



# Christopher Williams

YEAR OF CALL: 1988



LEGAL AID  
LAWYER  
OF THE YEAR AWARDS  
2016 WINNER

Chris Williams practises in public law with an emphasis on inquests, immigration law, prisoners' rights, mental health and emergency injunctions against public bodies. He also brings civil actions against the police, the Ministry of Justice and the Home Office, including personal injuries and unlawful detention.

Chris brings judicial review challenges to decisions by magistrates' and youth courts. He has also covered a number of successful judicial review challenges to police cautions.

Chris has experience in petitioning the European Court of Human Rights and has the appropriate Bar Human Rights accreditation to do so (ALBA 2000).

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

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## ADMINISTRATIVE AND PUBLIC LAW

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Chris Williams takes a keen interest in all aspects of work in the public law and human rights field from appearing before tribunals to pursuing judicial reviews in the higher courts. He is able to take on cases in the area of public law outside those listed above. Additionally, Chris has successfully represented asylum seekers charged with immigration related offences before the criminal courts.

### NOTABLE CASES

#### ***R (Aly) v HM Coroner for Bridgend and Glamorgan Valleys, September 2011***

In an urgent judicial review challenge to a coroners refusal to order a non-dissecting autopsy, based on Art.9 ECHR (religious belief) and Art.8 (family life) Silber J paid tribute to the advocates stating that "each party has put forward their submissions skilfully and the points have been argued with great skill by both Counsel".

#### ***R v London Borough of Newham ex parte Gentle [1994] 26 HLR 466***

Challenge to the rationality of a housing policy.

## CLAIMS AGAINST THE POLICE AND PUBLIC AUTHORITIES

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Chris brings civil actions against the police, the Ministry of Justice and the Home Office, including personal injuries and unlawful detention. Additionally, Chris brings judicial review challenges to decisions by magistrates' and youth courts. He has also covered a number of successful judicial review challenges to police cautions.

### NOTABLE CASES

#### ***Gronblom & Bathory v Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis, Central London County Court 28th November 2012***

Chris acted for two animal rights protesters in a wrongful arrest case which successfully challenged the misuse of s.14(1) of the Public Order Act 1986, by the police, against peaceful protesters.

## IMMIGRATION LAW

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Chris has successfully represented asylum seekers charged with immigration related offences before the criminal courts.

### NOTABLE CASES

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

#### ***Home Office v SM*, September 2016**

Appeal against exclusion of refugee status under Art 1F(a) of the Refugee Convention.

#### ***R v C* [2011] EWCA Crim 2911**

Refugee Convention Art 31 defence for possession of false identity documents.

#### ***KB (Trinidad & Tobago)* [2010] EWCA Civ 11; [2010] 1 WLR 1631**

Resisting Secretary of State's appeal against the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal's finding that a criminal deportation violated Article 8.

#### ***R (Haider) v Entry Clearance Officer* [2009] EWHC 3008 (Admin)**

Judicial Review of an Entry Clearance Officer's refusal to obey a determination of the Asylum and Immigration Appeal Tribunal.

#### ***SH (Palestinian Territories) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2008] EWCA Civ 1150**

#### ***AK (Iran)* [2008] EWCA Civ 941; [2009] Imm AR 93; [2009] INLR 577**

Appeal against refusal of Asylum and Immigration Tribunal to adjourn an asylum appeal of an Iranian transsexual. Following remittal by the Court of Appeal, to the tribunal the appeal was allowed.

#### ***AK (Palestine) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2007] Imm AR 81**

Chris appeared as leading counsel before the Court of Appeal in a case which raised issues of whether stateless Palestinians prevented from returning to the West Bank and Gaza Strip by Israel were entitled to refugee recognition, Article 3 ECHR protection, and rights to reside in the UK founded on Article 8 ECHR and the Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons 1954.

#### ***R v H (Isleworth Crown Court)* September 2005**

An acquittal before a jury where the defendant, a refugee, was charged with an offence of being unable to produce a travel document upon arrival in the UK contrary to s.2 Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants) Act 2004. This was one of a very small number of acquittals for this offence. The acquittal was achieved by the defence using live evidence from a country expert - a tactic which practitioners who had predominantly criminal practices were not considering at the time.

***Daraz v SSHD [2002] INLR 462***

Concerned the question of whether Article 1D of the Refugee Convention was a contingent inclusion clause which automatically entitled stateless Palestinians to Refugee Recognition.

***MNM v SSHD [2000] INLR 576***

Heard within days of commencement of the Human Rights Act in October 2000, to decide the question of whether immigration cases engaged Article 6 of the ECHR. It was concluded that whilst Strasbourg jurisprudence provided that Article 6 did not apply in immigration cases, nonetheless, common law principles applied to achieve the same result.

***R v SSHD ex parte Adan, Aitsegur, Subaskaran [1999] INLR 362***

A third country removal to Germany violated the Refugee Convention due to lack of protection from refoulement in cases of a risk of persecution by non-state actors.

***R v SSHD ex parte Ahmed & Patel (Coward) [1998] INLR 570***

Establishes that unincorporated international conventions, which have been ratified, are capable of giving rise to a legitimate expectation of compliance with their terms by the state.

***Kaja v Secretary of State for the Home Department [1995] Imm AR 1***

Established for the first time before the Immigration Appeal Tribunal that a lower standard of proof applied to asylum appeals, namely, 'a reasonable degree of likelihood'.

## **INQUESTS AND INQUIRIES**

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Chris was engaged in the Hillsborough Inquests for four years as one of the leading counsel representing a number of families who lost relatives in the disaster. He was also part of the team which assisted the Hillsborough Family Support Group at the High Court hearing in 2012 when the original inquests were successfully quashed.

In 2016, Chris won the Outstanding Achievement Award at the Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year Awards for his

contribution to the Hillsborough inquests alongside other lawyers who represented the bereaved families.

## **NOTABLE CASES**

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

### **Inquest into the death of Demi Williams, St Pancras Coroner, 16 December 2016**

This involved a death of psychiatric patient in the community, where despite Art.2 being out of scope, the coroner returned a critical narrative and made two prevention of future death reports.

### **[Inquest into the death of Simon McBride at HMP Liverpool 7 July 2016.](#)**

The Jury's narrative conclusion included neglect in a self inflicted prison death and also identified, pursuant to Article 2, a number of systemic failures concerning the assessment of prisoner with mental health problems.

### **Inquest into the death of Andrew Peebles at HMP Wymott, 19 May 2016**

The jury returned a Narrative conclusion enclosing a finding that the failure to perform a mental health assessment amounted to neglect and caused the death.

## **Hillsborough Inquests**

Chris was engaged in the **Hillsborough Inquests** for four years (concluding on 26 April 2016) as one of the leading counsel representing a number of families who lost relatives in the disaster. He was also part of the team, which assisted the Hillsborough Family Support Group at the High Court hearing in 2012 when the original inquests were successfully quashed.

### **Inquest touching on the death of Alan Guite, October 2011**

HM Coroner for Manchester 2011 - The jury concluded that his suicide had been contributed to by the neglect of the prison health care services at HMP Manchester.

### **Inquest into the death of Michael Clegg at HMP Leeds March 2010**

Verdict of unlawful killing following an assault by another prisoner. The jury's Article 2 narrative identified 30 systemic failures relating to Prison Service risk-assessment procedures regarding cell sharing.

### **Simon Murden inquest HMC for Hull 2008**

A police shooting case where Chris acted as junior counsel for the family.

### **Inquest into the Death of Tom Hurndall April 2006**

A case involving the shooting of a peace campaigner by an Israeli soldier in the Gaza Strip. Arguments were advanced concerning the applicability of Article 2 ECHR in the context of death in violation of the Geneva

Convention Act 1957.

### **Inquest into death of Guardsman Craig Lashley, Stourport on Severn Coroners Court 2003**

An accidental death during a military exercise in Jamaica where the Coroner agreed that Article 2 ECHR applied to the inquest and where the jury found that there had been systemic failures which contributed to the death.

### **Inquest into the death of Errol McGowan, Telford Coroners Court (2001)**

A hanging case where there had been a background of racial harassment of the deceased. Chris was junior counsel at the inquest.

## **PRISONERS' RIGHTS**

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### ***R v Lowe (Steven) [2009] EWCA Crim 2321***

Unlawfully imposed extended sentence for indecent assault.

## **PRO BONO WORK**

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Chris has undertaken a considerable number of pro bono cases in different areas of law during his time at the Bar. Chris covered cases on a regular basis for the bar Free Representation Unit (FRU) between 1988 and 1997.

In January 2011 Chris provided pro bono assistance to Canadian lawyers acting for the First Nation Beaver Lake Cree seeking to challenge the grant of licences by the Canadian Government to oil corporations in the notorious **Tar Sands Project**, which was the First Nation's traditional hunting grounds.

## **BACKGROUND**

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Chris commenced full time practice at the Bar in 1991 prior to which he worked as an Immigration Adviser and advocate in the voluntary sector for one and a half years.

He was also on the management committee of Hackney Community Law Centre between 1992 and 2001. This included holding the post of Chair. Chris covered cases on a regular basis for the bar Free Representation Unit (FRU) between 1988 and 1997.

Chris was appointed as a part-time Assistant Coroner for Inner London South Area in July 2011.

## PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP

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- **Legal Action Group**
- **Amnesty International**
- **INQUEST Lawyers Group**
- **Kurdish Human Rights Project (Legal Team member)**

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