BRICK COURT
CHAMBERS

Brick Court Chambers
7-8 Essex Street, London WC2R 3LD
DX 302 London Chancery Lane

Zahra Al-Rikabi

YEAR OF CALL: 2012

"Zahra is exceptionally bright and immensely driven. Her command of the detail is impressive and second to none."

Chambers & Partners, 2024

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Practice Overview

Zahra Al-Rikabi is a leading junior with a wide-ranging practice encompassing public international law (including investment treaty arbitration), international arbitration, commercial litigation and public law. She advises in complex multi-jurisdictional disputes raising issues of private and public international law and has built significant experience working with quantum experts in the context of high value disputes.

Zahra has been appointed to the Attorney General's B Panel for Public International Law. She is ranked in Legal 500 and Chambers & Partners as a leading junior in public international law and international arbitration. She was shortlisted by Legal 500 as international law junior of the year in 2024 and international arbitration junior of the year in 2022. She was also selected for inclusion in *The Lawyer* Hot 100 in 2020. The legal directories describe Zahra as "*exceptionally bright and immensely driven*", "*fiercely intelligent*", her "*command of the detail is impressive and second to none*", "*a whiz on technical issues and quantum and has incredible analysis*", "*really impresses with her mastery of the commercial priorities and understanding of the history of the matter*", "*confident, considered and thoughtful*", and "*an elite barrister, who is able to manage extremely difficult and complex cases with aplomb*".

Zahra has acted for a wide range of clients, including states, multinational corporations, international organisations and NGOs. She has appeared unled in the High Court and Court of Appeal and has been led on cases in the Supreme Court, Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Court of Human Rights. She has been instructed in a number of high-profile cases in her areas of practice, including *BTI v PwC* (*The Lawyer's* Top 20 Cases for 2024); *Municipio de Mariana v BHP Group* (*The Lawyer's* Top 20 Cases for 2020) and *Canary Wharf v European Medicines Agency* (*The Lawyer's* Top 20 Cases for 2019). Zahra is a member of the Attorney General's Public International Law C Panel.

Zahra is fluent in Arabic. She is a CEDR accredited mediator who is building a practice as a bilingual commercial mediator alongside her litigation and advisory work.

Zahra has received recognition for her pro bono work and her commitment to social mobility at the Bar, which led to her being shortlisted for Social Mobility: Bar Champion of the Year in the Legal 500's inaugural ESG awards.

Commercial

Zahra has experience in a range of commercial matters, including banking, insurance, civil fraud, shipping, professional negligence and general contractual disputes. Current or recent instructions include:

- *BTI v PwC* [2021] EWCA Civ 9 (led by Simon Salzedo QC and Tony Singla) a strike out application raising issues of abuse of process and scope of duty in the context of a $600 million auditor's negligence claim.
- *Municipio de Mariana and ors v BHP Group* (led by Charles Hollander QC), a claim on behalf of over 200,000 claimants arising from the collapse in 2015 of the Fundão Dam, which has been described as the worst environmental disaster in Brazil's history.
- *Fortunate Drift v Canterbury Securities* (led by Tim Lord QC) a $20 million claim in the Cayman Islands.

Zahra has experience of challenges to arbitration awards under ss. 67, 68 and 69 of the Arbitration Act 1996 as well as enforcement of arbitration awards under the New York Convention. She appeared unled in *L R Avionics Technologies Ltd v The Federal Republic of Nigeria & Anor* [2016] EWHC 1761 (Comm), an enforcement action raising issues of state and consular immunity.

Zahra is particularly interested in multi-jurisdictional disputes raising questions of private and public international law. She has significant experience advising on state immunity, both in her work with the Legal Advisor to the Prime Minister of Iraq and in practice.

Public international law

Zahra has a strong public international law practice, which includes both advisory work, in particular in relation to the immunity of states, international organisations and diplomats; as well as domestic litigation raising issues of public international law. Zahra was appointed Junior Counsel to the Crown (the UK Attorney General's Public International Law B Panel) in 2025. Notable cases include:

- *Canary Wharf v European Medicines Agency* [2019] EWHC 335 (Ch) (led by Lord Anderson of Ipswich KBE QC), selected as one of the top case in *The Lawyer's* Top 20 Cases of 2019, this case determined whether Brexit would frustrate the EMA's lease in Canary Wharf, raising issues concerning the immunity of international organisations as a matter of customary international law, EU law and domestic law
- *Belhaj & Anor v Jack Straw & Ors* [2017] UKSC 3 (led by Martin Chamberlain QC), an appeal before the Supreme Court addressing the application of state immunity and the foreign act of state doctrine in claims of complicity of UK agents in torture.
- *L R Avionics Technologies Ltd v The Federal Republic of Nigeria & Anor* [2016] EWHC 1761 (Comm), an enforcement action raising issues of state and consular immunity, in which Zahra appeared unled. This case is now authority for the proposition that s.9 of the State Immunity Act 1978 encompasses not only an arbitration award but also a judgment of a foreign court upholding the arbitration award and awarding interest.

Zahra also has a growing practice in investment treaty disputes. She is currently instructed in *Al-Jazeera v Egypt* ICSID Case No. ARB/16/1 (led by Toby Landau QC), as well as a multi-billion dollar claim brought by an investor against a South Asian state pursuant to a bilateral investment treaty.

Before coming to the Bar, Zahra worked with the Legal Advisor to the Prime Minister of Iraq during the negotiations of the US-Iraqi Status of Forces Agreement, advising on issues of state jurisdiction and state immunity.

Public Law

Zahra is ranked as a leading junior in administrative and public law (Legal 500, 2021) where she is described as "an excellent junior in the ascendancy". She has extensive experience of public law, including both advisory and judicial review in a broad range of areas including community care, housing, transport and energy, as well as proceedings under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Zahra has been instructed in a wide range of regulatory disputes, including industry and professional bodies, financial services and anti-money laundering, and pharmaceutical regulation.

Zahra frequently advises in relation to civil liberties and human rights, and has been involved in a number of high profile cases including *Salman Butt v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2019] EWCA Civ 256 (led by Paul Bowen QC), a challenge to the Prevent duty guidance raising issues concerning freedom of speech and the right to privacy; and *Catt and T v Commissioner of the Police of the Metropolis and Another* [2015] UKSC 9 (led by Paul Bowen QC), an appeal before the Supreme Court concerning the legality under Article 8 ECHR of data retention by the police.

Zahra has a keen interest in human rights and law reform: she co-authored the Bingham Centre's Report on Streamlining Judicial Review in a Manner Consistent with the Rule of Law; she has worked with and volunteered for a number of NGOs, including the Public Law Project, Liberty

and Amnesty International; and she is a Council Member of JUSTICE. Zahra was also a member of JUSTICE's advisory group of experts, led by Sir John Dyson, to inform its response to the Independent Review of Administrative Law.

Zahra's experience in practice builds on her experience with the public law team at the Law Commission for England & Wales, and her time working as a judicial assistant to Lord Justice Maurice Kay, the then Vice President of the Court of Appeal.

International/EU

Zahra is ranked as a leading junior in EU law (Legal 500, 2021). She has extensive experience of advising on questions of EU law in the context of domestic litigation. Recent instructions include:

- *Canary Wharf v European Medicines Agency* [2019] EWHC 335 (Ch) (led by Lord Anderson of Ipswich KBE QC), selected as the top case in *The Lawyer's* Top 20 Cases of 2019, this case determined whether Brexit would frustrate the EMA's lease in Canary Wharf, raising various issues about the EMA's capacity as a matter of EU law.
- *R (on the application of Tempus Energy Ltd) v Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy* (led by Victoria Wakefield QC), a challenge to the UK Capacity Market in which the UK Government was said to be in breach of EU state aid law.

Zahra also has significant experience in relation to EU economic sanctions, from challenges against designation to advising on questions of compliance with sanctions both generally and in relation to particular transactions. Notable cases include:

- *Case T-720/14 Arkady Rotenberg v Council* (led by Maya Lester QC), the first challenge to the EU's sanctions against Russia to go to judgment.
- Case C-266/15 P *Central Bank of Iran v Council* (led by Maya Lester QC), an appeal before the ECJ brought by the Central Bank of Iran challenging its designation by the EU Council.
- *Case* C-330/15 P *Tomana and others v Council and Commission* (led by Maya Lester QC), an appeal before the ECJ brought by over 100 individuals and entities designated by the EU Council (led by Maya Lester QC)

Zahra further developed her experience in relation to compliance with EU sanctions through a secondment at Peters & Peters, where she played a key role in creating a global sanctions compliance policy for a large multinational corporation.

Publications

Z Al-Rikabi, "Revisiting *Canary Wharf v EMA:* applying the "radically different" theory of frustration" Butterworths Journal of International Banking and Financial Law (2021)

Co-authored a chapter on proof in investment arbitration for the Max Planck Encyclopedias of International Procedural Law (2020)

Z Al-Rikabi, "Kadi II: the right to effective judicial review triumphs yet again" European Human Rights Law Review E.H.R.L.R. (2013) No.6 Pages 631-636

M Fordham, M Chamberlain, I Steele and Z Al-Rikabi, "Streamlining Judicial Review in a Manner Consistent with the Rule of Law" Judicial Review (Hart, Vol 19, no. 2)

Qualifications

2021: CEDR commercial mediation accreditation

2012-13: Pupillage, Brick Court Chambers

2012: Judicial Assistant to Maurice Kay LJ, UK Court of Appeal

2010-12: Bar Professional Training Course, College of Law

2010 - 11: Research Assistant, Law Commission for England and Wales

2008: Assistant, Office of the Legal Advisor to the Prime Minister of Iraq

2007 -10: LLM in Public International Law, London School of Economics (Merit)

2003 - 07: BA in Jurisprudence, New College, Oxford (First)

Scholarships:

2013: Phoenicia Scholarship, Bar European Group

2010: Astbury Scholarship (Major), Middle Temple

2004: Slaughter and May Prize for the best performance in Introduction to Law for Law Moderations

2004: New College Scholarship and the Burden-Griffiths Book Prize for performance in Law Moderations

Directory quotes

"Zahra is meticulous in her approach to evidence. I saw her work with patience and diligence with expert witnesses over a period of several years. She leaves no stone unturned in her approach to documents and legal research. She was selected as the only one of six juniors to carry out advocacy at a major hearing of our case, given the rapport she had established with the witnesses. She is sensible, pragmatic, and a pleasure to work with." (Legal 500 2027)

"Immensely clever, hard-working, and the barrister you want on your team." (Legal 500 2027)

"Zahra Al-Rikabi is a noted up-and-coming barrister who frequently acts on behalf of states, international organisations and diplomats. She represents clients in diplomatic immunity, state jurisdiction and BIT disputes. Al-Rikabi's fluency in Arabic makes her a prime candidate for instructing solicitors seeking MENA expertise." (Chambers & Partners 2026)

"Zahra Al-Rikabi is a rising star in the field of international arbitration. She is sought after by investors for her investment treaty disputes expertise. Al-Rikabi's fluency in Arabic makes her a prime candidate for instructing solicitors seeking MENA expertise. She recently began accepting appointments as an arbitrator." (Chambers & Partners 2026)

"Her evidence and arguments are so well thought through. She is unflappable." (Chambers & Partners 2026)

"Zahra is an excellent barrister on all counts. She could grasp the complex legal issues quickly, was excellent in briefing witnesses and experts, and also very measured in her advocacy at the hearing." (Chambers & Partners 2026)

"She has an extremely powerful intellect. Zahra is a confident advocate; she handles complex issues expertly." (Chambers & Partners 2026)

"Zahra grasps the complex legal issues quickly and is excellent in briefing the witnesses and experts." (Chambers & Partners 2026)

"Zahra has an extremely powerful intellect. She is a confident advocate who is capable of handling complex expert issues." (Chambers & Partners 2026)

"Zahra has great judgement and is unflappable. She doesn't let the point get away from her. Her evidence and the arguments are well thought through." (Chambers & Partners 2026)

"Zahra is a sharp and thorough junior. She is hard-working, personable and good at drafting and making the arguments." (Chambers & Partners 2026)

"A charming and urbane advocate who rapidly gains the trust of her client, her team, and her tribunal. She will go far." (Legal 500 2026)

"An outstanding international lawyer who is rapidly getting the recognition she deserves." (Legal 500 2026)

"Zahra is fantastic. She is trusted as a junior by silks and coming into her own as an advocate too, oral and written." (Chambers & Partners 2025)

"Zahra is a very, very good barrister and very experienced in arbitration work." (Chambers & Partners 2025)

'Zahra establishes solid relationships, and is seeking to expand in this area.' (Legal 500 2025)

'Extremely thorough – chases down every detail. Very reliable and practical. Excellent client manner and witness handling skills. Written advocacy is very strong.' (Legal 500 2025)

"Zahra is exceptionally bright and immensely driven. Her command of the detail is impressive and second to none." (Chambers & Partners 2024)

"Zahra is a solid junior, and not afraid to get into difficult parts of the case and drive them forward – she will be a beneficial addition to any team." (Legal 500 2024)

"She's extremely good. She's a whiz on technical issues and quantum and has incredible analysis." (Chambers & Partners 2023)

"She has an ability to jump into something large and work through it." (Chambers & Partners 2023)

"She's confident, considered and thoughtful. She is good at navigating challenging conversations with clients." (Chambers & Partners 2023)

"Zahra really impresses with her mastery of the commercial priorities and understanding of the history of the matter." (Legal 500 2023)

"Zahra is an elite barrister, who is able to manage extremely difficult and complex cases with aplomb." (Legal 500 2023)

''A great team player and a fine drafter with sound judgement.'' (Legal 500 2023)

"She's confident, considered and thoughtful. She is good at navigating challenging conversations with clients." (Chambers & Partners 2022)

"Excellent at digesting complex materials and reducing them to very digestible content." (Legal 500 2022)

"Great attention to detail. Very calm." (Legal 500 2022)

"She is fiercely intelligent and she works her socks off. A great team player, fine drafter, and displays sound judgement." (Legal 500 2021)

"A great team player and a fine drafter with sound judgement." (Legal 500 2021)

"An excellent junior in the ascendancy." (Legal 500 2020)

Languages

Arabic