



AMMAN ACADEMY MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2026

The Roman Centurion Court

## **The Trial of Julius Caesar**

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Original: **English**

No: **TRCC-AAMUN-01**

Date: **September 2026**

### **SITUATION REGARDING CAESAR'S CROSSING OF THE RUBICON AND THE START OF CIVIL WAR**

IN THE CASE OF

***The Roman Senate v. Julius Caesar***

**Before:** ***Iudex Maximus Hashem Abu Al Ghanam***

**Under Seal**

**CASE DOCUMENTS**



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## INTRODUCTION

This case concerns Gaius Julius Caesar's decision in 49 BC to cross the Rubicon River with a portion of his forces while holding *imperium* as proconsul of Gaul. The Rubicon marked the boundary of Caesar's provincial command and Italy. Caesar's crossing of the river with armed forces brought the dispute between himself, Pompey, and the Senate into open military conflict and is conventionally regarded as the immediate beginning of the Roman Civil War.

The Roman Senate, as the Plaintiff, argues that Caesar exceeded the lawful limits of his *imperium*, disobeyed the Senate's demands that he surrender his command, and used military force against the constitutional institutions of the Republic. Caesar, as the Defendant, argues that the Senate and his political opponents had themselves acted improperly, that Pompey retained military authority while Caesar was being ordered to surrender his own, and that his political and legal position would be placed in serious danger if he returned to Rome without his command.

The Court must therefore determine whether Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon constituted an unlawful use of military authority and an attack upon the Roman Republic, or whether the circumstances preceding the crossing provide a legal or constitutional justification for his actions.

## TIMELINE

### 60 BC: Formation of the First Triumvirate

Gaius Julius Caesar, Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus, and Marcus Licinius Crassus form an informal political alliance commonly known as the First Triumvirate. The alliance allows the three men to advance their political interests despite opposition from sections of the Senate.

### 59 BC: Caesar's Consulship

Caesar becomes consul alongside Marcus Calpurnius Bibulus. During his



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consulship, Caesar advances legislation supported by Pompey and Crassus and subsequently receives provincial commands in Gaul.

### **58–50 BC: Caesar's Gallic Campaigns**

Caesar conducts a series of military campaigns in Gaul. His victories substantially expand Roman control and greatly increase his military reputation, wealth, and political influence.

Caesar's relationship with his soldiers also becomes increasingly important. His army provides him with a powerful source of political and military influence.

### **55 BC: Caesar and Pompey Retain Major Commands**

Caesar receives an extension of his Gallic command, while Pompey receives extensive provincial authority in Spain. Pompey's provinces are administered through legates, allowing him to remain near Rome.

The two men therefore continue to possess significant military influence.

### **53 BC: Death of Crassus**

Marcus Licinius Crassus is killed during the Roman campaign against Parthia at Carrhae. His death removes the third major figure who had helped maintain the political balance between Caesar and Pompey.

### **52 BC: Pompey Becomes Sole Consul**

Political violence and instability in Rome contribute to Pompey's appointment as sole consul. Pompey increasingly becomes associated with the senatorial faction opposed to Caesar.

### **51–50 BC: Growing Dispute Over Caesar's Command**

As Caesar's provincial command approaches its end, political conflict develops over when Caesar must surrender his command and return to Rome.

Caesar seeks to retain his command long enough to protect his political position and pursue the consulship. His opponents demand that he surrender



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his command and return to Rome as a private citizen.

### **December 50 BC: Proposal for Caesar and Pompey to Surrender**

The Senate votes overwhelmingly in favor of a proposal that both Caesar and Pompey should surrender their military commands.

The precise legal implications of this decision remain important to the case because Pompey's military position was based on separate legislation and political arrangements.

### **1 January 49 BC: Caesar's Proposal to the Senate**

Caesar's position is presented to the Senate. He offers to surrender his army if Pompey also gives up his military command.

The proposal is rejected by the dominant senatorial faction.

### **January 49 BC: Tribunes Leave Rome**

Tribunes Marcus Antonius and Quintus Cassius oppose measures directed against Caesar and subsequently leave Rome.

Caesar presents the treatment of the tribunes as evidence that his political opponents have violated important constitutional protections.

### **7 January 49 BC: *Senatus Consultum Ultimum***

The Senate issues an emergency decree calling upon Roman magistrates to protect the Republic.

The decree had previously been used during several major political crises, but its constitutional scope remained controversial.

### **10–11 January 49 BC: Caesar Crosses the Rubicon**

Caesar crosses the Rubicon River with a portion of his forces, traditionally identified as including the Thirteenth Legion.

The Rubicon represented the boundary of his provincial command and Italy. Caesar's crossing therefore marks the transition from political confrontation to



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armed conflict.

### January–March 49 BC: Caesar Advances Through Italy

Caesar advances through northern and central Italy. Several towns and communities come under his control while Pompey and a number of senators withdraw southward.

### March 49 BC: Pompey Leaves Italy

Pompey and many of his supporters depart Italy for Greece, where they begin preparing forces to confront Caesar.

### 49 BC: Civil War Expands

The conflict spreads beyond Italy. Caesar campaigns in Spain while Pompey's forces consolidate in Greece and the eastern Mediterranean.

### 48 BC: Battle of Pharsalus

Caesar defeats Pompey's forces at the Battle of Pharsalus in Greece.

Pompey flees to Egypt, where he is subsequently killed.

The civil war continues in other regions before Caesar eventually defeats the remaining major opposition.

## GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE CASE

### The Roman Republic

The Roman Republic was not governed by a single written constitution comparable to those found in many modern states. Instead, political authority was distributed among magistrates, assemblies, the Senate, and traditional practices known collectively as *mos maiorum*.



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Roman political institutions therefore depended heavily on precedent, custom, political negotiation, and the balance between different offices.

This system became increasingly unstable during the final century of the Republic.

Powerful individuals began accumulating wealth, political influence, and military loyalty on a scale that challenged traditional political structures. Military commanders who controlled large and experienced armies could become particularly powerful.

The conflict between Caesar and the Senate must therefore be considered within this broader period of institutional instability.

### Caesar's Rise to Power

Caesar's military success in Gaul transformed his political position.

Between 58 and 50 BC, Caesar conducted extensive military campaigns and expanded Roman control over much of Gaul. His victories brought him enormous prestige and financial resources.

His soldiers also became highly loyal to him.

Caesar's political opponents increasingly feared that his military power could be used to dominate Roman politics.

Caesar, meanwhile, feared that surrendering his command and returning to Rome as a private citizen would expose him to prosecution by his political enemies.

This created the fundamental conflict:

**The Senate feared Caesar retaining an army.**

**Caesar feared surrendering his army.**



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### Caesar and Pompey

Pompey had once been Caesar's political ally.

The First Triumvirate allowed Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus to cooperate in advancing their political interests.

However, the alliance gradually collapsed.

Crassus died in 53 BC, while Pompey's relationship with Caesar weakened following the death of Julia, Caesar's daughter and Pompey's wife.

Pompey increasingly aligned himself with Caesar's opponents in the Senate.

By 49 BC, the political conflict was no longer simply a dispute between Caesar and the Senate. It had become a confrontation between two powerful political and military factions.



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### Imperium

*Imperium* was the lawful authority possessed by certain Roman magistrates and promagistrates to exercise military and governmental power. Its scope was connected to the office, command, and territory assigned to the individual holding it.

The Plaintiff argues that Caesar's *imperium* was geographically limited and did not authorize him to bring his provincial army into Italy.

The Defendant may argue that the circumstances surrounding the termination of Caesar's command, his right to seek the consulship, and the Senate's treatment of Pompey must be considered when determining the lawful extent of his authority.

### Provincial Boundaries and the Rubicon

Roman provincial commands were geographically defined. The Rubicon represented the boundary between Caesar's province and Italy. Caesar's crossing of the river with armed forces therefore raised a fundamental question concerning whether a provincial commander could bring military forces beyond the territory of his command.

The Rubicon should not be confused with the *pomerium*, the sacred boundary of the city of Rome. The legal significance of Caesar's crossing arose from the relationship between his provincial command and Italy rather than from the *pomerium* itself.

### Senatus Consultum Ultimum

The *Senatus Consultum Ultimum*, commonly translated as the "final decree of the Senate," was an emergency senatorial measure calling upon Roman magistrates to protect the Republic.



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Its constitutional scope was significant but contested. The Plaintiff may argue that the decree provided the Senate and its magistrates with sufficient authority to respond to Caesar's military threat. The Defendant may challenge whether the circumstances justified its use and whether it could lawfully be used to deprive Caesar of his political and legal protections. The decree of 7 January 49 BC was a major escalation in the dispute preceding the civil war.

### **Mos Maiorum**

*Mos maiorum*, or the "custom of the ancestors," refers to the traditional customs and precedents that formed an important part of Roman political and constitutional practice.

Because the Roman Republic did not operate under a single written constitutional document comparable to a modern constitution, historical practice and established political customs played an important role in defining the limits of political authority.

The parties may therefore rely upon historical practice when interpreting the powers of the Senate, magistrates, commanders, and other institutions.

## **ARGUMENTS OF THE PARTIES INVOLVED**

### **Plaintiff : Roman Senate**

The Plaintiff argues that Caesar knowingly exceeded the limits of his *imperium* by bringing armed forces into Italy.

The Senate maintains that Caesar had been ordered to surrender his command and that his continued possession of an army represented a direct threat to the authority of the Republic. Rather than comply with the decisions of the Senate, Caesar crossed the Rubicon and entered Italy with troops.

The Plaintiff argues that Caesar's political disagreements with Pompey and the Senate cannot justify the use of military force. Roman commanders were subject to constitutional limitations, and allowing a commander to retain an



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army whenever he believed that political institutions were acting unfairly would undermine the Republic's system of government.

The Plaintiff further argues that the *Senatus Consultum Ultimum* demonstrated that the Senate considered the situation sufficiently serious to require extraordinary action. Caesar's decision to cross the Rubicon after this escalation should therefore be understood as a deliberate rejection of senatorial authority.

The Senate therefore requests that the Court find Caesar responsible for exceeding his *imperium*, violating the authority of the Roman Republic, and unlawfully bringing military force into Italy.

### Defendant : Gaius Julius Caesar

The Defendant argues that Caesar's conduct cannot be considered separately from the actions of the Senate and Pompey.

Caesar maintains that he repeatedly proposed that both he and Pompey surrender their military commands. He argues that requiring Caesar to disarm while Pompey retained military authority placed him at an unequal political and legal disadvantage. Ancient accounts record Caesar's proposal that both commanders should surrender their forces and return to private life.

The Defense further challenges the Senate's use of the *Senatus Consultum Ultimum*. Caesar may argue that the decree represented an extraordinary expansion of senatorial power and that the Senate had already taken measures against Caesar's supporters and political allies.

Caesar may also argue that his actions were not intended to destroy the Republic but to protect his *dignity*, political rights, and security from opponents who were attempting to remove him from office and expose him to prosecution. His supporters may argue that the constitutional order had already been compromised before Caesar crossed the Rubicon.

The Defendant therefore requests that the Court consider the conduct of all political actors involved and determine whether Caesar's actions constituted an unlawful assault upon the Republic or a response to an already existing constitutional crisis.



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## PREVIOUS EFFORTS AND HISTORICAL PRACTICES

### Sulla's March on Rome 88 BC

In 88 BC, Lucius Cornelius Sulla marched on Rome with an army during a political dispute and entered the city under arms. He later repeated the action during the civil war of 83–82 BC.

Sulla's actions provide an important precedent for the use of military force by Roman commanders in political disputes. The Plaintiff may argue that Caesar's actions represent another dangerous instance of a commander using an army to resolve a political conflict. The Defendant may distinguish Sulla's circumstances from Caesar's and argue that precedent alone does not establish the legality or illegality of Caesar's actions.

### The *Senatus Consultum Ultimum* and Gaius Gracchus 121 BC

The Senate used an emergency decree during the crisis involving Gaius Gracchus in 121 BC. The event became an important example of the Senate invoking extraordinary measures in response to what it considered a threat to the Republic.

The Plaintiff may rely on this precedent to demonstrate that the Senate possessed a recognized emergency power. The Defendant may argue that the existence of the decree did not establish unlimited senatorial authority and that each use of extraordinary powers must be considered according to its circumstances.

### The Catiline Crisis 63 BC

During the conspiracy associated with Lucius Sergius Catilina, the Senate again relied upon emergency authority to respond to a perceived threat to the Republic.

The precedent demonstrates the willingness of Roman political institutions to adopt extraordinary measures during periods of internal crisis. The Defendant may distinguish Caesar's situation from Catiline's by arguing that Caesar was a sitting Roman magistrate and provincial commander involved in a constitutional dispute rather than a conspirator attempting to overthrow the



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state.

### **The December 50 BC Vote on Caesar and Pompey**

In December 50 BC, the Senate voted overwhelmingly in favor of a proposal that Caesar and Pompey should surrender their military commands. The vote is significant because it demonstrates that a substantial portion of the Senate supported removing military power from both men.

However, Pompey's existing command was connected to earlier legislation, and modern scholarship cautions against treating the vote as a simple and legally unambiguous order affecting both commanders equally. This distinction may form an important part of the Defendant's argument.

### **The Constitutional Crisis of 49 BC**

The events immediately preceding the civil war demonstrate that the conflict cannot be reduced to Caesar's actions alone. The Senate, Pompey, Caesar, the tribunes, and other political actors all took measures that contributed to the escalation of the crisis.

Caesar's own account presents his actions as attempts to protect his position and pursue peace, while other ancient accounts portray his actions as a challenge to the authority of the Republic. The Court should therefore consider competing accounts and arguments rather than treating Caesar's motives as historically settled.



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## GLOSSARY

### Caesar

Gaius Julius Caesar, Roman general, politician, consul, and Defendant in this case.

### Pompey

Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus, Roman general and former political ally of Caesar who became the leading military opponent of Caesar.

### Senate

The principal deliberative political body of the Roman Republic, composed largely of former magistrates and influential Roman elites.

### Imperium

The legal authority to command armies and exercise certain governmental powers held by Roman magistrates and promagistrates.

### Province

A territory assigned to a Roman governor or commander in which that individual exercised designated governmental and military authority.

### Rubicon

A river marking the boundary between Caesar's provincial command and Italy in 49 BC.

### Pomerium

The sacred boundary of the city of Rome. It should not be confused with the Rubicon.

### Senatus Consultum Ultimum



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An emergency decree of the Senate calling upon Roman magistrates to protect the Republic.

### Mos Maiorum

The traditional customs and practices of Rome's ancestors that formed an important part of Roman political and constitutional life.

### Tribune of the Plebs

A Roman magistrate whose office included important protections for the plebeians and the ability to veto certain official actions.

### Provocatio

A Roman legal principle associated with a citizen's ability, under certain circumstances, to appeal against coercive action by a magistrate.

### Consul

One of the two annually elected chief magistrates of the Roman Republic. Consuls possessed *imperium* and important military and political powers.

### Proconsul

A former consul or other individual exercising *imperium* outside Rome, commonly as governor of a province.

### Dignitas

A concept referring broadly to a Roman's standing, reputation, prestige, and political authority.

### Civil War

An armed conflict between groups within the same political community. In this case, the Roman Civil War began in 49 BC between Caesar and the forces associated with Pompey and the Senate.

### Republic



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The Roman political system that existed before the establishment of the Roman Empire.

### HELPFUL LINKS

[https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Caesar/Civil\\_Wars/home.html](https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Caesar/Civil_Wars/home.html)

[https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Appian/Civil\\_Wars/2%2A.html](https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Appian/Civil_Wars/2%2A.html)

<https://academic.oup.com/book/60589/chapter-abstract/524326226>

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Julius-Caesar-Roman-ruler>

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