

The Interview of Jima, a former child soldier of the RUF

How did you end up in the RUF?

"I was at home in my village when the rebels attacked. I didn't even have time to run, my family was at the market. I never saw them again. I was 14 so they didn't kill me, they branded me with RUF and from that day on I was forced to be a part of the RUF."

Did you kill for them because you had to or because you wanted to?

"When I was first recruited to the RUF I killed so they wouldn't kill me. After a while it just became normal to me. Almost like it was a normal activity"

Was there anything besides the thought of you being killed that influenced you to kill?

"They gave us a lot of different drugs that we were always taken in some way. That and the combination of them telling us over and over that the government needed change and that we could bring the needed change. The combination of that made killing seem fine."

What all did you do with the RUF?

"we basically went around raiding villages, killing everyone in them and got in gunfights with the army. Sometimes in our bases we would relive our best raids."

Did you regret killing the army and civilians?

At first I regretted killing both of them. I just got used to killing civilians, and after a while I developed a hatred for the army. They raided innocent villages and killed out people."

Wasn't that the same things you were doing?

No I was forced to or be killed. The RUF brainwashed us and made us kill so we wouldn't die. If I tried to leave with the RUF brand anyone would have shot me on sight."

Is it possible the same thing happened with the army? They were brainwashed?

No the army was a government force. They killed us because they liked it. They were so much worse than us.