



**Mission Viejo High School MUN**  
**34<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference**  
*Vox Populi*



**International Court of Justice: Blood Diamond Trade (Sierra Leone v Liberia)**

Hello delegates! My name is Madison Cota, and I'll be your head chair for the MVHS MUN 2017 conference. This is my fourth year in MUN and I am currently a senior. I am involved in a number of clubs here at mission including CSF and the Make a Wish Foundation. I also run track year round, despite my deep rooted hatred of running. I love animals and hope one day to become a vet. In my free time I enjoy going to the beach and hanging out with friends. I look forward to spending this 2017 conference with everyone.

**I. Background:**

**Note: This is NOT actual case of the ICJ. When writing resolutions, you may consider possible rulings which may arise, but be sure to present your own ideas. We will be presenting you with new witnesses and the case may take a turn away from expected results. YOU have the power to decide how this case proceeds.**

The diamond history of Sierra Leone began in 1935 when De Beers (a mining company) legally took complete control of the mining prospects in Sierra Leone for the next 99 years. Despite De Beers presence, Lebanese traders within Sierra Leone quickly discovered the immense profits that could be made by smuggling diamonds out of the country. As a result, illicit mining and trading soon increased throughout Sierra Leone. By the 1950's the government of Sierra Leone had virtually given up on policing the majority of its diamond industry. The government did however tighten security in two places. They increased their presence in the Kono diamond district and in Freetown the diamond export center. The result was that illegitimate diamonds were diverted from the high security sites and taken to Liberia, and an illegal diamond pipeline between Sierra Leone and Liberia was born. In 1961, Sierra Leone gained independence from Great Britain. It was after gaining its independence did diamond smuggling become a political problem as well as an economic one. In 1968, populist Siaka Stevens became prime minister, bringing the country to a one-party ruler. Stevens was the first person to officially connect the diamond mines to political power and profit, and he encouraged illicit mining to gain political power. He nationalized the diamond mines and De Beers' SLST by creating the National Diamond Mining Co. Through NDMC, Stevens gave himself and his key advisor, Lebanese businessman Jamil Mohammed, control of the diamond mines. Under Stevens' authority, legitimate diamond trading dropped from more than two million carats in 1970 to 595,000 carats in 1980 and 48,000 carats in 1988. On March 23, 1991 a civil war began when the Revolutionary United Front, a group of 100 fighters from Sierra Leone and Liberia, invaded east Sierra Leone. Throughout the nine-year civil war, fighting concentrated in and around the diamond districts. RUF, Revolutionary United Front, leaders were very aware that whoever controls the diamond mines controls Sierra Leone, and profits from smuggled diamonds funded



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its attack. Sierra Leone has suffered terrible social and economic costs as a result of its civil war and fight over diamond control. Under the cover of warfare the rebels committed heinous crimes against humanity in the form of murder, rape, and mutilation. The war between 1991 and 1999 claimed over 75,000 lives, caused 500,000 Sierra Leoneans to become refugees, and displaced half of the country's 4.5 million people. Liberian President Charles Taylor backed the rebels despite their heinous war crimes and provided them with the support of the special forces of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia. The Liberian government also traded weapons for blood diamonds from the rebels. The initial rebellion could have easily been quelled in the first half of 1991, but with Liberian military support, the rebels controlled two-thirds of Sierra Leone by the year's end. This led to Taylor's exile from Liberia and he was eventually tried for crimes against humanity. Additionally, Sierra Leone is currently suing Liberia for their participation in the civil war and support of the rebels. The case is based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which recognizes that "all members of the human family" are entitled to "equal and inalienable rights." It states that these rights are the international standard and are protected by law, so violators are subject to legal action. By aiding the rebels, Sierra Leone claims the Liberian government promoted the widespread human rights violations that plagued the nation, and therefore legally responsible for the rebels' crimes.

**II. Plaintiff:**

Sierra Leone asserts that the rebels committed crimes against humanity and that the Liberian support of the rebels leaves them liable for the abuses. Sierra Leone argues that without Liberian backing and weapons for diamonds trade, the rebellion would have been easily put down, inhibiting the rebels from becoming a dominant force. Without support, the rebel forces would have been unable to establish widespread control of the nation, and therefore limiting their ability to commit these heinous crimes. Sierra Leone claims that by participating in the blood diamond trade, the Liberian government supported the human rights violations associated with the illicit market and promoted violence in the region. Sierra Leone requests that the court orders Liberia to end its participation in the blood diamond trade and take the necessary steps to eliminate it altogether. It also requests that the UN reinstates its ban on the Liberian diamond trade.

**III. Defendant:**

Liberia argues that the support of the rebels and participation in the blood diamond trade was led by a government under Charles Taylor, and since he and his officials have been removed from power and exiled, the new government is not responsible for the war crimes committed by the former government. Taylor and other officials have been arrested, tried, and charged with war crimes so they are paying the price for the atrocities committed, and therefore the Liberian government is not liable.



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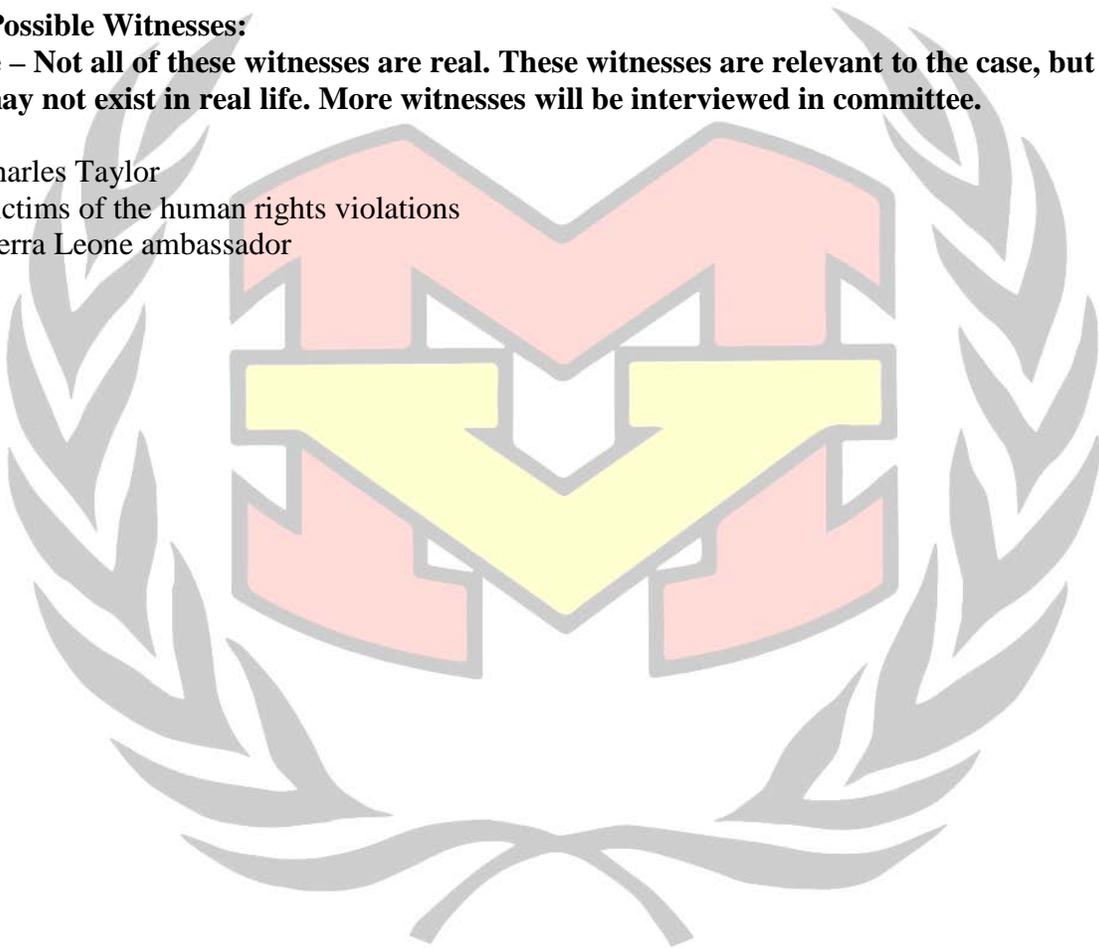
**IV. Questions to consider:**

1. What could Sierra Leone gain from this suit? What could Liberia lose?
2. How could the Judgment given by the court be enforced?

**V. Possible Witnesses:**

**Note – Not all of these witnesses are real. These witnesses are relevant to the case, but may or may not exist in real life. More witnesses will be interviewed in committee.**

1. Charles Taylor
2. Victims of the human rights violations
3. Sierra Leone ambassador





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**VI. Works Cited:**

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