

Camila Zapata Besso



Call: 2016

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Profile

Education

LLM in International Law, UCL (Distinction. Top of the year in international refugee law and humanitarian law) [2016-17]

Bar Professional Training Course, City Law School (Very Competent) [2015-16]

Graduate Diploma in Law [2014-15]

BA (Hons) English Literature, University of Bristol [2010-13]

Languages

Spanish

Related practice areas

Immigration

Immigration Detention Group

Administrative & Public Law

Anti-Trafficking

Inquests and Public Inquiries

Actions Against the Police and Public Authorities

International Human Rights Law

Immigration: Asylum and Human Rights

Camila is regularly instructed to appear in the First-tier and Upper Tribunals in complex asylum, human rights and deport appeals for vulnerable adults and children. She has particular experience representing victims of human trafficking, torture and sexual violence, unaccompanied minors, individuals with mental health needs and those who lack capacity.

Camila's experience of the range of immigration matters also includes issues relating to revocation of refugee status, 'first countries of asylum' and the Immigration Rules (including entry clearance). She is developing a practice in asylum claims involving national security issues and concurrent extradition proceedings.

Administrative and Public Law

Camila represents clients in judicial review claims, including on an urgent basis, in the Upper Tribunal and Administrative Court, including challenges to decisions relating to fresh claims, certification, immigration detention, removal, trafficking and the issuance of passports.

She represented the Seven Sisters Latin Village market traders in their legal challenge to the government's decision to redevelop the market.

Civil Claims Against Public Authorities

Camila advises claimants in civil damages claims against the police and prisons, including false imprisonment, assault, malicious prosecution, misfeasance in public office and claims under the Human Rights Act 1998. She represents bereaved family members in inquests engaging Article 2 ECHR.

Camila was junior for the claimant in *TPKN v Ministry of Defence* [2019] EWHC 1488

(QB). The primary issue was whether the Ministry of Defence could be held vicariously liable for the rape of the claimant by a fellow soldier on base, following a social event. The claimant successfully appealed against summary judgment/strike out on all grounds.

During her pupillage under the supervision of Maya Sikand QC and Keir Monteith QC at Garden Court Chambers, Camila worked on statutory criminal appeals against conviction for victims of human trafficking (including *R v L*; *R v N* [2017] EWCA Crim 2129), and drafted grounds of referral to the Criminal Cases Review Commission. She also appeared in the Crown, Magistrates and Youth courts for trials, bail hearings, sentencing, contested Proceeds of Crime Act proceedings and Criminal Behaviour Order hearings.

International practice

Camila has experience in public international law, with a specific focus on international human rights, international humanitarian law and international cultural heritage law.

She is developing a practice in international civil claims against private entities.

Camila has a keen interest in Latin American issues. She has jointly drafted an **amicus curiae brief** in a Colombian case brought by Wayúu indigenous peoples' against the Carbones del Cerrejón mining company and Colombian state entities, focussing on applicable principles under international human rights and international environmental law. Another **amicus curiae** before the Colombian Constitutional Court in a case between the national army and the San José de Apartadó Peace Community concerned the right to freedom of expression of human rights defenders working in the midst of post-conflict situations.

In 2019 the Bar Council awarded her the International Legal Professional Scholarship to deliver conferences on human trafficking and modern slavery in Mexico and Colombia. She acted as an independent international electoral observer at the 2020 Bolivian Presidential elections, and in 2021 **reported** on the criminal trial of Santiago Uribe, the brother of the former Colombian president, on behalf of the Bar Human Rights Committee.

Background

Before coming to the Bar Camila volunteered at a human rights consultancy in Colombia,

Grenfell Legal Support, the Free Representation Unit, the United Migrant Workers Education Project and Survival International. She completed her LLM thesis under the supervision of Professor Roger O'Keefe on the protection of indigenous culture under international human rights and cultural heritage law (first class).

At university, Camila was an award-winning international mooter, and has since enjoyed helping students develop their advocacy skills by judging moots at the Jessup international law competition, the London School of Economics and the University of Durham. She has spoken about the importance of a representative legal profession at events at Oxford University, Kings College London, Goldsmiths University, and in Mexico with the Law Society.

Pro Bono

Camila regularly accepts domestic and international pro bono instructions from NGOs including Advocate, Bail for Immigration Detainees, ABColombia, the Colombian Caravana and the Alliance for Lawyers at Risk.

Publications

Asylum Research Centre publishes its major 'Comparative Analysis of US Department of State Country Reports on Human Rights Practices (2016-2019)' yielding interesting results on the reliability of reports produced by the Trump administration (2020)

Joint report of the Independent International Election Observation Mission to the Bolivian Presidential Elections (2020)

'COVID 19: Implications for bail hearings' (2020)

'Ministry of Defence can be vicariously liable for rape committed on base' (2019)

'The right of refugee-receiving states to compensation: a 'general framework' under the international law of state responsibility' (2018)

'Hill Immunity Revisited: The Beginning of the End?' (2018)

'Colombia's human rights warriors are marginalized and stigmatised' (2016)