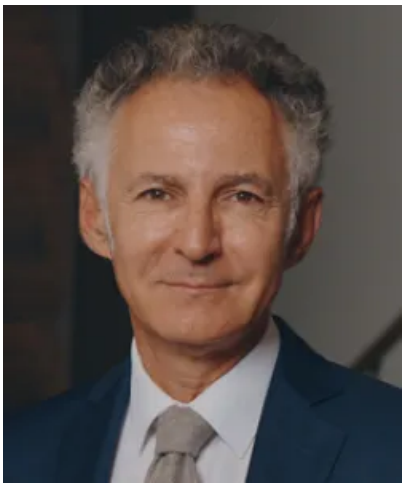
François Zimeray (Associate)



Call: 1987

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Profile

François Zimeray is an international lawyer, formerly serving as the French Human Rights Ambassador-at-large and as a Member of the European Parliament. He joined Doughty Street Chambers as an Associate Tenant in October 2018.

Called to the Paris Bar in 1987, François has extensive experience dealing with complex international legal challenges, for individuals, corporations and governments. Previously, François was a partner in a leading Paris law firm where he advised and assisted corporations on transnational commercial disputes both in litigation and arbitration.

As a member of the European Parliament, he served on the Legal Affairs Committee and contributed to the preparatory works for the European Charter of Fundamental Rights (1999-2004) and the creation of a European mutual assistance in criminal matters.

He later became the highest-ranking French Human Rights diplomat (2008-2013) and represented his country for Human Rights issues before multilateral institutions, including

during the Universal Periodic Review and other UN sessions.

Returning to private practice in 2018, Ambassador Zimeray now combines his skills in international law with his diplomatic experience, advising private and public sector clients on complex international disputes. His areas of expertise include international human rights, business and human rights, arbitration and transnational crimes.

Attorney-at-law (1987-2008):

Business: Admitted to Paris Bar in 1987, Francois Zimeray joined Jeantet & Associes, a renowned French commercial law firm. For 21 years, as associate, then Partner, he practiced litigation, arbitration and contract law for a wide spectrum of clients including major international companies.

Human Rights: Zimeray has worked on a range of human rights issues such as against Khmer Rouge genocide, child soldiers in DRC, political opponents in Laos, before international jurisdictions, including the ICC and the European Court of Human Rights. Francois Zimeray has been Member of the International Criminal Bar and was admitted as expert in the French Institute for international legal experts (IFEJI). He founded in Paris the Alliance des Avocats pour les droits de l'Homme.

Member of European Parliament (1999-2004):

Having become one of France's youngest mayors, Francois was elected member of the European Parliament (1999-2004). He was particularly active in the Legal Affairs, International, Human Rights and Trade committees. He took part in the preparatory debates on the European Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Diplomat (2008-2018):

Ambassador-at-large for Human Rights, in 2008, Francois became France's top diplomat for human rights, a position he assumed over five years, serving two Presidents. He was deeply engaged in OSCE and UN activities, such as UN Security Council on child soldiers and the Human Rights Council UPR where he twice represented France. He actively supported international Justice mechanisms and participated in the Kampala conference on Rome Status (ICC).

Ambassador Zimeray conducted more than 100 field missions covering a wide range of

Human rights challenges (notably in Irak, DRC, Rwanda, Colombia, Libya, Sri-Lanka Bangladesh, Cameroon, Guatemala, Nepal, Honduras, Burundi, Egypt, Israel-Palestine, Tunisia). The Ambassador was missioned by the French Minister of Foreign Affairs to bring crime evidences against the Syrian regime. He drafted a Strategy for Human Rights for the French Government and formulated the concept of Digital habeas Corpus. Zimeray considered the heart of his mission to support activists and jailed dissidents everywhere in the world. He took an active part in the universal abolition of death penalty campaign.

Ambassador to the Kingdom of Denmark:

In 2013, Zimeray was appointed to Copenhagen. In this capacity, he intensively developed bilateral trade and cultural relations and created the very first Human Right's Prize of French Embassy.

On 14 February 2015, soon after Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris, he survived a bloody terror attack in Copenhagen. The shooting targeted a meeting where he took part in order to support cartoonists and Human rights activists.

Publications:

- "The mayor and the legal protection of environment" (Paris, Litec 1994, foreword by Michel Barnier)
- "J'ai vu partout le même visage", an essay about universality of Human Rights (Plon, Paris 2016 and Gyldendal, Denmark 2015)

Education

Master's degree in law from the Paris-II faculty of Law (Assas)

Certificate in Criminal Sciences - Paris criminology institute (Pantheon-Sorbonne)

Languages

French
Spanish
English

Related practice areas

Business and Human Rights and Modern Slavery
Mediation

International Human Rights Law
International Law
International Arbitration