Gillian Higgins



Head of the International Practice Group
CALLED 1997

"Gillian is well-regarded and very hard working. She is a diligent advocate who does a blend of ICL and..."
CHAMBERS AND PARTNERS, 2027

Gillian is a senior international criminal lawyer and Head of the International Practice Group with extensive experience at the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the UN international tribunals.

Background and Expertise

She has been instructed in some of the leading cases in international criminal law including the first trial of a former Head of State (former President of Serbia, Slobodan Milosevic) and the first case at the ICC of an incumbent Head of State (President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya). Before the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, she represented Ivan Cermak in a case that has been described as the most important trial in the history of Croatia. Before the Rwanda Tribunal (ICTR), she acted for the defence in the trials of Alfred Musema (the first trial of a civilian alleging command responsibility for genocide) and Ferdinand Nahimana (a trial concerning the responsibility of the media for genocide in Rwanda in 1994). In 2019, she was appointed as an independent commissioner to the Special Tribunal for Lebanon. Gillian is currently advising the Government of South Sudan on international legal issues. She also provides interactive Witness Familiarisation sessions for both experts and

witnesses of fact in any legal forum. These sessions include cross-examination experience and are intended to give individuals confidence in giving evidence in legal proceedings.

In 2023, Gillian launched the Cultural Heritage Desk which she leads at 9BR Chambers. She provides legal services and lends her mediation and negotiation skills to resolving issues arising in this field including cultural restitution. She also reviews publications in this field for Oxford University Press. See here.

Gillian's advisory practice involves assisting states to investigate allegations of corruption and human rights abuses, capacity building, advising on transitional justice, sanctions, improving relations between governmental institutions and assisting states to fulfil their human rights obligations. Her recent work includes the following significant reports set out below:

- **Libya**: Report entitled "Libya: Voice of the Tribes". Read the report here.
- **South Sudan**: An investigation and report on the causes of the 2013 and 2016 conflicts in South Sudan. Read report here.
- **South Sudan**: A report entitled "Setting the Record Straight". Read report here.
- **Sudan**: Preparation of a report on the Lundin case concerning universal jurisdiction proceedings in Sweden alleging war crimes committed in Sudan from 1997-2003 against Lundin Oil company, its chairman and its CEO. This report was commissioned by the Board of Directors for Lundin Energy. Read report here.
- **Algeria**: A Human Rights Abuse Alert report on Algeria, July 2019. This alert was submitted to the United Nations Human Rights Council, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. Read report here.
- **Egypt**: Reports on the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt commissioned by the State Lawsuit (Litigation) Authority of Egypt, 2015. Read all four reports here.
- **Sri Lanka**: Submissions to the OHCHR investigation on Sri Lanka (OISL) relating to the 30-year conflict between the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE (Tamil Tigers). Read one of the reports here.

In 2019, Gillian and Steven Kay KC established the Interpol Red Notice Desk at 9BR Chambers. She has also served as a member of the steering committee for Oxfam's Lawyers Against Poverty programme and provided advice and legal services to a range of organisations including the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, the State Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Kurdish Human Rights Project.

Gillian is registered to accept instructions under Direct Public Access.

Gillian is also registered as Counsel before the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Having trained as a civil and commercial mediator, Gillian employs this skillset throughout her legal practice, assisting clients with 'difficult conversations', brokering agreements and empowering institutions and government agencies to facilitate better communication.

In addition to her legal practice, Gillian is a recognised pioneer of wellbeing at the Bar as an accredited mindfulness teacher. For the past 6 years, she has designed and developed presentations, workshops, and courses for a broad range of legal institutions and bodies including The International Criminal Court, Gray's Inn, Women in Criminal Law, The Criminal Bar Association, The South-Eastern Circuit, civil and commercial chambers, Barclays Bank and JPM Chase. Gillian is the author of Mindfulness at Work and Home and a Champion of LawCare.

Notable Cases

International Crime

The Prosecutor v Alfred Musema, International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, May 2026

Pro bono representation of Alfred Musema as a member of the drafting team to prepare an Open Letter to the United Nations opposing the transfer of ICMCT/ICTR detainees to Rwanda, signed by ten defence counsel. The detainees are currently serving sentences in Benin and Senegal.

To read the letter, click here.

The Prosecutor v Alfred Musema, International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, February 2026

Pro bono representation of Alfred Musema, instructed to draft a request for his immediate transfer to the United Nations Detention Unit in The Hague to undergo urgent medical treatment

The Prosecutor v Alfred Musema, International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, January 2025

Pro bono representation of Alfred Musema instructed to draft an Early Release Motion which was filed before the MICT in January 2025. Mr Musema was convicted of genocide before the ICTR in January 2000. He has been in custody for 26 years.

Libya, 2024

Member of the International team led by Steven Kay KC producing the report "Libya: Voice of the Tribes" commissioned to support the peace and unification process for Libya after the failure of the UN and international community to provide the pathway for elections and reunite a divided Libya.

Libya: Voice of the Tribes the report available here

Government of South Sudan, 2021-present

Provision of international legal services to the Government of South Sudan covering advice on international legal issues and preparation of a report entitled “Pushing the Reset Button for South Sudan” in respect of the conflict in 2013 and 2016 in South Sudan.

Report available here

Advising Company X on International Criminal Liability for Pollution, 2023

Provision of confidential written advice and in conference on international and domestic criminal liability for oil pollution by a company in Africa.

Natalie Chang et al v Republic of South Sudan, Ministry of Defence and Veteran Affairs US District Court of Columbia, 2023

Claim for damages by 9 Claimants in US District Court for District of Columbia against the Republic of South Sudan and the Ministry of Defence and Veteran Affairs alleging liability for serious crimes by South Sudan Defence Forces. Successful challenge to claim based upon state immunity.

Read more:

- The Standard Media
- Sudans Post
- Reuters
- Hausfeld

Lundin Oil Company, 2021

Universal jurisdiction proceedings in Sweden alleging war crimes committed in Sudan 1997-2003 against Lundin Oil Company, its Chairman and CEO. Preparation of a report on the Lundin case.

Read here

The Prosecutor v Uhuru Kenyatta, 2010-15

International Criminal Court proceedings commenced in December 2010 against President Uhuru Kenyatta of the Republic of Kenya, and son of the first President of the nation, Jomo Kenyatta. The case alleged that President Kenyatta had a leading role in the post-election violence of 2007-2008 for which he was charged with crimes against humanity. At the confirmation of charges hearing the Defence challenged the prosecution's case theory comprehensively and called Uhuru Kenyatta to

give evidence in his own defence. Although the Pre-Trial Judges confirmed the charges, it was subsequently established that the defence contentions at the confirmation hearing had been correct. In January 2015 the charges were finally withdrawn by the Prosecution, having admitted there was an insufficiency of evidence upon which to proceed to trial. Read the Defence report here.To view extracts of Gillian's presentation of submissions from the Confirmation Hearing, see below:

Gillian Higgins Presents Evidence at the Confirmation Hearing in the Trial of Uhuru Kenyatta (Part 1)

Gillian Higgins Presents Evidence at the Confirmation Hearing in the Trial of Uhuru Kenyatta (Part 2)

Gillian Higgins Presents Evidence at the Confirmation Hearing in the Trial of Uhuru Kenyatta (Part 3)

Sri Lanka, 2014-15

Submissions to the OHCHR Investigation on Sri Lanka (OISL), on behalf of three Sri Lankan NGOs, relating to the 30-year conflict between the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE (Tamil Tigers). 9BR Chambers submitted detailed reports on aspects of the conflict, supported by evidence from open sources.

Read one of the reports here.

Egypt, 2015

Member of the 9BR Chambers team commissioned by the State Lawsuit (Litigation) Authority of Egypt to provide a series of reports upon the Muslim Brotherhood: The History of the Muslim Brotherhood, The Egyptian Experience of the Muslim Brotherhood in Power 2012-2013; The Egyptian Revolution against the Muslim Brotherhood 2013; and The Current Situation in Egypt. Read reports here.

The Prosecutor v Ivan Cermak, 2007-11, ICTY

International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Instructed to represent Ivan Cermak, who was acquitted of all charges in 2011. This case has been described as the most important trial in the history of Croatia and concerned the prosecution of Ante Gotovina, Ivan Cermak and Mladen Markac in respect of the military action that resulted in the liberation of the Croatian territories from the Republic of Serbian Krajina (RSK).To view extracts of Gillian's submissions from the trial, see below.

Gillian Higgins argues before the ICTY in The Hague regarding the issue of admissibility of evidence in Cermak et al.Gillian Higgins examines the Prosecution's final brief in the closing argument for Ivan Cermak at the ICTY

The Prosecutor v Slobodan Milosevic, 2001-05, ICTY

Trial of Slobodan Milosevic on 66 counts of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide at the ICTY. Appointed as Court-Assigned Defence Counsel with Steven Kay KC from 2004, having previously been appointed Amica Curiae (in 2003) and instructed as a Legal Consultant to the Amici Curiae (2001).

Osmanoglu v Turkey, 2008, ECoHR

Instructed as Counsel before the European Court of Human Rights by the Kurdish Human Rights Project (KHRP), in a case concerning alleged multiple breaches of the European Convention on Human Rights. The applicant was a Turkish national of Kurdish origin who alleged that his son was taken into police custody and subsequently disappeared.

Read the judgment here.

The Prosecutor v Ferdinand Nahimana, 2000-02, ICTR

Member of the defence team before the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) representing Ferdinand Nahimana in a trial concerning the responsibility of the media for genocide in Rwanda in 1994 – which came to be known as the "media trial". Nahimana, who had acted as Director of the Rwandan Office of Information in 1990–92, was one of three people charged with genocide, conspiracy to commit genocide, direct and public incitement to commit genocide, complicity in genocide and crimes against humanity.

The Prosecutor v Alfred Musema, 1999-2000, To date, ICTR

The first trial of a civilian alleging command responsibility for genocide. Gillian was engaged as a member of the defence team, the first to enter Rwanda to conduct investigations. At present, Gillian is instructed with Steven Kay KC as Review Counsel before the UN International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals.

International Crime

International Fraud, Bribery and Corruption

FBME, Saab and Saab v Dangate, Brown and Leighton, 2019

Litigation in the Commercial Court concerning two ex-Metropolitan police officers, sued by the owners of FBME bank. The litigation concerns an alleged breach of a confidentiality agreement in relation to the provision of information to Central Bank of Cyprus and US FINCEN of serious criminal conduct and regulatory breaches revealed within the accounts held by the Cyprus branch of the bank

referencing: money laundering, Magnitsky money, terrorist accounts, fraud, sarin gas and extreme pornography.

News story here

Top Zinc Ltd v Hilton Hotels, Alix Partners et al, 2018

Instruction concerning legal action by Vincent Tchenguiz in relation to a portfolio of Hilton hotels bought by Mr Tchenguiz, leased back to Hilton and eventually put into administration upon default of a loan scheme hedged by Bayerische Landesbank, in circumstances where the value of assets was believed to be undersold.

News story here

International Fraud, Bribery and Corruption

International Human Rights

Founder of the Stop Arbitrary Detention Initiative with Norwegian NGO, Transnational Justice Initiative, February 2026

Read more:

- The Stop Arbitrary Detention Initiative
- 9BR Chambers and the Transnational Justice Initiative present The Stop Arbitrary Detention Initiative

Drafting an application with the Norwegian NGO, Transitional Justice Initiative, to challenge the policy of medical detention in the Democratic Republic of Congo before the United Nations Working Group Against Arbitrary Detention, March 20206, ongoing.

Appointed Trustee of the Alliance for Lawyers at Risk, June 2026

Read more about the work of the Alliance here.

Report on Extradition Bars

Report on extradition bars between Cyprus and China and breaches of Article 3 and 6 of the ECHR.

DW Interpol Proceedings

Chinese national in Interpol proceedings seeking information and challenging a Red Notice.

Individual X, 2023-2024

Challenging the arrest and arbitrary detention of an individual against whom the subject state has made large demands of payment for release. Widescale abuse of Rule of Law by the state.

Abuse of human rights in Algeria, 2019

Report was commissioned by an individual whose family member had been arbitrarily detained with related attempts to extort money from the family.

Human rights abuse alert Algeria

Virunga National Park Democratic Republic of Congo, 2012

Pro-bono project for Virunga National Park in DRC to challenge a UK FTSE 200 company, prospecting for oil and gas in the famous UNESCO heritage site and home to the last species of mountain gorillas. This matter involved international environment law, the national laws of DRC and national laws of the company.

International Human Rights

Investigations and Inquiries

Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry 2017-2021

In 2018, Gillian worked as disclosure counsel on the Grenfell Inquiry, reviewing extensive documentation and applying the disclosure principles on the Relativity platform. She was instructed on behalf of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

Investigations and Inquiries

Achievements

Memberships

- Gray's Inn
- List Counsel at the International Criminal Court
- List Counsel before the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights
- Criminal Bar Association
- Founding member of the International Criminal Law Bureau

Appointments

- Independent Commissioner to the Special Tribunal for Lebanon
- Accredited civil and commercial mediator
- Member of the steering committee for Oxfam's Lawyers Against Poverty programme, 2015–16
- Member of the Faculty of the London School of Mediation, 2016–date
- Investigative Interviewer – Accredited Course Part 1, Intersol Global, 2016

Associated Work

Extraordinary Chambers of the Courts of Cambodia, 2007

Legal consultant for the Defence Support Section advising on strategy and international criminal law.

Office of Defence Counsel (OKO) in Sarajevo, 2006

Legal consultant for the Office of Defence Counsel providing advice on strategy and international criminal law.

Kurdish Human Rights Project, 1998

Legal advisor and trial observer for KHRP of the HADEP trial in Ankara, Turkey.

Publications

- South Sudan Reports:
  - Pushing the Reset Button - Read here
  - The Government of South Sudan's Response to The Sentry Report - Read here
  - Setting the Record Straight - Read here
- Oxford University Press Book Review: International Cultural Heritage Law by Janet Blake, 2023. Read review here
- Counsel Magazine, "How to Tame Your Inner Critic", September 2019. Read review here.
- Mindfulness at Work and Home, Reddoor Press, 2019.
- Blog editor and publisher for the International Criminal Law Bureau.
- Book review of Interpreting the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty by Daniel H Joyner, 2012. Read review here.
- Examination-in-Chief and Cross-Examination, chapter in Transferring War Crimes Cases From the ICTY, UNICRI 2011. Read here.

- The Development of the Right to Self-Representation before the International Criminal Tribunals, chapter in Judicial Creativity at the International Criminal Tribunals, OUP, 2011. Read chapter here.
- The Impact of the Size, Scope and Scale of the Milosevic Trial and the development of Rule 73bis before the ICTY, Northwestern University Law Review, 2009. Read here.
- Entries on The Prosecutor v Slobodan Milosevic and The Prosecutor v Ferdinand Nahimana in the Oxford Companion to International Criminal Law, Oxford University Press (OUP) 2009. Read here.
- Fair and Expeditious Pre-Trial Proceedings: The Future of International Criminal Trials, Journal of International Criminal Justice 2007. Read here.
- The Impact of the Size, Scope and Scale of the Milosevic Trial, special edition, Criminal Law Forum 2006. Read here.
- Life Beyond the Crown Court Grind, The Times 11 October 2005. Read here.
- The Intoxication Defence and Theories of Criminal Liability: A Praxeological Approach by Martin Shain and Gillian Higgins, Contemporary Drug Problems, Volume 24, Issue 4, pages 731-736, 1999.

Education

- LLB, Exeter University, 2001–04
- LLM, Trinity Hall, University of Cambridge, 2004–05
- Inns of Court School of Law, 2006–07
- Accredited Mediator – 2016

Recognition

"Gillian shows incredible professionalism and knowledge and impressive expertise. She made complex issues of law accessible and delivered them with patience and care." **Chambers and Partners, 2027**

"Gillian is well-regarded and very hard working. She is a diligent advocate who does a blend of ICL and private commercial cases." **Chambers and Partners, 2027**

"Gillian is a very smart and dedicated international lawyer." **Chambers and Partners, 2027**

"Gillian gives clear advice and explains in an accessible and clear way. She is sympathetic and gracious and her manner with clients was warm, accessible and welcoming." **Chambers and Partners, 2025**

"She is excellent in court and is good on the law, advocacy and case management." **Chambers and Partners, 2025**

"Her advocacy is concise, informed and uncompromising, a position she can hold because of her prominence in her field." **Legal 500, 2025**

"Gillian brings a methodical and insightful perspective to complex cases." **Chambers and Partners, 2025**

"She has a truly fearless approach to winning for her clients. She is a powerhouse and has an infectious calm." **Chambers and Partners, 2025**

"She combines her excellent judgement, tenacity and creativity to present persuasive legal arguments." **Legal 500, 2023**

"An incisive cross-examiner who takes no prisoners and is a fantastic all-rounder." **Chambers and Partners, 2023**

"She combines her excellent judgement, tenacity and creativity to present persuasive legal arguments." **Legal 500, 2023**

"The most experienced junior doing this type of work, who is utterly methodical and has the full respect of her peers both for the international criminal law work she does and her efforts in highlighting the issue of mental health at the Bar." **Chambers and Partners, 2022**

Highly experienced junior who has been in all the major international criminal law cases. Able to handle complex litigation and lead a team. Good legal drafting and research skills. In court her advocacy is delivered with great poise and total command of the facts. Legal 500, 2021

Well known for her expertise in complex international criminal cases Legal 500, 2020