

**YMCA MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2025**  
*Case Descriptions*

Committee: International Criminal Court  
Chief Justices: Margaret Wang & Suhani Khatri

## Case #1: ICC v. Christopher Columbus

*The following is to be accepted as the standard fact pattern of the case; additional research is compulsory. These facts may not be challenged.*

### Historical Background

**Christopher Columbus** was born in Genoa, Italy in 1451 to his father Domenico Columbo and mother Susanna Fontanarossa. Throughout his childhood, he trained at sea, and began to establish his career as a sailor and navigator. It was in early 1492 when Columbus proposed his plan to sail west across the Atlantic to reach Asia, appealing to the Spanish monarchs Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile. Columbus's desire for fame, the spread of Christianity, and monetary wealth, or "**gold, god, and glory**", aligned with the foreign interests of the Spanish monarchs, thus creating a formal contract between the two parties.

Columbus's fame comes from his voyage beginning on August 3, 1492 on three ships: the *Niña*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa Maria*. On October 12, his ships landed in what was assumed to be the East Indies, but was most likely the unexplored Bahamian islands. Initially, Columbus and his men landed on Guanahani, later to be renamed San Salvador, and were greeted by the Taino natives, specifically the Lucayan tribe. The Taino people were a well-established society, with enforced social structures, a strong government, and trade networks to exchange goods (pottery, baskets, jewelry, tools). Initially, the Taino people and Christopher Columbus and his men had friendly exchanges. These relationships started to severely decline when Columbus and his men began to enslave the Lucayans and mistreat them. Through this enslavement process and the arrival of new diseases in America through the Columbian Exchange, around **40,000 Lucayan people were killed or died through disease**, essentially wiping out the tribe as a whole.

Another prominent island Columbus and his men explored was the island Quisqueya, which he renamed Haiti. Columbus noted in his writings that the natives, the Arawak people, had little to no weaponry and much hospitality. This led to his immediate seizure of these islanders and enslaving them to work in gold mines, causing over **125,000 deaths of Arawak Natives in two years**. It is also noted in Columbus' and other explorers' writings that soldiers would cut off the hands of native Arawaks and tie them around their necks if they failed to meet their gold quota of the day. Furthermore, a popular theme within Columbus' journal entries was the selling of young Native American girls into sexual slavery. He wrote that dealers look for girls aged 9 to 10 to sell to work on farms, where hundreds of other young native girls would work. On his second trip to Newfoundland, he wrote about burning Arawak slaves alive, cutting off their noses and ears, sending hunting dogs to attack Arawak natives trying to escape slavery, and feeding Arawak babies to the hunter dogs if the explorers ran short of meat to feed them. Historians estimate that the population of Hispaniola (modern day Haiti and Dominican Republic) had a population over 3 million before Columbus and his men arrived. **Twenty years after their arrival, the native population was estimated at 60,000 inhabitants, a number which shrank to zero three decades following.**

Although there are various negative outcomes of Columbus' voyage, there are many positive benefits to his exploration as well. It is noted throughout history that the Columbian Exchange fostered economic growth through the spread of animals and plants. European and American nations were able to share crops and animals to expand diets and improve farming

techniques. Furthermore, Columbus helped Europeans expand their geographic knowledge, leading to the creation of new maps, improved navigation, and new possibilities for maritime exploration. Columbus can be seen as having inspired other explorers to travel to Newfoundland and expand their overseas colonies and empires. Finally, his exploration influenced the future of European history, as it contributed to the rise in new trade routes and the rise of powerful nation-states.

In the end, his negative actions outweigh the positive actions, therefore causing allegations of Christopher Columbus to be a pioneer of racism, slavery, rape, oppression, theft, vandalism, and extermination. He passed away on May 20, 1506 in Valladolid, Spain, after leaving his legacy in Newfoundland and in the history of European exploration.

Therefore, the International Criminal Court charges Christopher Columbus with one count of Genocide and three counts of Crimes Against Humanity as follows:

### **Crimes Charged**

1. Article 6(b): Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
2. Article 7(c): Enslavement;
3. Article 7(g): Rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity;
4. Article 7(g): Persecution against any identifiable group or collectivity on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, gender as defined in paragraph 3, or other grounds that are universally recognized as impermissible under international law, in connection with any act referred to in this paragraph or any crime within the jurisdiction of the Court.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Should Christopher Columbus be held responsible for the rape and sexual slavery of Native Americans conducted by his soldiers, even if he did not partake in it himself?
2. How have Christopher Columbus and his men's exploration impacted the lives of the Native Americans?
3. Are there any notable actions taken by Columbus himself on the cultures, races, or ethnicities of the Native American people, or was his exploration more based on monetary wealth? Which of the factors of "gold, god, and glory" are most obtained by Columbus?

### **Resources**

1. *Christopher Columbus Early life*. (n.d.). HISTORY CRUNCH - History Articles, Biographies, Infographics, Resources and More.  
<https://www.historycrunch.com/christopher-columbus-early-life.html#/>.

Description: Columbus's early life before his exploration to Newfoundland.

2. *Columbus makes landfall in the Caribbean*. (n.d.).  
<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/columbus-makes-landfall-caribbean/>.

Description: Columbus's first landing in Newfoundland and interactions with the Natives.

3. *Columbus reports on his first voyage, 1493* | *Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History*. (n.d.).  
<https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/spotlight-primary-source/columbus-reports-his-first-voyage-1493>.

Description: Quotes and explanations of Columbus's journal entries from his voyages to Newfoundland.

4. Historian, The. "10 Christopher Columbus Accomplishments and Achievements." *Have Fun with History*, 2 June 2023,  
[www.havefunwithhistory.com/christopher-columbus-accomplishments/](http://www.havefunwithhistory.com/christopher-columbus-accomplishments/).

Description: Provides a list of benefits that arised from Columbus's exploration of Newfoundland.

5. Onion, A. (2023, August 11). Christopher Columbus - Facts, voyage & discovery. *HISTORY*. <https://www.history.com/topics/exploration/christopher-columbus>.

Description: Build up to Columbus's first voyage to Newfoundland, the journey itself in 1492, and his motives for exploration.

6. *Physical abuse* | *Christopher Columbus: Debate prep*. (n.d.).  
<https://u.osu.edu/columbusvillian/physical-abuse/>.

Description: Compiled website with links to sources of Columbus's abuse to the natives with summaries of their main points.

## Case #2: ICC v. Pol Pot

*The following is to be accepted as the standard fact pattern of the case; additional research is compulsory. These facts may not be challenged.*

### Historical Background

**Pol Pot**, initially named Saloth Sar, was born in 1925 in the village Prek Sbauv, just outside of Cambodia's capital, Phnom Penh. He came from a comfortable family, where his father Pen Saloth and his mother Sok Nem owned around 50 acres of rice fields. In 1949, he went to Paris to study radio electronics, where he got involved with Cambodian students who followed the ideas of Marxism and Leninism.

In 1960, Pol Pot helped to reorganize the Khmer People's Revolutionary Party (KPRP) to fit those Marxist and Leninist ideals. Soon after, the Cambodian Communist leader Tou Samouth disappeared, allowing Pol Pot to take his place as the leader of the party in 1962. 8 years later, a military coup on Prince Sihanouk's government expanded to a five-year long civil war within Cambodia. Fully establishing Pol Pot to power, the Khmer Rouge communist forces attacked Phnom Penh violently and established a national government with Pol Pot as the prime minister in April 1975.

Immediately after Pol Pot took power, his "Year Zero" policy took off as he began to evacuate over 2.5 million residents, stripping doctors, teachers, civil servants, and other professionals of their possessions and creating laws for them to work in fields in various labor brigades. His goal was to turn the country into an "agrarian utopia" by imitating a poor, agricultural lifestyle. Laborers placed in these fields who complained, hid their rations, or broke rules were tortured and killed in detention centers. Historians estimate that between the years of 1975 to 1978, **2 million Cambodians died due to execution, forced labor, and famine/malnutrition**. The most noted torture center was the S-21 jail in Phnom Penh, where over **17,000 men, women, and children** were kept and tortured during the regime's power. Furthermore, Pol Pot initiated control of all aspects of the citizens' lives. He outlawed money, private property, jewelry, reading material, and religion, collectivized agriculture, placed children into the military, and enforced rules about sexual relations, vocabulary, and clothing.

Pol Pot and his supporters deemed themselves as "pure" individuals, and deemed anyone who did not support his ideals as "impure". Children were taken from their families at the age of 8 and were taught Pot's ideals, specifically their dedication to the state. This was done to train them into becoming soldiers and kill individuals seen as enemies of the state once they are able to fight. As well as children, his ideals targeted ethnic minorities, in which 80% of Chinese, Vietnamese, and Cham Muslims in Cambodia were killed. The population of just **Cham Muslims that were killed during the Cambodian Genocide is estimated at 500,000** by historians.

During Pol Pot's rule, the economic situation worsened as professionals were taken away from their jobs and forced to work in agricultural fields, where they failed to meet Pot's high quota standards. The situation escalated significantly, causing Pot to allow killings of members of the Khmer Rouge for failing to meet the agricultural standards or being supposed foreign spies. Worsening the situation, emergency workers were prevented from continuing their practice, causing health failures and a statewide lack of medicine and healthcare. This resulted in significant deaths due to disease and health issues, for example malaria.

Although there were many negative consequences of Pol Pot's actions, his ideas and beliefs were positive and approved by the public. Pol Pot's main followers included the Cambodian peasants, who he uplifted and motivated by allowing them to take governmental roles and help change the future of their country. Those who had ideals similar to Pot viewed him as a charismatic leader willing to fight corruption and openly express his empathy for the lower class Cambodians. Many looked to him to bring together social changes and revamp the order of Cambodian society to provide benefits to all.

Pol Pot's regime ended in 1979 when Vietnamese forces invaded Cambodia and overthrew the Khmer Rouge by entering Phnom Penh. Although his political stance seemed ideal to the average Cambodian initially, the harmful effects to Cambodia's people and economy initiated by Pol Pot and his leadership of the Khmer Rouge still remain.

Therefore, the International Criminal Court charges Pol Pot with one count of Genocide and two counts of Crimes Against Humanity as follows:

### Crimes Charged

1. Article 6(c): Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
2. Article 7(e): Imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of fundamental rules of international law;
3. Article 7(k): Other inhumane acts of a similar character intentionally causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health.

### Discussion Questions

1. Can the actions taken by the Khmer Rouge be blamed fully on Pol Pot since he was the leader of the party, or can the blame be put on those taking physical action?
2. What are some harmful behaviors that Pol Pot initiated during his rule that can be considered "inhumane acts" that are not included in the previous charges?
3. What strategies enacted by Pol Pot can be considered unintended consequences, and which can be seen as deliberate acts that he can be charged for?

### Resources

1. *Cambodia*. (n.d.). *College of Liberal Arts*.  
<https://cla.umn.edu/chgs/holocaust-genocide-education/resource-guides/cambodia#:~:text=Religious%20and%20ethnic%20minorities%20faced,total%20Cham%20population%2C%20were%20exterminated>.

Description: Describes the actions of the genocide in detail and how Pol Pot was involved in the genocide and with the Khmer Rouge.

2. *Cambodian Genocide*. (n.d.). USC Shoah Foundation.  
<https://sfi.usc.edu/collections/cambodian-genocide>.

Description: Focuses on the aftermath of the genocide and how Pol Pot's regime came to an end.

3. History, P. P.-. B. F. R. & D. |. (2018, August 21). Pol Pot - Biography, facts, regime & death | HISTORY. *HISTORY*. <https://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/pol-pot>.

Description: Discusses Pol Pot's rise to power, the Cambodian Genocide, and the Khmer Rouge's downfall.

4. *Holocaust Memorial Day Trust | Khmer Rouge ideology*. (n.d.). Holocaust Memorial Day Trust. <https://www.hmd.org.uk/learn-about-the-holocaust-and-genocides/cambodia/khmer-rouge-ideology/>.

Description: Offers insight on the reasoning and ideals of the Khmer Rouge regime.

5. *Khmer Rouge History | Cambodia Tribunal Monitor*. (n.d.). <https://cambodiatribunal.org/history/cambodian-history/khmer-rouge-history/>.

Description: Discusses the rise and fall of the Khmer Rouge party in detail and the actions they took during the Cambodian Genocide.

6. Som, Socheat. "Pol Pot's Charisma." *Mekong.net*, Dec. 2001, [mekong.net/cambodia/pol\\_pot1.htm#:~:text=Pol%20Pot%20identified%20with%20and](http://mekong.net/cambodia/pol_pot1.htm#:~:text=Pol%20Pot%20identified%20with%20and).

Description: Introduces the positive and charismatic side of Pol Pot's character.

7. *The Cambodian Genocide – The Holocaust Explained: Designed for schools. (1933, May 10)*. <https://www.theholocaustexplained.org/what-was-the-holocaust/what-was-genocide/the-cambodian-genocide/>.

Description: Gives historical context before the genocide (World War I) and the effects of those conflicts (The Cambodian Genocide).

8. The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. (2024, May 15). *Pol Pot | Biography, Regime, Genocide, death, & Facts*. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Pol-Pot>

Description: Provides an overview of Pol Pot's childhood experiences, rise to power, and regime.

### Case #3: ICC v. Hideki Tojo

*The following is to be accepted as the standard fact pattern of the case; additional research is compulsory. These facts may not be challenged.*

#### Historical Background

**Hideki Tojo** was born on December 30, 1884 in Tokyo, Japan. He was born into a military family and gradually worked his way through the ranks at an impressive rate, consistently endorsing a more militaristic approach to foreign affairs alongside vehement nationalism. In 1937, he was named the **chief of staff of the Kwantung Army** in Manchuria. In July of 1940, he was also named as the **Army Minister** for the Prime Minister at the time, gaining significantly more political influence as a result of his military achievements.

Through his efforts to form a political front of national unity and other alliances during the war, he officially became Japan's **Prime Minister** in 1941. Since he now held the power of both the prime minister and army minister, he managed domestic and foreign affairs, education, munitions, and commerce - Emperor Hirohito merely held a ceremonial position.

Before and during World War II, Tojo waged war against China in the **Second Sino-Japanese War** as a result of Chinese resistance to Japanese expansionism, which began in 1931. During the majority of the early 20th century, Japan exercised immense authority over Manchuria by controlling its railroads and compromising Chinese independence. After the Chinese people attempted to reassert themselves by building their own railroads, the Japanese instigated a series of skirmishes and that led up to the **Nanjing (Nanking) Massacre**, in which their army killed as many as 300,000 civilians and surrendered troops. Additionally, tens of thousands of women were raped in a mass attempt to dehumanize and belittle the Chinese population. Once the Japanese finished looting and burning down the city, they continued to pursue Chinese soldiers and murdered many families beyond Nanjing.

During World War II, Tojo's treatment of prisoners of war of those from both the Far East and the Allied Powers was infamous. During the **Bataan Death March**, roughly 30,000 lives of both American and Filipino soldiers were lost under Japanese oversight. The **Sandakan Death Marches**, also started under Tojo, led to a large number of POW casualties. Throughout the war, prisoners were frequently abused, experiencing both poor working conditions and deprivations of basic rights. Inadequate accommodations and medical care were also a consistent characteristic of these marches.

As the unofficial leader of Japan, Hideki additionally instilled in his soldiers a sense of honor and commitment to their code of conduct of "**bushido**", which was a set of guidelines that encouraged suicide in the face of defeat and prioritized honor over life. Whether the soldiers followed the code out of fear or loyalty is up for debate. He also initiated a successful **propaganda campaign** that antagonized Americans and made the war effort appeal to the youth, ensuring that young students in school were thoroughly indoctrinated with more militaristic values. As someone in control of essentially all aspects of Japanese society, Hideki was viewed as a surprisingly efficient bureaucrat who improved Japan's "fighting capabilities," even under a strict budget and some civilian opposition.

Therefore, the International Criminal Court charges Hideki Tojo with one count of Genocide, two counts of Crimes Against Humanity, and two counts of War Crimes as follows:



## Crimes Charged

1. Article 6(c): Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
2. Article 7(1)(e): Imprisonment or other severe deprivation of physical liberty in violation of fundamental rules of international law;
3. Article 7(1)(g): Rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity;
4. Article 8(2)(a)(ii): Torture or inhuman treatment, including biological experiments;
5. Article 8(2)(a)(vii): Unlawful deportation or transfer or unlawful confinement;

## Discussion Questions

1. Can Hideki Tojo be held accountable for the forcible transport of prisoners of war and rape of civilians if he himself did not commit the crime(s) directly?
2. To what extent was under-preparation and a lack of Japanese resources a contributing factor to the maltreatment of prisoners of war?
3. Is the taking of prisoners of war justified during times of conflict, especially considering that countries other than Japan did so as well? If so, should they be treated equally relative to soldiers?

## Resources

1. "Hideki Tojo." *Britannica*, [www.britannica.com/biography/Tojo-Hideki](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Tojo-Hideki). Accessed 12 June 2024.
2. "Hideki Tojo." *History Crunch*, [www.historycrunch.com/hideki-tojo.html#](http://www.historycrunch.com/hideki-tojo.html#/). Accessed 12 June 2024.
3. "Hideki Tojo | Biography, Military Career & Death." *Study.com*, [study.com/academy/lesson/hideki-tojo-in-ww2-biography-quotes-facts-death.html#:~:text=Hideki%20Tojo%20Early%20Life%20%26%20Career,class%20of%20nearly%20400%20cadets](http://study.com/academy/lesson/hideki-tojo-in-ww2-biography-quotes-facts-death.html#:~:text=Hideki%20Tojo%20Early%20Life%20%26%20Career,class%20of%20nearly%20400%20cadets). Accessed 12 June 2024.
4. "Nanjing Massacre." *USC Shoah Foundation*, [sfi.usc.edu/collections/nanjing-massacre](http://sfi.usc.edu/collections/nanjing-massacre). Accessed 12 June 2024.
5. "Second Sino-Japanese War." *Britannica*, [www.britannica.com/event/Second-Sino-Japanese-War](http://www.britannica.com/event/Second-Sino-Japanese-War). Accessed 12 June 2024.
6. "Tojo Hideki." *History*, [www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/tojo-hideki](http://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/tojo-hideki). Accessed 12 June 2024.
7. *The Treatment of Prisoners of War by the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy Focusing on the Pacific War*. E-book ed.

## Case #4: ICC v. Ranaivalona I of Madagascar

*The following is to be accepted as the standard fact pattern of the case; additional research is compulsory. These facts may not be challenged.*

### Historical Background

Born as Ramavo in 1778, **Queen Ranaivalona** has always been infamous for her intellect and cunning. When she was young, she already began to form alliances with powerful military and religious figureheads, staging a coup by capturing the throne and ultimately assuming her position as Queen soon after.

Her first approach in foreign policy was to reverse a majority of Radama's reforms and usher Madagascar into a new age of cultural revitalization, denouncing all forms of Western traditions that were initially introduced to her people in previous years. In doing so, she effectively **severed all trade relations** with Western colonial powers, including the French and British. Naturally, the French led a naval attack in retaliation, facing a surprising defeat after falling victims to malaria. She also expelled all traces of European presence, sticking the heads of foreign merchants, diplomats, and teachers on pikes, lining them up on beaches to deter any other nations from invading.

Her **intolerance of Christianity** was also a notable characteristic in domestic policy, adopting cruel methods to eradicate the religion entirely. Between 1837 to 1856, she detained and persecuted about one hundred Christians, all while ordering inhumane punishments unto those who practiced the religion and beheading them in front of relatives. She additionally banned the instruction of Christianity in all educational institutions and carried out murders of missionaries, forcing them to go underground or leave the country.

Furthermore, Ranaivalona established "**Trial by Ordeal**" (later dubbed "trial by tangena") and abandoned the common "Trial by Jury" precedent. This was a primitive method of determining one's loyalty in which the accused was forced to consume three chicken's skins, followed by a toxic tangena nut and the tangena plant's poisonous fluid to induce vomiting.

Ranaivalona was also infamous for executing an essentially national **buffalo hunt in 1845**, ordering roughly fifty thousand subjects to travel a lengthy path and hunt buffalo, while also building a road throughout their journey. However, a glaring lack of leadership and planning forced the group into peril, as they were frequently confronted with harsh labor conditions without ample food or water supply. Despite many attempts to sustain the builders and hunters, many died of starvation, exhaustion, and other unfortunate illnesses. After four months, the hunt ultimately produced no buffalo and thousands of dead residents.

However, though her ways were unconventional, Ranaivalona ruled with the intent of strengthening Madagascar's economic and political position on the regional, if not global, stage. Her usage of **Fanompanoa**, which was forced labor in lieu of monetary taxation or material trade, was designed to fulfill this objective, selling individuals into slavery and receiving financial contributions in return. She was also intent on keeping Europeans out of Madagascar, succeeding in yet another conflict involving the French and English. In 1849, European naval forces were deceived into attacking a seemingly-lackluster front that actually concealed a larger, more sophisticated fort. In doing so, she effectively ensured that **no armed forces would enter** her country without reasonable grounds.

Ranavalona's reign soon came to an end when she died in her sleep on August 16, 1861. Succeeded by her son, Prince Rakoto, her controversial policies were put to an end. Despite her tainted legacy, she is known for being the first to establish real female authority over a certain country, taking concrete action rather than assuming a ceremonial position.

Therefore, the International Criminal Court charges Queen Ranavalona I of Madagascar with two counts of Genocide and three counts of Crimes Against Humanity as follows:

### Crimes Charged

1. Article 6(b): Causing serious bodily or mental harm to the group;
2. Article 6(c): Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
3. Article 7(f): Torture;
4. Article 7(h): Persecution against any identifiable group or collectivity on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, gender as defined in paragraph 3, or other grounds that are universally recognized as impermissible under international law, in connection with any act referred to in this paragraph or any crime within the jurisdiction of the Court;
5. Article 7(k): Other inhumane acts of a similar character intentionally causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health.

### Discussion Questions

1. To what extent were Ranavalona's actions for the advancement of Madagascar's greater position in the global community?
2. Does the principle of protecting Madagascar from colonial authority outweigh Ranavalona's actions as a ruler?
3. How were the circumstances of certain minority groups altered throughout Ranavalona's regime compared to the years preceding her rule?

### Resources

1. "Ranavalona I, Queen Of Madagascar." *Encyclopedia.com*, [www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/ranavalona-i-queen-madagascar](http://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/ranavalona-i-queen-madagascar). Accessed 18 May 2024.
2. Suman, Swati. "The Terror of Queen Ranavalona I in Madagascar." *Medium*, 17 Nov. 2020, [swati-suman.medium.com/the-terror-of-queen-ranavalona-i-in-madagascar-9afc5a995a1f](https://swati-suman.medium.com/the-terror-of-queen-ranavalona-i-in-madagascar-9afc5a995a1f). Accessed 18 May 2024.
3. Terovsky, Ilya. "Queen Ranavalona: The First Queen of Madagascar." *Our Ancestories*, 30 Jan. 2021, [our-ancestories.com/blogs/news/queen-ranavalona-the-first-queen-of-madagascar](https://our-ancestories.com/blogs/news/queen-ranavalona-the-first-queen-of-madagascar). Accessed 18 May 2024.
4. "2.6 Ranavalona I, Queen of Madagascar." *Her Half of History*, 13 May 2021, [herhalfofhistory.com/2021/05/13/ranavalona-i-queen-of-madagascar/](https://herhalfofhistory.com/2021/05/13/ranavalona-i-queen-of-madagascar/). Accessed 18 May 2024.