

An extract from Sorin's Final Assignment

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Scholars Programme Course: Modern Slavery

Assignment Title / Question: Evaluate the judgement of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in *The Hacienda Brasil Verde Workers V. Brazil* case



Brazil, as a country, has a somewhat unstable and lax law enforcement regarding labour exploitation. Historically, in Brazil, the slave trade has been linked to forced labour and the Portuguese colonisation. By the mid 18th century roughly 40 percent of the Brazilian based slaves were involved in sugar cane farming. In 1850, the trans-national trade of enslaved Africans came to an end which gave strength to a revolution seeking to abolish slavery and by 1888, slavery in Brazil was abolished completely, legally at least.

This case which occurred in Feb 2000 (*Hacienda Brasil Verde Workers Vs. Brazil*, Judgement, Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Series C, No 318) concerned the almost enslavement-like working conditions of around 85 workers in Brazil. Some of them were even children. It occurred in a privately-owned cattle ranch in North Brazil called "Hacienda Brasil Verde". Most Brazilian victims of this slavery were recruited by a "gato" known as "Meladinho" who recruited dozens of workers in the Barras municipality. When these victims, lured under a false promise of good pay and a stable job, had to travel for 3 days, out of their own money, by multiple modes of transportation and had to spend a night in a hotel. This further indebted these victims and therefore made them even more desperate and keen to work at this cattle ranch that they went through so much effort to reach.

Once these people reached the cattle ranch, they had to hand over their work permits and sign documents, which is an issue because these targeted victims were illiterate, having to rely on trust and their own intuition. For the children, these crooked managers even changed their dates of birth on their birth documents to try and appear as though everyone who worked for Hacienda Brasil Verde was of legal age. Every piece of food and basic human needs that these slaves used were then written down on their tab, leading them into debt bondage as these managers and gatos charged unreasonable prices, especially for vulnerable people like these.



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