

Isabella Kirwan

Isabella specialises in Public International Law, Human Rights, Administrative & Public Law, Immigration and Asylum Law, and Sanctions.

Called: 2022 (Solicitor 2021)



International Law

Isabella is highly sought after in her areas of specialism, particularly in international human rights law, international criminal law and international humanitarian law. She is consistently selected to represent and advise clients in matters involving complex issues of international law and has acted in cases before almost every international human rights court, tribunal and fora.

Isabella has been involved in cutting-edge work on and novel areas of international law, including being at the forefront of the representation of groups advocating for the repatriation of cultural heritage, advising on diplomatic immunity and immunity of international organisations, on gender apartheid under international law, and on accountability for violations of international law by mercenaries and private military and security companies (PMSCs), for example. She has a particular interest in transitional justice and peacebuilding in post-conflict states.

Isabella has presented on issues of international law at conferences, including recently chairing a 2025 series co-convened by the International Bar Association Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI) and the Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales (BHRC) on universal jurisdiction. She has also delivered training on international law, including in Uzbekistan as part of a course on modern slavery and human trafficking, Mutual Legal Assistance, extradition, and international fair trial standards.

Isabella is admitted to the prestigious 'List of Assistants to Counsel' at the International Criminal Court and is a member of the Attorney General's JJ Panel of Counsel.

Recent cases include:

- *Kosovo Specialist Chambers - the Prosecutor v Shala et al.* - representing an ex-Member of Kosovan Parliament and ex-guerilla fighter as part of the Kosovo Liberation Army in high-profile proceedings at the Kosovo Specialist Chambers (KSC) in The Hague;
- *International Criminal Court* - complaints to the Prosecutor pursuant to Article 15 of the Rome Statute concerning alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity in Libya and in Ukraine.
- *European Court of Human Rights - cases against Member States*: counsel for the Applicant in an ongoing case concerning national security; representing intervener in a case concerning violations of political and fair trial rights;
- *African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights - Advisory Opinion on Climate Change*: representing intervener in the landmark proceedings before the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACtHPR) for a request for an Advisory Opinion on the human rights obligations of African states in addressing the climate crisis;
- *Inter-American Court of Human Rights - Guatemala's Advisory Opinion on a 'Right to Democracy'*: representing intervener in landmark proceedings before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) for an Advisory Opinion request by Guatemala's concerning a 'Right to Democracy';
- Representing and advising Sudanese victims on accountability for potential war crimes and crimes against humanity committed

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CHAMBERS

INTERNATIONAL LAW SPECIALISTS

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by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) during the current conflict in Sudan;

- *UN Mechanisms and Special Procedures* - submitting various complaints to UN Special Rapporteurs and mechanisms, including to the UN Special Rapporteur on truth, justice and reparation in relation to transitional justice and violations of IHL in the Chechen, Syrian, and Ukrainian conflicts. Presented findings at high-level meeting of Ambassadors and State representatives at a conference at the Finnish Ambassador's residence in Geneva;
- Part of a team of international human rights lawyers on a project in relation to accountability for the use of chemical weapons against the civilian population in violation of international humanitarian law in Syria.

Public Law, Human Rights & Civil Liberties

Isabella undertakes a variety of public law, civil liberties and human rights work, including judicial review claims. She has been involved in several groundbreaking public law cases, including:

- *R (MXV) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2026] EWHC 251 (Admin) - public law challenge concerning immigration detainee with HIV. The High Court gave important guidance on the lawfulness of the Home Office's policy related to the detention of HIV positive detainees and, for the first time, on the new powers under s.12 of the Illegal Migration Act 2023 alongside the well-established *Hardial Singh* detention principles;
- Advising and representing in claims concerning returns to France under the UK government's 'UK-France Treaty' ("1in1out" pilot scheme);
- *R (on the application of) CSM v SSHD* [2021] EWHC 2175 (Admin) in which the Home Secretary was found to be in breach of the "systems duty" under Article 3 ECHR to put in place appropriate legal and administrative systems to protect detainees with HIV from harm.

Immigration & Refugee Law

Isabella has a thriving immigration and asylum law practice, representing individuals in both private and public cases, including international protection claims, including asylum, political asylum

and humanitarian protection, nationality and citizenship law, appeals against refusals of visa applications, including family applications and applications for Indefinite Leave to Remain, High Net Worth Individual (HNWI) cases, and immigration bail.

Sanctions, INTERPOL, and Mutual Legal Assistance

Isabella also appears regularly in professional disciplinary proceedings. Isabella has recently been instructed in several cases of serious professional misconduct by professionals against vulnerable patients and/or colleagues.

Crime & Regulatory

Isabella also appears in criminal and professional disciplinary proceedings. In crime, she has represented clients in the Magistrates Court, Crown Court, and on appeal to the Court of Appeal, Criminal Division. She is also a Level 1 Prosecutor and represents the Crown Prosecution Service. She has also been instructed in several cases of serious professional misconduct by professionals against vulnerable patients and/or colleagues.

Background

Before transferring to the Bar, Isabella was a Solicitor before the Senior Courts of England and Wales. She worked for several years in private legal practice and in a non-governmental organisation in the area of immigration, asylum and public law. She was interviewed and featured in the media about her work on multiple occasions, including appearing on ITV News and being featured in *The Independent* and *The Guardian* newspapers. See [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#), for example.

Isabella also worked at the United Nations' Migration Agency (IOM) in London, interned at the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR, Human Rights Council) in Geneva and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in London, and was a *Stagiaire* (Trainee Lawyer) at the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in Strasbourg, France.



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Professional Memberships and Appointments

The Honourable Society of the Inner Temple

Executive Committee, Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales (BHRC)

List of Assistants to Counsel at the International Criminal Court (ICC)

The Roll of Solicitors of England and Wales

Qualified Mediator, Society of Mediators, London

Education

LLB Law (Hons.). Top of the year in 'criminology of mass violence'; awarded university prize for work on post-conflict transitional justice measures.

LLM Public International Law (Merit)

LPC

Languages

English (Mother Tongue)

French (C1)

Italian (B2)

German (B1)



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