED] Investigator), Elena EGAWHARY (Associate Investigator), [REDACTED] (Interpreter), [REDACTED] (PSE)

Signature(s):



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Procedure

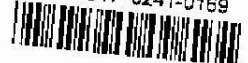
1. I was introduced to [REDACTED] and Elena EGAWHARY and told that they are investigators with the Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) of the International Criminal Court (ICC). I was introduced to [REDACTED] a Psychosocial expert, and [REDACTED] an interpreter, and told that they are with the OTP of the ICC.
2. The investigators explained to me what the ICC is and described its mandate. They explained the role and mandate of the OTP within the ICC.
3. The investigators explained to me that they are investigating events that took place in Uganda since July 2002. I was informed that the OTP is contacting me because they believe I may have information relevant for establishing the truth.
4. I agree that this interview will be conducted in Acholi and English. I fully understand and speak Acholi.
5. The investigators explained to me that I do not have to answer their questions but if I do, I have to tell the truth.
6. I was informed that any information I give to the OTP, including my identity, may be shared with the parties of the proceedings at the ICC; in particular the Judges, Accused persons, the Counsel of the Accused and the legal representatives of the victims.
7. The investigators informed me of the protective measures that may apply during and after the investigation and/or trial proceeding.
8. The investigators have explained to me the reasons and importance of keeping my contacts with the OTP confidential, which I fully understand.
9. Having understood all the above issues, I confirmed my willingness to answer the investigators' questions.
10. The investigators explained to me how the interview was going to be conducted. I was told that I need to be as accurate as possible in my account and that I state when I do not know or do not understand the question. I understand that I need to

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

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distinguish between what I have experienced or seen myself and what I have heard or learned about from someone else.

11. I was told that at the conclusion of the interview, I would be asked to sign a written statement after having had the opportunity to review it, make any corrections, or add additional information.

Background

12. Before I lived in Odek IDP Camp I lived in Olam village in Odek. I had lived there for 40 years. I was not born in Olam village but I was married there. The government made everyone move to Odek IDP camp, we all had to go there. If we had remained in our village the government would have beaten us. The government thought that if we stayed then the rebels would come and get food from us.
13. I moved to Odek IDP camp in March 2004 but I do not remember the exact day. I moved there with my husband and all of my children. I had 12 children: called OJOK David, LATIGO James, OKELLO Richard, OKELLO Johnson, ODOC Patrice, KILAMA Hilary, OKETA Allan, AKELLO Alice, ADONG Betty, AKUMU Molly, APIYO Florence and ADOC Lucy.
14. OJOK David was the oldest. He was 28 years old at this time. OKETA Allan was the youngest. He was about 12 years old when we moved to the camp. I also moved there with my husband.
15. In Odek IDP camp we built 4 separate huts in our compound. The older children had their own hut, the young children had a hut, OJOK David and his wife and children had a hut and my husband and I had a hut.
16. Before the attack happened the rebels would come and steal things at the edge of the camp. They would steal children and food.

The Attack

17. The attack happened on 29 April 2004. When I spoke to the investigators previously I had said 24 April. This was a mistake as I was tired and had got confused but I now remember that the attack happened on 29 April 2004.
18. On the day of the attack I was sitting in the compound with all 12 of my children and my husband. When I first met the investigators I said I had 11 children but when we counted them by name I realised I had made a mistake. We were just sitting there talking and laughing, enjoying ourselves. There was nothing else to do

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in Odek IDP camp at this time because after 3pm you were not allowed to go anywhere, you had to stay in your compound.

19. It was between 5 and 6pm when the soldiers came. The first thing I heard was the sound of gunshots. We heard gunfire, loud gunfire. We all scattered into houses when the gunfire happened.
20. When we heard the gunshots we could hear that the rebels were already very close and were near our compound. The rebels filled up the place. It happened immediately. Gunshots were everywhere, everywhere. You cannot think of anything when that happens. I do not know the name of the armed group of rebels that attacked but I know the President of the group is called KONY.
21. We all ran and entered different huts. I remember some of my older children and some small children from the neighbourhood were in the house with us. I do not remember everyone that was there, I also do not remember the names of my neighbours' children.
22. When we were inside we shut the door, we did not lock it because if you did that the rebels would set your house on fire. We were not in the house long and the rebels came and kicked in the door to our hut and entered. Soldiers wearing camouflage uniforms and carrying guns came in and started dragging the children outside. I do not know how many rebels there were. There were many of them. You are not supposed to look at them or look at their faces. Some of them had pulled their caps down so they can look at you but you cannot look at them. I covered my eyes to avoid looking at them. They came to kill. They were shouting "Cut! Shoot!"
23. After the soldiers had taken the children, women came in and started looting our things. They took flour, maize, beans, oil, clothes, saucepans, even the bedding. They took everything they could find and we remained with nothing.
24. I couldn't stop them. If you try to stop the rebels or talk to them they will kill you or take out your eye with the butt of the gun. You cannot stop them. If you try to stop them they will cut off your mouth or your ears. After they dragged the children out I was just sitting there in the hut, I had no strength or authority to do anything. I remained in the hut with my husband. They took all my children out of the house and only left OJOK David's children with us as they were very young.
25. After they left my house I did not look outside my door. I could not have seen anything, it was dark and confusing. I just bent my head down and waited for what was coming next.

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Assault of P-270

26. Immediately after they took my children out of the house a woman from the group came into my house. She was a girl from the bush, a rebel. I know she was a rebel because she had a gun and she was wearing an army outfit with camouflage. I do not know her name.

27. 

32. I did not leave my house at all that night. From the moment they attacked until 6am the next morning my husband and I stayed in the hut. OJOK David's children were also there with us, they were called OKOYA, WATUM and LANYERO. They were very young and still breastfeeding. They would cry and then sleep.

33. The army used to tell us to put out the lights. This was a good thing as if we had not the rebels would have burnt the whole place. We did not leave the house at all. It was raining and it was dark. All we could hear was the gunfire and after the sound of people who had been shot, crying. I could hear people crying. They were crying

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that people have been killed. The people crying outside were screaming "ONGWEN today has finished the people of Odek. ONGWEN has killed us today". That is how I know it was ONGWEN's group who attacked. I used to hear people talking about ONGWEN before now but I did not know who he was at this time.

Arrival of Government soldiers

34. The government soldiers came at about 7 to 7.30pm. I knew the government soldiers had arrived and were running after the rebels because I could hear their gumboots as they moved. Also the language the government soldiers use is different. Government soldiers speak Swahili and the rebels in Acholi.
35. I did not leave the hut and I did not get up and look out of the door. You cannot do that. I would not have been able to see anything if I had looked outside as it was dark. When the government soldiers arrived they came and peeped into the huts. The government soldiers did not say anything to me when they looked inside but I know they were government soldiers because their uniforms are different.
36. After this everything was silent until the morning.

The next morning

37. At about 6am the next morning everyone who had been left behind started coming out of their houses. I saw many corpses when I left my house. Children and adults were killed as well as cattle. You could see only corpses everywhere, and the people who were collecting them.
38. I also saw the corpses of other people on this day: ONGWEN Janara, OKETCH Kirikiya and DP were found behind my house. I also saw OKULLU Adoni, ACAYO, ABONI, OKETCH and Veronica who were husband and wife, ACAYO Mary, LAKER Katherine and OKOT Valentino. I saw all of them. Sometimes when people have died you forget their names so there are still many names that I have not told you because I cannot remember them all.
39. Some of the dead people I saw were in their homes. Some mothers were shot with a child strapped to their back. For example ACAYO Mary and LAKER Katherine were both shot with children tied to their backs but the children survived.
40. People went and collected the bodies of their relatives the next morning. I saw the bodies of LATIGO James, OJOK David and OKELLO Johnson. The pain is so intense seeing one of your own children having been killed. You lose strength and people have to hold you.

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41. All the corpses were piled together and people came to collect me and I went to see the bodies of my children. I remember the most painful thing was seeing the corpses all piled up together.
42. Everyone killed that night was buried in the same place but in different graves. It became like a graveyard. The people who buried my children were from the camp. Everyone in the camp assisted the other. Clan by clan they buried the people. There were so many bodies you could not even walk around. People came from other camps to help us.
43. They were burying people the whole day, from 8am to 6pm in the evening. They kept collecting and burying, collecting and burying. Some people were found later because they had been killed in the bush, two weeks later they still found people floating in the water around the Camp.
44. Later I found out they had abducted OKETA Allan, OKELLO Richard, KILAMA Hilary and ODOC Patrice. They abduct little boys to be escorts. My neighbour's son, ONEK was also abducted.
45. KILAMA Hilary and ODOC Patrice were killed in the bush because they were walking too slowly. They were shot. I know this because a month later my son OKETA Allan who had been abducted returned and told me. My other son OKELLO Richard was also abducted and returned. They are both alive today.
46. The rebels did not take my daughters that night. I do not know what happened to them that night. There are four of my daughters still alive today AKELLO Alice, AKUMU Molly, APTYO Florence and ADOC Lucy.
47. ADONG Betty died the day after the attack. I saw her the next day when she was alive but she could not go anywhere and was in her house. I was not there when she died and I don't know how she died. It might have been a gunshot but I could not tell how she was injured. She was lying in the house alone and I was lying in my house treating myself. I know she died because they came and told me.
48. Some of the women who had been abducted were released and returned. Some of these women were made to abandon their children on the side of the road. Other people never came back and were killed by the rebels out in the bush. Only women were released. I know some of the women who came back. ADONG Helen lived near to me and was one of the women who returned. Her husband was the camp leader. KIDEGA Alice also came back. They had been abducted to carry loads.

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Recovery after the attack

49. After the attack I took some medicine and nursed myself at home. I could not go to the hospital because the situation was so bad. We could not go in a car as the rebels would attack it. So I stayed at home.

50. Some time later I did manage go to the hospital and see the doctor and he checked me but the book where the diagnosis was written was destroyed when my house was burnt. I was so angry about this that I did not go back to see the doctor again. I decided that it was God's will that the book got burnt and that I should not go back.

51.



52. The woman who assaulted me did not do this to anyone else. They even took a message to the leader of the camp to tell him that this had been done to me. The leader told the LC and the LC talked to every other person and this is how we found out that no one else had come forward to say this had happened to them.

53. Every time it reaches 29 April I'm reminded of the terrible things that happened. The community would like the government to make a day so we can commemorate our dead and so that people do not forget and even the grandchildren remember the people left behind.

Closing Procedure

54. I was informed that individuals who according to the judges qualify as victims will be entitled to participate in future court proceedings and potentially to receive reparations. I was informed of the existence of the Victims' Participation and Reparation Section and its function, as well as on the procedure for applications. I consent to my personal data being shared with the Victims' Participation and Reparation Unit.

55. I was informed that I may be called to testify before the Court. It was brought to my attention that ICC trials are held in public and explained to me that, as an exception to the principle of public hearings, the judges may apply protective measures to those testifying if circumstances require.



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56. I have nothing to add to the above statement nor do I have anything to clarify. I am available to be contacted in the future for clarifications or questions on topics not covered during this interview.

57. I have given the answers to the questions of my own free will.

58. There has not been any form of coercion, duress, threat, promise or inducement which has influenced my account.

59. I have no complaints about the way I was treated during this interview.

WITNESS ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This statement has been read over to me in the English and Acholi language and (it) is true to the best of my knowledge and recollection. I have given this statement voluntarily and I am aware that it may be used in legal proceedings before the International Criminal Court and that I may be called to give evidence in public before the International Criminal Court.

Signed: _____ 

Dated: _____ 31/08/2015 _____

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INTERPRETER CERTIFICATION

1. I, [REDACTED] certify that:
2. I am duly qualified to interpret from the Acholi language into the English language and from the English language into the Acholi language.
3. I have been informed by Helen OPOKA ACAN that she speaks and understands the Acholi language.
4. I have orally translated the above statement from the English language to the Acholi language in the presence of Helen OPOKA ACAN who appeared to have heard and understood my translation of this statement.
5. Helen OPOKA ACAN has acknowledged that the facts and matters set out in her statement, as translated by me, are true to the best of her knowledge and recollection and has accordingly signed her signature where indicated.

Signed: [REDACTED]

Dated: 31/08/2015

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