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conflict.

◆ In the Angolan civil war of 1974-2001, the National Union for the Total Independence of Africa illegally sold diamonds worth £2.4 bn.

◆ During the '80s it's estimated 19 per cent of the world's diamond market were blood diamonds.

◆ The flawless 200-carat Millennium Star diamond was discovered in the Democratic Republic of the Congo during the civil war in the 1990s. It was bought by DeBeers.

“Around 50 had both hands hacked off by the weapon of choice — the machete.

“For some, amputation occurred after rebels had force marched them into a town carrying heavy loads, under the muzzle of an AK-47.

“When they reached their destination, exhausted and scared, their hands were bound.

“They were asked if they wanted short sleeves or long, the answer determined where the rebels cut off their arm.

“If the rebels couldn't hold them still they slashed their noses, fingers or anything they could grab, or they would stab the prisoner in the shoulder and shoot off a leg.

“I remember one guy describing

of man's inhumanity.

Charles Taylor's trial began in 2007 and is entering its closing stages. His defence, led by British barrister Courtney Griffiths QC, is expected to be wrapped up in November. It will be followed by closing speeches. Legal experts say a verdict could be handed down in a year.

Mr Taylor has pleaded not guilty to the 11 charges and denied possessing any diamonds as a result of the war.

Prosecutors summoned supermodel Naomi Campbell to testify about reports she received diamonds from Taylor in South Africa in 1997.