



GARDEN COURT CHAMBERS

Dexter Dias KC

YEAR OF CALL: 1988 | YEAR OF SILK: 2009



Dexter Dias KC is an award-winning barrister (King's Counsel) who has been instructed in some of the biggest cases of recent years involving human rights, murder, crimes against humanity, terrorism, war crimes and genocide.

He has also played a pivotal role in public inquiries and inquests that are watersheds in the developing law of the land.

Dexter has been instrumental in changing the law to better protect young women and girls at risk of FGM and works internationally on human rights with victims and survivors of abuse of institutional power and harmful social practices. He is Chair of the Global Media Campaign to End FGM (a development of *The Guardian* newspaper's project).

He was finalist in Liberty & Justice's Human Rights Lawyer of the Year, nominated for "his outstanding commitment to the rule of law and justice for all; for his deep devotion to ensure that the voices of the weakest in society are heard."

He is a Crown Court Recorder authorised to sit at the Old Bailey and on Serious Sexual Offences, and is Visiting Researcher at Cambridge University and recently Harvard.

"An excellent all round barrister. Hard-working, client friendly and utterly fearless."

CHAMBERS UK, 2024

"Exceptionally bright and someone with a photographic memory. He is so hard-working and will leave no stone unturned."

CHAMBERS UK, 2023

"One of the cleverest people at the criminal Bar. His emotional intelligence is rare for someone so academically gifted."

CHAMBERS UK, 2022 (CRIME)

"Knows how to get to the core of the case and delivers electric speeches."

CHAMBERS UK, 2021 (CRIME)

"He is a top performer and a proper jury advocate. Combines steely determination with an easy manner and inspires confidence to all those around him that he is on top of the detail and his case."

LEGAL 500, 2021 (CRIME)

"Incredibly clever and committed to international human rights law."

LEGAL 500, 2021 (CIVIL LIBERTIES & HUMAN RIGHTS)

If you would like to get in touch with Dexter please contact the clerking team:

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You can also contact Dexter directly:

CRIMINAL DEFENCE

Dexter has appeared in - and won - many of the most high-profile murder trials in recent years: see below. He works relentlessly, in close collaboration with his solicitors and lay client, is fearless in court and is particularly known for his searching cross-examinations, deep knowledge of the law, and engaging the jury with his closing speeches.

NOTABLE CASES

Past notable cases can be viewed below. [Click here to see a list of recent notable cases.](#)

In 2018 Dexter had the case of a youth accused of murder dismissed at 'half-time' at St Alban's Crown Court, the only defendant to be entirely acquitted. This required his experience and expertise in dismantling the Crown's cellsite and forensic evidence.

In 2018 Dexter also secured the acquittal of an 18 year-old accused of murder at the Old Bailey in a challenging multi-directional cut-throat case. Those attacking his lay client were convicted of murder; his defendant was acquitted. He also appeared in one of the most high-profile 'moped murder' cases, representing a youth with severe learning difficulties needing an intermediary.

In 2017 Dexter secured the acquittal of a defendant accused of a gang-related firearms execution, establishing via a detailed challenge to the pathology that the prosecution case theory was flawed.

In 2016, Dexter secured the acquittal of a youth accused of gang-related murder; he also secured the acquittal of a man accused of an Albanian Mafia-related murder.

In 2015, Dexter secured his lay client's acquittal of murder in a gangland execution case. He also appeared in another high-profile double murder gang-related firearms assassination.

In 2014, Dexter obtained the acquittal of murder of his lay client in the nationally reported Leicester House Fire murder; he also acted for the lead defendant in a £170 million money laundering case.

In 2013, he secured the acquittal of his lay client in a three-month 'cut-throat' murder trial at the Old Bailey; conducted one of the biggest 'Bollywood' fraud trials; appeared in a four-month gang-related execution trial.

In May 2012, he secured the acquittal of his lay client in a major fraud and money laundering case, applying to dismiss the prosecution pre-trial. He was the only counsel to succeed in this application. In February 2012, he secured the acquittal of his client following an attempted murder trial that was nationally reported and involved a government 'code-breaker' expert witness.

During 2010, he conducted a five-month trial at the Old Bailey in which his client was acquitted of murder, attempted murder and manslaughter. The case involved the murder of the son of the former Prime Minister of Somalia.

Dexter's reputation for human rights work placed him at the forefront of the wave of terrorist trials that have mapped new territory in the balance between national security and civil liberties. He was leading counsel in the 'Soldier Beheading Plot' case (Operation Gamble), one of the first prosecutions under the 'duty to inform' provisions of the new Terrorism Act. He conducted the 'Terrorist Training Camps' case (linked to 21/7 London bombings) - the first prosecution under the Terrorism Act 2006 (Operation Over Amp), where he appeared for the principal defendant. He provided emergency advice in the matter of O, a case involving the detention conditions for those convicted of terrorist offences. He advised and appeared in the Bristol suicide bombing plot terrorist case (Operation Vulcanise).

Previous notable cases

In summer 2006 Dexter appeared in a gang-related triple murder execution case at the Old Bailey, which was regarded by senior officers in Operation Trident as one of the most brutal investigated.

During the first half of 2006, he appeared in a five-month murder trial at Bristol Crown Court, which stemmed from the biggest investigation by Avon & Somerset Police (Operation Aragon - linked with the Met's Operation Yigo). His client was acquitted of all counts of murder and conspiracy to murder.

In 2004, Dexter appeared in the world's biggest diamond robbery case, the multi-million pound 'heist' from Graff's Jewellers, New Bond Street. He also appeared in a \$100 million international fraud which involved the US Treasury Department.

In 2003, he secured the acquittal of 'Kaish', a singer in the So Solid Crew. In doing so, he helped cast doubt upon one of the world's foremost forensic lip-reading experts. She is no longer used by the Crown. This led to the BBC programme on the case. He also effected the dropping of a murder case against his client at the

Central Criminal Court when his detailed analysis of CCTV from the Unused Material proved that his client must have been innocent.

In 2002 he was leading counsel on a four-month trial concerning a massive importation of heroin from the continent. He was instructed in an attempted murder of a police officer and won an alleged gangland execution case at the Old Bailey. He was also instructed in an alleged 'Taliban-inspired' murder. It was a four-handed cut-throat defence - only his client was acquitted.

In 2000, he conducted a trial at the Central Criminal Court which uncovered corruption and malpractice in the Immigration Service at Gatwick Airport.

In 1999, Dexter was counsel in the landmark GM crops case, the winning of which led a moratorium and governmental rethink on commercial testing.

In 1996/7 he was counsel in one of the biggest investigations by the Met's anti-Yardie taskforce. He secured acquittals on all counts of murder.

In 1994 Dexter acted in the Security Guard murder, which involved the biggest reward ever offered by the Greater Manchester Police. His client was acquitted of murder.

In 1993 he won acquittals in one of the most notorious of murder cases in the North of the decade - the Penny Black murder in Manchester.

In 1991 and 1992 Dexter helped expose corruption at Stoke Newington Police Station, winning cases that, along with others, led to one of the biggest modern police corruption investigations, Operation Jackpot. Jackpot investigated police corrupt practices, theft and conspiracy to pervert the court of justice. The Stoke Newington drugs squad was disbanded. One of the officers eventually went to prison for ten years.

In 1990 and 1991 he participated in all the major Poll-tax demonstration cases, securing the acquittal of Neil Fernandez, the man who allegedly 'torched the Porsche' - according to the front page of most national tabloids. Following Dexter's cross-examination, the police officer in the case was referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions for perjury. Dexter was also counsel in the largest riot trial, which ran five months. He secured an acquittal.

Dexter started his legal career defending Anti-Apartheid protestors, CND, poll-tax demonstrators, and hippies fighting for the right to dance naked around Stonehenge. After winning the last-mentioned case, he was invited to join his lay clients at the next solstice. He graciously declined.

FINANCIAL CRIME AND CONFISCATION

Dexter has appeared in many large value frauds, having been particularly instructed in cases involving complex international schemes where his lay clients faces severe challenges.

By way of example, in 2013 he was instructed in the biggest Telecom fraud. In 2014, he appeared in a multi-million pound Bollywood fraud. In 2015, he appeared in a £170 million MTIC fraud. He has previously appeared in a \$USD 100 million Treasury fraud.

INQUESTS AND INQUIRIES

Dexter has played a pivotal role in public inquiries and inquests that are watersheds in the developing law of the land (Zahid Mubarek Inquiry, Gareth Myatt, Cherry Groce and Alton Manning inquests).

NOTABLE CASES

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Previous Notable Cases

Dexter represented the family of Cherry Groce in a landmark inquest of national importance. Cherry was shot in the back by police in front of her children in her home. Her shooting led to the Brixton Riots. During the inquest Dexter challenged the police about their deficiencies in their operation and the jury, three decades after the shooting, returned a severely critical narrative verdict, confirming the serious police failures.

Dexter also represented the family of Jake Hardy at the inquest into the death of a young person with many learning and cognitive difficulties who was being bullied in prison. Although Jake tried to bring his problems to the attention of staff he was not adequately safeguarded and hanged himself. The jury returned a condemnatory verdict, finding multiple failures to protect Jake, causative of his death.

Dexter was leading counsel in the landmark inquest into the death of Gareth Myatt, aged 15. This was one of the longest death in custody inquests in legal history, and the jury returned an unprecedented verdict, devastatingly implicating Home Office and Youth Justice Board failures as causative of this child's death. The inquest judge wrote to the Secretary of State for Justice stating it would be 'wholly unforgivable' not to learn from the failures exposed during the inquest. His Honour Judge Pollard specified 34 Actions he believed

should be taken to prevent other children dying in custody. The judge also stressed to the Home Secretary a theme pressed by Dexter throughout the inquest: the absolute need to 'listen to the voice of the child'.

HHJ Pollard's Report to the Secretary of State for Justice and the jury's narrative verdict are available online.

Dexter was counsel in the investigation into the death of Azrar Ayub, a young Asian man who died following restraint and emergency tranquillisation in a secure psychiatric unit. The jury returned a highly critical narrative verdict, and explicitly accepted Dexter's submission that facts surrounding the death of this young man had been concealed from them. He worked (pro bono) on behalf of the bereaved father and the Victoria Climbié Foundation in the Serious Case Review into the murder of two children by their clinically disturbed mother. The Review accepted that health professionals had failed to assess the risk this deeply disturbed mother presented to her children.

Dexter was counsel for the bereaved family in the Zahid Mubarek Inquiry before the Hon. Mr Justice Keith, the much-publicised public inquiry into the Prison Service following the racist murder of a young offender at Feltham Young Offenders Institution: reported at Lord Lester & David Pannick QC, *Human Rights Law & Practice* (2nd ed.), p121-2. During the entirety of Phase 2, Dexter represented Zahid's family on his own. Having now reported, the Inquiry has been hailed as being comparable in importance to the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, and proposes significant reforms to the prison system to make it safer, more racially and religiously tolerant, and humane.

Dexter's scathing indictment of the failures in the prison service was widely reported in the national press. The Inquiry has led to the hugely successful play, *Gladiator Games*, which *The Times* describes as "a work of real political importance; painful to witness, but entirely essential". The first main action of the play is Dexter's speech. He was invited to deliver the opening speech at the inaugural Zahid Mubarek Memorial Lecture at the Theatre Royal, where he shared a platform with former HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, Lord Ramsbotham.

More information can be found on the Zahid Mubarek Inquiry Website, including Mr Justice Keith's Final Inquiry Report. Dexter's address to the national prison reform conference is also available.

Dexter represented the family of a young woman, Edita Pomell, who was found dead in HMP Brockhill in suspicious circumstances, amid allegations of her having being racially abused and sexually harassed, and having suffered physical violence from prison staff. Despite the Prison Service's claims that Edita's death was a suicide, the jury returned the Open Verdict that Edita's family had fought many years for. Further, Dexter persuaded the Coroner to allow the jury to provide a narrative on several points of pressing public interest concerning the treatment of young women in this prison. The jury provided a scathing assessment of the level

of care provided by the Prison Service. A summary of the jury's narrative verdict is available.

Dexter changed the law of the land with the defining Alton Manning inquest, securing the first verdict of unlawful killing against a private British prison, proving that a young black inmate was killed by prison officers. He represented the deceased inmate's family in this protracted inquest on a pro bono basis - something that was said by Lord Bingham (then Lord Chief Justice) to do great credit to the legal profession. He also helped prove that the subsequent decision of the Director of Public Prosecutions not to prosecute the officers was unlawful, irrational and legally perverse.

The case underlined in UK law the rights of the family of victims to have rigorous scrutiny of deaths in State custody, applying the European Convention on Human Rights: reported at Professor HWR Wade's *Administrative Law* (9th ed), p524. The exposure of the police failings in the following investigation has led to major beneficial changes, culminating in the ACPO protocol of February 2006 for the investigation of deaths in State custody.

He conducted an inquest into the worrying death of a young black man after a high-speed police pursuit, a case which exposed serious flaws in the Met's monitoring of and policy towards high-speed vehicular pursuit.

BACKGROUND

Dexter is a prize-winning scholar of Cambridge University, having been elected to a Foundation Scholarship at Jesus College and winning the Lopez-Rey Prize for the highest Distinction in his research degree at the Faculty of Law's Institute of Criminology, where he critically analysed the use of state coercive force on vulnerable young people in custody.

His concern about this area arose after representing the mother of Gareth Myatt at the inquest into her son's death following restraint by prison officers. Dexter has also been pursuing his ambition of creating fairer and more socially just legal systems by way of research at Harvard University.

Dexter is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. He is also a Friend of the Chapel and Choir of King's College, Cambridge.

PUBLICATIONS

The Ten Types of Human (Penguin Random House, 2018): Dexter recently published a book based on ten years of his social justice research and his three decades' human rights practice. The book is being published internationally and has been a number one bestseller on Amazon in over a dozen different categories. He appeared on BBC Radio 4's Today programme, being interviewed by Nick Robinson. He also featured in an hour session on Radio 5 Live discussing the book and his legal practice. He gave major talks at the Hay and Edinburgh Festivals, and the book was given a major feature in *The Guardian*, where Dexter was interviewed by Zoe Williams. The book subsequently inspired a podcast *The 100 Types of Human*.

Dexter has been published numerous times in the national and legal press on human rights and social justice issues and has regularly appeared on television and radio. He is also an internationally published novelist with bestsellers in the UK and abroad. His first novel, the thriller *False Witness*, was a top 20 bestseller in the UK. He has followed it up with four further globally published novels. He has been published by Time Warner in the US. His books have been translated into Japanese, Dutch, German and Finnish. *Above the Law* was a number two bestseller in South Africa. His fifth novel *Power of Attorney*, was a WH Smith book of the month.

Cases That Changed Our Lives, Stop The Traffik: selected by International Bar Association to author chapter for worldwide publication to support the movement to prevent human trafficking. Forward by Lord Thomas.

BBC: Dexter was chosen by the BBC to represent the Defence and Human Rights Bar on Radio 4's factual programme 'Between Ourselves'. He appeared with Nicholas Hilliard KC (now the Honourable Recorder of London); the programme was selected as one the BBC's Picks of the Week.

AWARDS

Dexter's distinctive rights-based style of advocacy, marked by a passionate commitment to fundamental freedoms and social justice, resulted in his winning the TMG award for Outstanding Contribution to Advocacy and Justice, and being finalist in Liberty and JUSTICE's prestigious Human Rights Lawyer of the Year Award, short-listed by a panel of judges including Baroness Hale of the Supreme Court.

He was nominated for "his outstanding commitment to the rule of law and justice for all; for his deep devotion to ensure that the voices of the weakest in society are heard."

ASSOCIATED WORK

Global Media Campaign to End FGM: Dexter is honoured to be appointed Chair of this innovative campaign to help end FGM, an offshoot of the Guardian newspaper's international campaign.

Centre for Community, Gender and Social Justice, University of Cambridge: Affiliate; developing social justice initiatives.

Law Commission: Consulted by the Law Commission working group reviewing Fitness to Plead, and made a co-authored a more effective assessment protocol, with Dexter's text now made operational.

Parliament: contributor to briefing on the Coroner's & Justice Bill 2009, which in part led to Government shelving of plans for 'secret inquests' into controversial deaths involving the State.

EDUCATION

Jesus College, Cambridge (First Class; ranked 1st in year; awarded Lopez-Rey Prize for research degree)
Research Fellow, Harvard University
Visiting Scholar, Cambridge University
Elected to Foundation Scholarship of Jesus College

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP

Bar Human Rights Committee: Chair Working Group on FGM; seminal report to Parliamentary Inquiry on FGM. Secured positive changes in law.

Bar Standards Board: appointed from 2008 to the profession's regulatory body (Standards Committee).

Governor, INQUEST: Dexter was very proud to have been Governor of the charity INQUEST, the only organisation in the UK to provide free advice and support to bereaved families following contentious deaths in custody. While Dexter was a Governor, the charity won the prestigious Longford Prize for outstanding work in the field of penal and social reform which demonstrates qualities of humanity, courage, persistence and originality.

Ministerial Council on Deaths in Custody: Independent Advisory Panel: Appointed to the Stakeholders Group of the IAP, chaired by Lord Harris, to provide independent expertise and advice to work to create safer systems of custody and reduce the incidence of prison deaths.

Chair, Bar Equality Training: From January 2010-13 Dexter was Chair of the Bar's Equality Training sub-committee, determined to promote equality training and understanding of gender, race and disability rights throughout the profession, following Lord Neuberger's report on Entry to the Bar. He actively contributed to

the committee's work from 2008 and has been one of the Bar's principal trainers for several years.

Patron, UNLOCK: Dexter was appointed patron of UNLOCK, the independent charity that works with reformed offenders to assist them putting their lives back on track so they can fulfill their potential through equality of opportunity, and an understanding of their rights and social responsibilities.

Public funding: appointed to Bar Council committee, convened by Chairman of Bar, to oppose Government plans that would destroy the fabric of legal services. Dexter's legal analysis of compliance and equality issues constituted a significant part of the Bar's official response.

Ambassador, Make Justice Work: appointed Ambassador of Make Justice Work, an innovative campaign aimed at making the criminal justice system fairer and more effective.

LANGUAGES

French

A little Italian

If you would like to get in touch with Dexter please contact the clerking team:

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