



Zeenat Islam

Call 2013

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Zeenat is ranked as a Leading Junior for inquests and inquiries. She is a specialist in public inquiries and is currently instructed as Junior Counsel to the UK Covid-19 Inquiry and Grenfell Tower Inquiry.

Zeenat holds a portfolio of judicial and quasi-judicial roles providing a wealth of multi-disciplinary experience to her practice. She sits as a Fee-paid First Tier Tribunal Judge assigned to the Health, Education and Social Care Chamber and a Fee-paid Employment Judge.

She also sits as a Legally Qualified Chair for the Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service and for Police Misconduct Panels. She serves as a Panel Member for Redress Scotland, determining applications from survivors of historic child abuse.

In addition to her core practice of inquiries, inquests and investigations, Zeenat has experience in professional standards and regulatory matters. She also has a background in international law and public law matters intersecting with issues of criminal justice and discrimination.

Expertise

Inquiries

UK Covid 19 Inquiry

Zeenat is currently instructed as Junior Counsel to the UK Covid-19 Inquiry, led by Hugo Keith KC and Kate Blackwell KC. She is one of four core junior counsel members of the Module 1 counsel team, examining the UK's preparedness for the Covid-19 pandemic.

For the Module 1 hearings, Zeenat led the preparation of witness examination for several high-profile witnesses including Matt Hancock, the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Health and Social Care and other senior civil servants responsible for pandemic preparedness.

She also led on the body of evidence relating to impact and inequalities including identifying lines of enquiry about the extent to which inequalities had factored into government pandemic planning.



Zeenat is currently involved with the drafting of the Module 1 report.

Grenfell Tower Inquiry

Zeenat has been instructed as Junior Counsel to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry since 2017, led by Richard Millet KC. She is a member of the Module 4 counsel team, examining the actions of the government in the immediate aftermath of the fire, in respect of the provision of humanitarian relief to those affected.

In the Module 4 hearings, Zeenat examined several witnesses including survivors, the bereaved, residents, and community leaders. She led on the evidence streams relating to No10, the Cabinet Office, the Tenant Management Organisation, the community, faith and voluntary sector and the bereaved, survivors and residents.

Zeenat is currently involved with the Phase 2 report.

Inquests

Zeenat welcomes instructions in all aspects of coronial law. Her portfolio of judicial and quasi-judicial roles enables her to offer a diverse range of perspectives and experience to her inquests practice.

She has experience of inquests in the context of healthcare settings and medical negligence. Her role as an LQC for the Medical Practitioners Tribunal complements this work, given her experience in hearing and determining cases of fitness to practise. Her expertise as Junior Counsel to the UK Covid-19 Inquiry dealing with pandemic preparedness of the UK's core health structures, is particularly valuable to this area.

Zeenat sits as a Panel Member for Redress Scotland and determines applications from survivors of historic child abuse in care in Scotland, currently being examined by the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry. She has significant expertise examining issues of childhood trauma and systemic failings in social care and thus welcomes instructions dealing with these issues.

Given her early practice in criminal defence, and her experience as an LQC for Police Misconduct Panels, Zeenat is particularly interested in inquests arising from deaths in detention and police custody. Similarly, in light of her work on the Grenfell Tower Inquiry she has experience of examining regulatory and health and safety issues and thus welcomes instructions in associated areas.

She has advised and made submissions on a wide range of issues including Article 2, scope, disclosure, interested persons and witnesses. She has advanced niche arguments in relation to race and religion successfully. She has advised on associated claims under the Human Rights Act 1998.

Zeenat has specific expertise with working with vulnerable and bereaved people, and as such, welcomes instructions from bereaved families. She is open to pro bono instructions in appropriate cases.

Public Law

Zeenat has a wide range of advisory experience on discrimination issues and challenging public bodies. Her experience has a particular emphasis on cases involving Islamophobia and challenges against public bodies in relation to the failure to consult, referrals to PREVENT and closed cases by the police.

Zeenat practised in criminal defence for several years and has an in-depth knowledge of criminal justice



issues. She is particularly interested in the intersection between public law and counter-terrorism, youth justice and racial justice issues.

International Law

Zeenat has wide ranging interests in human rights and public international law.

In 2018, Zeenat received a grant from the Bar Council to take part in the 'International Lawyering in the Public Interest' summer programme at TMC Asser Institute in The Hague in affiliation with the University of Amsterdam. She deepened her understanding of strategic litigation, the importance of advocacy outside of the courtroom and how better to support community organisations in creating coalitions to achieve social change.

In 2016, Zeenat received a Pegasus Scholarship from the Inns of Court to undertake a Fellowship at the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York, renowned for its movement lawyering approach. She worked within the Guantanamo Global Justice Initiative and international human rights team.

Prior to the Bar, Zeenat volunteered for Restless Beings for several years, an international human rights organisation where she worked on advocacy projects relating to Rohingya and Uyghur communities.

She also worked as a Research Associate for the University of Warwick Centre for Human Rights. She gained a breadth of experience through report writing for the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency, and providing research assistance on international criminal justice, shariah law and refugee protection in the Middle East.

Regulatory Law/Professional Standards

Zeenat sits as a Legally Qualified Chair for the Medical Practitioners Tribunal. She has experience of fitness to practise proceedings in respect of several regulators including the HCPC and GDC.

Zeenat has also been appointed as a Legally Qualified Chair for Police Misconduct Hearings in the Eastern Region.

She accepts instructions in all matters relating to professional discipline and professional standards.

Associated Work

Zeenat is deeply committed to equity and inclusion work. She has founded a number of projects working with people from racialised and minoritised backgrounds. She has also been appointed to the Bar Council's Race Training Delivery Panel and delivers freelance consultancy services advising on issues of justice, equity and social impact.

Additionally, Zeenat has a strong grounding in academia. She taught as an Associate Tutor at the University of Warwick School of Law for two academic years and is regularly invited to advise, deliver lectures and speak at conferences.

As a result of her work, she has been recognised in a number of awards and featured on various media



platforms including ITV, British Muslim TV and Islam Channel.

Appointments

- Fee-paid Employment Judge (England and Wales) (January 2023)
- Fee-paid First Tier Tribunal Judge assigned to the Health, Education and Social Care Chamber (January 2023)
- Legally Qualified Chair: Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service (2022)
- Panel Member: Redress Scotland (2021)
- Trainer: Bar Council Race Training Panel (2021)

Awards

- Muslim Women Awards, Professional Woman Award, Winner 2022
- UK Chambers Bar Awards, Outstanding Contribution to Diversity & Inclusion: Future Leader Highly Commended Award 2019
- The Baton Awards, Professional Services Award, Nominee 2018
- Asian Legal Awards, Rising Star, Finalist 2018
- South Eastern Circuit Criminal Advocacy Award 2017
- UK Legal Diversity Awards, Rising Star, Finalist 2017
- Society of Asian Lawyers Awards, Rising Star, Finalist 2016
- The Pegasus Scholarship 2016
- The Criminal Bar Association Bursary Award 2014
- Inner Temple BPTC Prize for Outstanding Performance 2013
- Inner Temple Major Exhibition Award 2012
- Inner Temple Duke of Edinburgh Scholarship 2012
- Asian Women of Achievement Awards, Social & Humanitarian Category Finalist 2011
- Women of the Future Awards, Young Star Category Finalist 2010
- University of Warwick Law School, Best Academic Performance Prize (Final year) 2010
- Julia Kerr Human Rights Award 2010
- University of Warwick Law School, Best Academic Performance Prize (Penultimate year) 2009
- University of Warwick MSP Scholarship 2007-2010

Education

- BPTC (Outstanding), University of Law (2013)
- LLM (Merit) Public International Law, London School of Economics & Political Science (2012)
- LLB (Hons) Law (First Class – highest in year), University of Warwick (2010)



Languages

- Sylheti

Memberships

- The Honourable Society of the Inner Temple
- Administrative Law Bar Association
- Association of Regulatory & Disciplinary Lawyers
- Muslim Lawyers Action Group
- Health and Safety Lawyers Association

Publications

The Radical Lawyer: Legal Practice, the Bar, Activism: The Critical Legal Pocketbook – 16.10.2021

The Critical Legal Pocketbook consists of a series of chapters written by expert critical legal researchers and practitioners. Zeenat's contribution reflects on her activism and her experiences at the Bar. She invites readers to rethink the traditional confines of the legal system and re-envision a justice system for all.

<https://counterpress.org.uk/publications/the-critical-legal-pocketbook/>

A Survival Guide to Being on Your Feet – 08.10.20

Zeenat's article for the Young Bar section in Counsel Magazine is targeted at pupils about to start on their feet.

<https://www.counsellmagazine.co.uk/articles/a-survival-guide-to-being-on-your-feet>

Finding a Way to Serve – 06.05.2020

Zeenat writes about her lockdown project, Redefined Lawyers, targeted at aspiring lawyers from underrepresented backgrounds.

<https://www.counsellmagazine.co.uk/articles/finding-a-way-to-serve>

Diversity and Inclusion: Beyond the Tick Boxes – 14.02.2020

Zeenat writes about the need to rethink the Bar's approach to diversity and inclusion, with a renewed focus on addressing root causes to achieve structural change.

<https://www.counsellmagazine.co.uk/articles/diversity-and-inclusion-beyond-the-tick-boxes>



Recommendations

'Highly skilled in terms of her advocacy. With a friendly and approachable persona, she has a natural way of putting the bereaved and survivors at ease before giving evidence. Zeenat is a calm advocate who does not falter under pressure; and is a good team-player who quickly builds strong relationships with those around her. She is also able to explain tasks clearly in order to get the best support from her team.' Legal 500 2023

'Zeenat is the first choice for any team'. Legal 500 2024