

Steven Powles KC



Call: 1997

Silk: 2019

Email: s.powles@doughtystreet.co.uk

Profile

He has represented a number of high-profile clients, accused of the most serious crimes, before both international and domestic courts. In 2020 he was sworn in as State Counsel in Seychelles and served in the Attorney General's Chambers for three years prosecuting both criminal and civil confiscation cases relating to corruption and money laundering offences.

What the directories say

"Steven is very very clever and a delight to work with. He is kind and compassionate." - Legal 500 2025

"He is highly reliable and demonstrates strong commitment to helping victims of human rights abuses." - Legal 500 2025

"Very committed and hard-working, while also sophisticated and brilliant in his approach." - Legal 500 2024

"Inspiring, expert at what he does and diligent. His powers of persuasion are just incredible in court." - Chambers and Partners 2024

"He is a superb, hard-working professional who can empathise with clients" - Chambers and Partners 2024

"An outstanding silk and an extremely personable advocate whom clients and colleagues warm to." - Chambers and Partners 2023

"Very competent criminal silk. Lots of heavy overseas work. Very personal and easy to work with." - Legal 500 2023

"A very strong advocate who passionately fights his corner and always ensures a just and fair outcome." - Chambers and Partners 2022

"Steven is an expert in this field and a compelling advocate. In potentially very emotive proceedings Steven is calm and authoritative and of great re-assurance to clients. He excels in criminal appeals, demonstrating thorough preparation and encyclopaedic knowledge of the law." - Legal 500 2022

Education

LLB (Hons)

LLM (International Law)

Related practice areas

International Law

International Criminal Law

Public International Law

Criminal Law

Extradition

Business Crime

Business and Human Rights and Modern Slavery

International Human Rights Law

International Media Law

Sanctions

Foreign Jurisdiction Work

International Arbitration

International Crime

Steven has been working in the field of international crime for over 25 years. He first worked as a legal assistant to a judge at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and then as representative of Trinidad and Tobago during international negotiations on the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC). He has previously served as a consultant in the Legal Advisory Section to the UN International Independent Investigation Commission investigating the assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in Beirut, Lebanon. Steven is also co-author of one of the leading practitioner texts on international crime ' *International Criminal Practice*' (OUP).

Steven has appeared in numerous cases before nearly all the various international courts and tribunals, as well as in universal jurisdiction cases before domestic courts:

- ***R v Agnes Reeves-Taylor*** - Represented former First Lady of Liberia charged with allegations of torture during Liberia's civil war. Challenged whether UN Convention against Torture is applicable to armed opposition groups before Supreme Court [2019] UKSC 51.
- ***Situation in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan*** (ICC-02/17 OA4) - Represented a group of Pakistani drone victims before International Criminal Court (ICC) Appeals Chamber in attempt to overturn Pre-Trial Chamber refusal to open an investigation.
- ***Prosecutor v Aime Kilolo Musamba and others*** - Represented lawyer ICC accused of procuring false testimony and witness tampering on behalf of client (ICC).
- ***Prosecutor v Henry Kosgey and others*** - Defended former Kenyan Government Minister accused of Crimes Against Humanity (ICC).
- ***Prosecutor v Zuhdija Tabakovic*** (IT-98-32/1-R77.1) - Allegation of contempt arising from acceptance of payment from defence lawyer to provide false testimony at International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).
- ***Prosecutor v Prlic and others*** (IT-04-74) - Represented UN international organisation during testimony of former UN staff member in closed session proceedings (ICTY).
- ***Prosecutor v Moinina Fofana*** (SCSL-2004-14-T) - Defended ex-member of Civil Defence Forces in proceedings at Special Court for Sierra Leone.
- ***Prosecutor v Isak Musliu*** (IT-03-66) - Defended ex-member of Kosovo Liberation Army accused of War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity (ICTY).
- ***Prosecutor v Morris Kallon*** - Defended ex-member of Revolutionary United Front accused of War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity at Special Court for Sierra

Leone: Argued legality of establishment of Special Court (2004) 16 BHRC 227 and status of amnesty granted under international law (2004) 16 BHRC 252.

- ***Prosecutor v Brdjanin*** (IT-99-36-AR73.9) - Represented Washington Post reporter Jonathan Randal at ICTY in establishing qualified privilege for war correspondents.

Human Rights

Steven is regularly instructed in cases raising human rights issues in both domestic courts and before the European Court of Human Rights:

- Representing 5 former Albanian judges and prosecutors dismissed and prohibited from office in Albania. Established violation of Article 8 (private life) in first case to be considered: ***Sevdari v Albania*** (Applic. No. 40662/19).
- ***Stephen Gough (The Naked Rambler) v UK*** (Applic. No. 49327/11): Case regarding the freedom expression (Article 10) to appear naked in public.
- ***Beghal v UK*** (Applic. No. 4755/16): Challenge to compatibility of interviews under Schedule 7 of the Terrorism Act 2000 with Articles 5, 6 and 8 of the ECHR. Arising from Supreme Court case of *Beghal v DPP* [2015] UKSC 49.
- ***Dedvukaj and Dedvukaj v Montenegro*** (Applic. Nos. 1451/10, 7260/10 and 7382/10) : Represented two American nationals accused of coup attempt in Montenegro. Case regarding treatment upon arrest (Article 3) and fairness of trial (Article 6).
- ***Bahmanzadeh v UK*** (Applic. No. 35752/13): Case regarding the need for Special Counsel in domestic appeal proceedings in which public interest immunity material is considered for the first time by the Court of Appeal.

Extradition

Steven has conducted numerous extradition cases under both the 1989 and 2003 Extradition Acts.

- ***Chawla v The Government of India*** [2020] EWHC 102 (Admin) Application to 'reopen' appeal on behalf of applicant wanted for trial in India for fixing cricket matches.

Application based on fresh evidence on insufficiency of undertaking given by Indian Government.

- ***Henriques v Judicial Authority of Portugal*** [2019] EWHC 1998 (Admin) Claimant resisted extradition on basis of prison conditions and serious health issues. Judicial Authority were forced to provide one of the most comprehensive undertakings ever to secure extradition.
- ***PH and HH v Italy*** [2012] UKSC 25 Leading case on application of Article 8 (Family life) regarding interests of young children in extradition proceedings.
- ***La Torre v Italy*** [2007] EWHC 1370 (Admin) Extradition request for alleged member of Camorra/mafia association accused of numerous murders.
- ***King's Prosecutor Brussels v Cando Armas*** [2005] UKHL 67 – First case under Extradition Act 2003 to proceed to the House of Lords.

Terrorism, Protest Cases and Politically Motivated Crime

Steven has appeared in a number of high-profile terrorist and protest cases:

- ***R v Syed*** [2018] EWCA Crim 2809 – Case challenging compatibility of *R v Looseley* [2001] UKHL 53 with developing ECtHR jurisprudence. Defendant was 17 year old alleged to have been entrapped into agreeing to carry out large scale suicide bombing mission.
- ***SSHD v IM*** [2017] EWHC 1529 (Admin) – Proceedings under Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures Act 2011 in relation to alleged member of proscribed organisation said to be encouraging others to carry out terrorist related activity in both UK and overseas.
- ***R v McCartney and others*** – Defended former IRA member accused of conspiracy to blackmail (January 2010).
- ***R v S and A*** [2008] EWCA Crim 2177 – Case arising out of alleged conspiracy to breach a Control Order, possession of information likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism (sec. 58 Terrorism Act 2000) and first prosecution under section 53 of Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 for failure to disclose encryption key code.

- ***R v Ul Haq and others*** [2008] EWCA Crim 2910 – Defended in terrorist case arising out of international conspiracy to cause explosions in both UK and USA.
- ***R v Tadman and others*** - Peace activists charged with conspiracy to cause criminal damage after causing £180,000 of damage to an arms factory in Brighton. Defence was one of legal justification on the basis that they were seeking to protect civilian life and property during Operation Cast Lead in Gaza in 2009 [2011]
- ***R v Kirtley and others*** – Defended animal rights protestor accused of conspiracy to interfere with contractual relations as to harm an animal research organization [2009]

Financial Crime

- ***Attorney-General's Chambers, Seychelles*** 2020-2022. Prosecuted numerous corruption and money-laundering matters, including POCA case concerning confiscation of nearly \$10 million laundered through Seychelles by corrupt officials from Equatorial Guinea.
- ***R v Choudary*** Blackfriars Crown Court. 2018. Defendant prosecuted for bribery under Bribery Act 2010 in relation to promised payment with intention to induce a manager at Network Rail not to recover rent payment.
- ***Silvio Berlusconi v Italy*** Application to ECHR alleging violation of Article 6 (fair trial) arising out of conviction for large scale fraud concerning former Prime Minister's media enterprises.
- ***C v HM Treasury*** [2016] EWHC 2039 (Admin) – First case under Terrorist Asset-Freezing, etc Act 2010 to proceed to fully contested evidentiary hearing. The subject of asset freeze was successful businessman who was brother of high-profile radical preacher.
- ***R v Woollard*** Sheffield Crown Court. 2015. Conspiracy to commit fraud by false representation in relation to mortgage fraud.
- ***Khelifa v Algeria*** [2013] EWHC 4204 (Admin) Algerian extradition request for president of one of Algeria's largest banks, airline and TV station accused of serious fraud in Algeria leading to bank's collapse and losses of over \$1 billion.

- ***R v Shah et al*** Kingston Crown Court. 2008. Pharmacist acquitted of importation and distribution of counterfeit pharmaceuticals.
- ***R (Lloyd) v Bow Street Magistrates' Court*** [2004] 1 Cr App R 11. Established violation of Article 6 of ECHR (Fair Trial) for delay in enforcement of confiscation order for proceeds of crime resulting from large-scale fraud.

Victim Representation

Steven has represented victims of both international and domestic crime. He regularly advises NGO's and victims' groups on possible prosecution of those responsible and has acted in securing financial compensation for victims of crime.

- ***Situation in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan*** (ICC-02/17 OA4) Represented a group of Pakistani drone victims before International Criminal Court (ICC) Appeals Chamber in attempt to overturn Pre-Trial Chamber refusal to open an investigation.
- ***Al-Sweady Inquiry*** – Represented group of former Iraqi detainees and families of deceased at Public Inquiry into alleged misconduct and breach of international law by British armed forces. To read the Inquiry Report please see [here](#).
- ***Ministry of Justice v Scott*** [2009] EWCA Civ 1215 – Compensation secured for victim of assault by Prison Officers and malicious prosecution based on false evidence provided by state employees.
- ***RK v Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority*** – Represented victim of vicious stabbing in appeal against decision to refuse compensation. Victim received award in excess of £100,000.

Lecturing and Training

- Contributor to Chatham House/Doughty Street '**Milestones**' series.
- Lectured team of OSCE monitors on elements of international crimes (Sarajevo, Bosnia).

- Lectured members of British armed forces on laws of war and at NATO lawyers' conference (Moenchengladbach, Germany).
- Lectured on human rights law for European Roma Rights Centre (Romania) and Interights (Azerbaijan).
- Organised and provided legal and advocacy training to members of Sierra Leone bar to appear at Special Court for Sierra Leone (Freetown, Sierra Leone).
- Regularly lecture for NGO's (Amnesty International, Redress, No Peace Without Justice) and universities on human rights and international law.
- Advocacy Trainer – train junior barristers using Hempel method.

Media

Over 100 TV and radio appearances: CNN, BBC World, BBC News 24, Sky News, ITN news, Channel 4 News, The World Today. Commenting mainly on proceedings against Slobodan Milosevic, Saddam Hussein and Charles Taylor. Published in **The Guardian - Charles Taylor trial** (2012) and The Times - Saddam Hussein proceedings (2004), International Criminal Court (2002), Fair Trials in Kosovo (2000).