

Ben Watson



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A "genius" junior with vast experience in cases concerning European Arrest Warrants and extradition relating to international terrorism issues. **(Chambers UK 2018: Extradition)**

"Very hard-working and has a great ability to master the detail of a case. He is very technically able and a powerful advocate who is able to command the confidence of the court." **(Chambers UK 2018: Extradition)**

"He is a really excellent advocate. Very clear and persuasive." **(Chamber UK 2018: Administrative and Public Law)**

'Phenomenally bright.' 'Judges really love him and his legal analysis is brilliant.' 'He has a great degree of charm as an advocate, but he can be steely when necessary.' **(Chambers UK 2017: Extradition)**

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"He is clever and hard-working and really impresses with his cross-examinations. He is a star of the future." **(Chambers UK 2016)**

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"He is phenomenal, very good with the clients and user-friendly." "He is one of the first people who comes to mind, and is extremely good." **(Chambers UK 2015)**

"He's in a different league to many juniors. He's extremely accessible and really good at giving advice." **(Chambers UK 2015: Public & Administrative Law)**

Details of practice

Ben is one of the country's leading juniors in crime, extradition, and public law. He is regularly instructed to act for individuals in high-profile extradition cases, as well as in criminal cases, particularly those with an international or public law dimension. He is a member of the Attorney General's A Panel, and has been on the Attorney's Civil/Public law Panels for over 10 years. In that capacity, Ben is regularly instructed in high-profile and complex cases, especially involving issues of national security and human rights.

Crime, extradition, and international mutual legal assistance

Ben has been involved in many of the leading extradition cases on international terrorism, the European Arrest Warrant scheme, as well as various high-profile allegations of fraud and other 'white collar' crime.

Having been instructed for the UK Government before the European Court of Human Rights in many of the leading authorities on extradition and human rights (including *Abu Hamza*, *Bary*, *Al Fawwaz*, *Ahmed*, *Aswat*, and *Wellington*), he has acted in a series of high-profile cases for the Home Secretary (including, *Gary McKinnon*) and foreign governments (for example, the South African request for the extradition of *Shrien Dewani*, and the French request for *Alexandre Djouhri*, wanted for fraud and corruption offences arising out an investigation into Nicolas Sarkozy's Presidential election campaign).

With that background, Ben now regularly acts for clients resisting extradition, particularly in complex cases raising issues of political corruption, abuse of process, and human rights conditions abroad. His current and recent defence instructions therefore include extradition proceedings initiated by the Russian Federation, Iraq, the UAE, Turkey (for *Hamdi Ipek*, Chairman of Koza Ipek Holdings), and India (for *Vijay Mallya*, Chairman of United Breweries Group, and former CMD of Kingfisher Airlines).

Ben also still prosecutes and defends in the Crown Court in his own right, with white collar crime and related asset recovery proceedings his particular areas of interest. Recent instructions for the defence in these areas include an SFO LIBOR prosecution (*SFO v Johnson*); an SFO prosecution arising out of the collapse of Torex (*SFO v Loosemore*); an FSA prosecution for insider dealing (*FSA v Calvert*); and two on-going SFO investigations into bribery and corruption.

In addition, Ben regularly acts and advises in confiscation, cash forfeiture and civil recovery proceedings in the Crown Court, High Court and County Courts.

Last year, Ben was instructed in the first 'Unexplained Wealth Order' for the wife of the former Chairman of the International Bank of Azerbaijan.

Public law including judicial review and human rights

Ben is regularly instructed in leading public law cases, particularly those with national security and/or criminal features. He was instructed for the Secretary of State in four 'TPIM' (Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures Act 2011) proceedings brought against members of Al-Muhajiroun, as well as the first 'Temporary Exclusion Order' (under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015) imposed on a returnee from ISIL-controlled territory.

Ben also acted for the Metropolitan Police in *Miranda v Met Police*, following the stop and questioning of an associate of Edward Snowden's at Heathrow under anti-terrorism powers; and is regularly instructed by the Foreign Office and Ministry of Defence in cases arising out of UK military operations abroad. In other public law work, Ben's instructions have included acting for the Government in the judicial review claim concerning the burial site of *Richard III*, and proceedings challenging the UK's decision to pursue a prison training contract with Saudi Arabia.

Between 2011 and 2016, Ben was appointed as a Special Advocate by the Attorney General, and in that capacity acted for a wide variety of clients including Ms Zatuliveter, a former Parliamentary researcher for a Lib-Dem MP who was accused of being a Russian spy; Messrs Omar & Njorge, who alleged UK involvement in their rendition from Kenya to Uganda; and in a recent challenge to EU sanctions targeting Iran's nuclear proliferation activities.

Other areas of interest

Ben is also frequently instructed to appear at Coroner's inquests, and undertakes police disciplinary proceedings, civil actions against the police, and immigration cases.

Directory recommendations

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"Ben Watson is the 'cleverest man in chambers' according to his peers who note his 'exemplary drafting skills' and 'easy manner with clients'." **(Chambers UK 2016: Criminal Fraud 2016)**

'He is phenomenal, very good with the clients and user-friendly.' 'He is one of the first people who comes to mind, and is extremely good.' **(Chambers UK 2015: Extradition)**

'He's in a different league to many juniors. He's extremely accessible and really good at giving advice.' **(Chambers UK 2015: Public & Administrative Law)**

'He is extremely assiduous and hard-working, and has a great eye for detail. A very reliable person to have on your team.' **(Chambers UK 2015: Civil Liberties & Human Rights)**

"One of the most impressive juniors in the field." **(The Legal 500 2014: Civil Liberties & Human Rights)**

"A hugely popular choice for the handling of extradition matters. He is very well liked by clients and is able to deal with complex human rights issues. 'He is dedicated and hard-working, has great client skills and is wonderfully analytical'" **(Chambers UK 2014: Extradition)**

"Ben Watson is regarded as "a real star of the future," whose "exemplary written work" deserves special mention. His areas of practice have a strong international focus, with extradition, general crime and mutual legal assistance all falling under this umbrella." **(Chambers UK 2013: Crime)**

"Ben Watson is a special advocate, enabling him to advise on the most sensitive matters. He is lauded for his 'phenomenal legal mind for one of his call,' and he acts on hotly contested extradition matters" **(Chambers UK 2012: Crime)**

Education/professional qualifications

MA Hons (Cantab)
Diploma in Law
Hardwicke Entrance Award (Lincoln's Inn) 2000
Lord Denning Scholar 2001
Cholmely Scholar 2002
Sir Louis Gluckstein Prize for Advocacy 2002

Appointments

Attorney General's A Panel 2016
Attorney General's B Panel 2011
Attorney General's C Panel 2006
Attorney General's Special Advocate's Panel 2011-2016

Publications

Contributor to *Criminal Confiscation and Civil Recovery*, Oxford University Press.
Contributor to *National Security Law, Procedure and Practice*, Oxford University Press (publication date, late 2019).

Direct access

Ben Watson is qualified to accept instructions direct from clients under the Bar Council's Public Access Scheme. This means that members of the public who seek specialist advice can come direct to him. In addition, he welcomes instructions from solicitors, in-house law departments, qualified foreign lawyers, and clients licensed by the Bar Council to give instructions direct to barristers under the Bar Council's Licensed Access Scheme.

For further information please contact our Clerks.

Notable cases

India v Vijay Mallya

The Indian extradition request for the former CMD of Kingfisher Airlines.

NCA v Mrs Hajiyeva

The first 'Unexplained Wealth Order' made against the wife of the former Chairman of the International Bank of Azerbaijan.

YZ v SSHD

Instructed for the Secretary of State in the first 'Temporary Exclusion Order' proceedings under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015.

Belhaj v DPP

Heard by the Supreme Court in March 2018. The appeal concerned the availability of a 'Closed Material Procedure' in criminal judicial review proceedings.

LF & IM, JM, LG v SSHD

Four 'TPIM' (Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures Act 2011) proceedings brought against members of Al-Muhajiroun.

R (River East Supplies Ltd) v Crown Court at Nottingham

Instructed for the UK Central Authority in mutual legal assistance proceedings on the confidentiality of letters of request.

R(oao Ismail) v SSHD

Heard by the Supreme Court in January 2016. The appeal concerns the SSHD's human rights obligations in the field of international mutual legal assistance.

Solicitor General v Cox and Parker-Stokes

Instructed for the Solicitor General in contempt proceedings brought for publishing photographs taken in court on Facebook.

KAB v Ministry of Defence and Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Acting for the UK Government in proceedings issued by three Afghan nationals who claim to have been engaged as spies for the UK in Afghanistan.

Russian Federation extradition requests

Instructed for the defence in numerous separate proceedings, including *Korolev*, *Tyurin*, and *Trefilov*.

Miranda v SSHD and Met Police

Acted for the Met Police following the stop and questioning of David Miranda, an associate of Edward Snowden's, at Heathrow under anti-terrorism powers.

Nour v Ministry of Defence

Judicial review claim challenging the UK's provision of 'defence education' to the Sudanese Armed Forces.

Richard III

Instructed for the Secretary of State for Justice in the judicial review claim concerning the burial site of the King's remains.

Abu Hamza and others v United Kingdom

Instructed for the UK Government before the European Court of Human Rights in support of six separate US extradition requests alleging offences of Al-Qaeda related terrorism offences (led by James Eadie QC).

Gary McKinnon

Acted for the Home Secretary.

South Africa v Shrien Dewani

Instructed for the South African authorities in their request for the extradition of Shrien Dewani accused of conspiring to murder his wife while on honeymoon in Cape Town.

Secretary of State v Ekaterina Zatuliveter

Acted as Special Advocate for Ms Zatuliveter, a former researcher for the Lib-Dem MP, Mike Hancock, who was accused by MI5 of being a Russian spy.

Bulgaria v Atanasova

Successfully resisted two Bulgarian extradition requests accusing the former secretary to the Bulgarian Chief Prosecutor of murdering a fellow legal secretary with an axe. Both requests rejected on the grounds of bad faith/abuse of process.

Germany v Toben

Obtained the discharge of Dr Toben who was accused of 'holocaust denial' in a European arrest warrant issued by a German prosecutor.

Brown et al. v Government of the Republic of Rwanda

Former local mayor in Rwanda accused of genocide by the Government of Rwanda. Extradition request rejected on the basis that surrender would be incompatible with Article 6 (right to a fair trial) due to the absence of an independent and impartial tribunal in Rwanda. For the defence.

Meadow v General Medical Council

Led by the Attorney General intervening on the issue of expert witnesses' immunity from suit.