

Joe Holmes

Junior Counsel - Above 15 Years

CALLED 2009

"Joe has an encyclopaedic knowledge of international criminal law."

CHAMBERS UK, 2024



Joe is an international lawyer who operates in diverse national and international jurisdictions, including fragile and conflict-affected regions.

He is dual-qualified before the Bars of England and Wales and New York.

Background and Expertise

Joe offers expertise in international criminal law, public international law, international humanitarian law, strategic litigation, counter-terrorism and human rights law. He is a recognised subject matter expert in rule of law capacity-building, deployable to conflict-affected countries.

His clients have included the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the Egyptian government, the African Centre for Rights and Governance and the former préfet of Butare, Rwanda.

Joe has represented high-profile individuals in international criminal law for more than 10 years – appearing before courts and tribunals for Rwanda and Sierra Leone, along with the

Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals (MICT), arguing long and complex cases at trial and appellate levels.

Notable Cases

International

Justice reform programme in Somaliland

On behalf of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office part of a team instructed to deliver the justice component of the Somaliland Security and Justice Reform Programme. Lead consultant on [Legal Defence and Registry](#) strands.

Advice and response: African Centre for Rights and Governance

Instructed by the African Centre for Rights and Governance to advise on and prepare a response to the ‘Report of the Committee of the Judicial Services Commission on the Establishment of an International Crimes Division in the High Court of Kenya’.

P v Alphonse Nteziryayo ICTR-98-42-A, (‘Butare’)

Advised the former préfet of Butare on appeal against a single count of direct and public incitement to genocide and a sentence. The Appeals Chamber quashed and substituted sentence of 30 years.

Regina v Ward [2012] EWCA Crim 2534

Successful appeal against sentence.

P v Aloys Ntabakuze, ICTR-98-41-T and A, (‘Military I’)

From 2007-2013, legal assistant and then pro bono counsel for the former commander of the Para-Commando Battalion of the Rwandan Government Forces. Advised on trial and appeal wherein convictions were overturned for murder and other inhumane acts, both crimes against humanity, and genocide in part. The Appeals Chamber also quashed and substituted his life sentence.

Her Majesty’s Attorney General v Samuel Gichuru

Represented the former CEO of Kenya Power and Lighting Company, whose extradition was sought from Kenya, in proceedings before the Royal Court of Jersey. The index offences are financial offences in an amount of approximately 10m USD.

The Baha Mousa Public Inquiry

Led by Michael Topolski QC, (now HHJ Topolski QC), represented Donald Payne, the first British soldier to be convicted of a war crime (inflicting inhumane treatment). The Inquiry, before Gage LJ, concerned the handling of civilian detainees during Operation Telic II in Basra in 2003.

P v Kallon, SCSL-04-15-T, ('RUF')

Legal consultant to the defence team of the former 2ic of the Revolutionary United Front during the Sierra Leonean civil war. Defended, amongst others, charges of the conscription child soldiers, slavery and forced marriages.

P v Ngeze, ICTR-99-52-A, ('Media')

Case which sought to delineate between mere hate speech, protected by the freedom of speech, and incitement to genocide. Legal assistant to the editor of Kangura magazine on appeal. Convictions reversed for genocide, conspiracy to commit genocide, incitement to genocide and extermination and life sentence quashed and substituted.

P v Nzuwomemeye, ICTR-00-56-T ('Military II')

Legal intern on the defence team of the former commander of the Reconnaissance Battalion of the Forces Armées Rwandaises.

[View International](#)

Achievements

Memberships

- IBA
- CBA
- New York State Bar Association
- Association des Avocats de la Defense (association of defence attorneys before the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda)
- JUSTICE

Appointments

- State of New York, Attorney. Passed the Bar exams in 2007. Licensed to practise in the New York State and Federal jurisdictions in the USA.

- Axiom International Ltd, Senior Justice Reform Advisor. Axiom International provides expert services in the defence, policing, criminal justice and forensic sciences sectors. Joe is regularly deployed as a subject-matter expert in criminal justice to consult on and implement institution and capacity-building projects in developing jurisdictions.
- Global Rights Compliance LLP, Legal Consultant. GRC provides advice to Governments, corporations and NGOs on matters of international human rights law, international humanitarian law, transitional justice and business and human rights.

Publications

- Co-author of [Call to Arms](#), International Bar Association North American Forum Regional Newsletter, 2013
- [International Criminal Justice?](#), Criminal Law and Justice Weekly, 2012
- The Third International Defense Conference - International Criminal Justice: Justice for Whom?, Criminal Bar Quarterly, 2012
- [Assisted Suicide – the Case for Reform](#), Criminal Law and Justice Weekly, 2012
- Weighing up the Evidence, with Fulford LJ., (then President of the Trial Division of the International Criminal Court), Counsel, (May 2010).

Training and Speaking

- International Bar Association, War Crimes Committee, Annual Conference, Peace Palace, The Hague (forthcoming)
- Association of Defence Counsel before the ICTY Training, The Hague
- Designs and delivers bespoke training programmes for judges, prosecutors and defence lawyers in Hargeisa, Somaliland

Education

- BVC, College of Law
- LPC, Nottingham Law School
- BA Law with European Law, University of Nottingham
- Diploma en Derecho Espanol, Universitat de Valencia