



Legal Brief: UK Complicity in the Biafran Genocide

Title:

The United Kingdom's Complicity in the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970) and the Biafran Genocide: Legal Grounds for Accountability

Prepared by:

Truth Over Empire – Legal & Advocacy Unit

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I. Background

Between 1967 and 1970, an estimated **1 to 3 million Biafran civilians**—predominantly of **Igbo ethnicity**—died due to targeted military actions, aerial bombings, mass starvation, and blockade policies by the Nigerian government during the Nigerian Civil War.

The conflict arose following the declaration of the independent state of **Biafra** after a series of pogroms, political persecution, and ethnic massacres targeting Igbos in northern Nigeria. The war was characterized by genocidal conditions, including:

- **Starvation used as a weapon of war**
- **Systematic targeting of civilians and refugee centers**
- **Blockades of food, medicine, and humanitarian aid**
- **Aerial bombing of hospitals and markets**

Despite international awareness of the humanitarian catastrophe, **the United Kingdom—Nigeria's former colonial ruler—chose to support the Nigerian federal military government with weapons, military intelligence, and diplomatic protection.**

II. Key Evidence of UK Complicity

A. Arms Supply and Military Aid

- The UK provided **over £6 million worth of arms** and military equipment to the Nigerian government during the war, including **Hawker Hunter jets** used in bombing civilian areas.
- Declassified documents show that British officials were **fully aware** that these weapons were being used to target civilian populations.

"I do not think we should go on using the argument that these arms are for the defense of Nigerian unity. The brutal truth is that this policy is designed to protect our oil interests."

— UK Foreign Office Memo, 1968

B. Oil Interests and BP (British Petroleum)

- The UK government was heavily invested in protecting British Petroleum's operations in the Southern part of Old Eastern region (Biafra) now known as Niger Delta.
- BP maintained a close partnership with the Nigerian federal authorities and was complicit in fueling the war to maintain access to oil fields formerly controlled by Biafra.

C. Suppressing International Intervention

- The UK lobbied against UN or Commonwealth intervention.
- British diplomats sought to **undermine humanitarian relief efforts**, especially those run by faith-based organizations seen as "pro-Biafra." This culminated in the shot down of a UNICEF plane documented by David Koran in his memoirs "[*Far Away in the Sky: A Memoir of the Biafran Airlift*](#)"

D. Media Disinformation via the BBC

- The **BBC downplayed or distorted reports** of starvation and civilian massacres.
 - Survivors and journalists accused the BBC of acting as a **propaganda arm** for British foreign policy.
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III. Legal Framework for Accountability

A. Violation of the Genocide Convention (1948)

Under the **Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide**, genocide includes:

- “Deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about [a group’s] physical destruction in whole or in part.”

UK’s complicity through arms supply, blockade support, and silence contributed to these genocidal conditions.

B. Breach of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

- Article 6: Right to life
- Article 7: Prohibition of torture and inhuman treatment
- Article 19: Right to information

C. Violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

- Article 3: Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person
- Article 25: Right to food, health, and well-being

D. Customary International Law: Aiding and Abetting

- The UK’s direct material support constitutes **aiding and abetting crimes against humanity** under customary international legal standards, even if the acts were not carried out directly.

IV. Legal Demands

Truth Over Empire and affiliated legal networks are pursuing:

1. **Official Acknowledgment and Public Apology** by the UK Government.

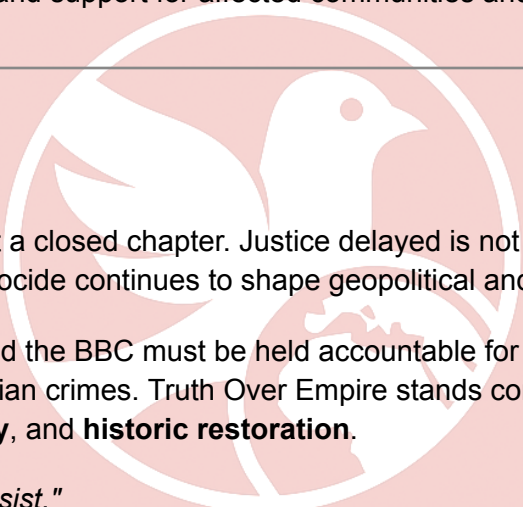
2. **Declassification and release of all relevant UK documents** from 1966–1970 regarding the war.
3. **An Independent International Inquiry** into UK complicity and BP's role.
4. **Accountability mechanisms** through UN bodies, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, or European Court of Human Rights (for diaspora cases).
5. **Reparative justice** and support for affected communities and survivors.

V. Conclusion

The Biafran Genocide is not a closed chapter. Justice delayed is not justice denied—especially when the legacy of that genocide continues to shape geopolitical and economic realities.

The UK government, BP, and the BBC must be held accountable for their roles in one of Africa's most devastating humanitarian crimes. Truth Over Empire stands committed to the pursuit of **legal redress, moral clarity, and historic restoration.**

"To remember is to resist."



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