2 HARE COURT

Leon Kazakos KC

"He is absolutely brilliant"
Chambers UK 2024 (Financial Crime)

Year of Call: 1999 KC: 2020

020 7353 5324

Prior to taking silk Leon was shortlisted for Crime Junior of the Year 2019 and ranked Band 1 for Crime as a leading individual by Chambers and Partners.

Now in his fourth year in silk he is ranked Band 2 for both General and Financial Crime.

His practice divides into business crime, general crime, regulatory proceedings, tax appeals and police disciplinary work.

In business crime he is instructed to defend across the spectrum of misconduct; from allegations of high value fraud, corruption and misconduct in public office to cheating the public revenue, money laundering, breaches of FSMA, and other related misconduct.

His general criminal practice encompasses homicide (murder and manslaughter), human trafficking and slavery, serious drugs and firearms offences, and serious sexual offending.

His regulatory work spans firearms licensing, breaches of planning notices, wildlife offences (CITES regulations) and some health and safety work.

He provides advice and advocacy in substantial, sensitive and complex cases usually from a pre-charge stage; representing individuals and companies who are under investigation or being prosecuted for serious wrongdoing. He is an accredited advocacy trainer (Lincoln's Inn), a pupil supervisor and a trained facilitator for advocacy and the vulnerable. Leon lectures and delivers training to solicitors' and accountancy firms in relation to criminal and regulatory matters, with a particular focus on financial misconduct and money laundering.

Leon is the current Leader of the South Eastern Circuit and Joint Vice Chair of the Kalisher Trust. He is a contributing editor to Butterworths "Fraud Law, Practice and Procedure", a contributing author in corporate crime to LexisNexis and a contributor to Banks on Sentence.

Location

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What others say:

"The level of detail he goes into is amazing – in the matter he handled for us he knew the case better than the prosecution and the jury looked to him." – Chambers UK 2024 (Crime)

"Thinks outside the box, works super hard for his clients and leaves no stone unturned" – Chambers UK 2024 (Financial Crime)

"His advocacy and presence is incredible." – Chambers UK 2024 (Financial Crime)

"Leon is the advocate's advocate. He is compelling, lucid and erudite. Not a word is wasted in his written submissions or skeleton arguments and no bad point is ever taken." – Legal 500 UK 2024 (Fraud Crime)

"*Leon is very astute and dedicated to achieving good results for his clients. His tremendous advocacy skills, impressive intellect and ability to think strategically mean that he always conducts his cases with elegance and ease." – Chambers UK 2023 (Financial Crime)*

"He is a complete joy to work with for both solicitors and clients." and "Leon is so bright and is able to grasp complex issues immediately." – Chambers UK 2023 (Crime)

"Leon is an exceptional barrister. His attention to detail is impeccable, his advocacy is top-notch and his client care is excellent." – Legal 500 UK 2023 (Fraud Crime)

"A fearless advocate who is excellent both on his feet and on paper." – Chambers UK 2022 (Crime)

"Judges respect him and his clients feel completely taken care of" – Chambers UK 2022 (Financial Crime)

"Professional and lay clients relate to him easily" – Chambers UK 2022 (Crime)

"Leon is an exceptional barrister and there is no case which he doesn't fit. His attention to detail is impeccable, his advocacy is top notch and his client care is exceptional." – Legal 500 2022 (Tier 1 Crime and Financial Crime)

"He works like a machine. Clients love him, he knows the law and he is possessed of good judgement." "A barrister's barrister who is really committed and hard-working. He has an easy manner, but underneath it he is hardcore." – Chambers UK 2021 (Crime)

"A good tactician, enormously hard-working and a very good lawyer." "He is brilliant and unflappable in the face of adversity." – Chambers UK 2021 (Financial Crime)

"Tactically smart … He is an exceptional advocate and every client rates him. He never leaves any stone unturned in a case and therefore you know that the case has been prepared as thoroughly as possible meaning it is rare you encounter something you were not expecting. Leon's strengths undoubtedly lie in the courtroom where he always pitches the tone with the jury perfectly every time" – Legal 500 2021

"A well-regarded new silk who is noted for his broad criminal defence practice" – Chambers UK 2020 (Crime)

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"He is nothing short of brilliant and his work ethic is second to none. He can approach any offence from murder to fraud and does so with equal brilliance which never falters." – Chambers UK 2020

"Committed, bright, forward-thinking, tactically astute and incredibly client-friendly, he's commanding in a courtroom, knows the law inside out and delivers the case in the best way possible." – Chambers UK 2020 (Financial Crime)

"Excellent at handling very challenging clients." – Legal 500 2020 (Fraud)

"Shows mastery of the facts." – Legal 500 2020 (General Crime)

"A class act who is a pleasure to watch" – Chambers UK 2019

"He is very impressive, has a very quick legal mind and understands where the problems are. He has a lovely manner too – in court he's respectful but firm." – Chambers UK 2018

"An excellent tactician, he is the hardest-working and most user-friendly barrister solicitors know"- Legal 500 2018

"Particularly good for an underdog who needs someone to fight their corner." – Legal 500 2016

Business Crime & Financial Services

Ranked as a leader in financial crime in Chambers and Partners and Legal 500, complex financial cases are a very substantial part of Leon's practice. He has extensive experience of defending in all forms of business crime and is instructed to defend in cases brought by the Financial Conduct Authority, the Serious Fraud Office, CPS, BEIS, HMRC as well as against cases brought by private prosecutors where a robust approach is often called for.

Leon's caseload spans the full spectrum, from allegations of misconduct in insolvency proceedings to the operation of unauthorised collective investment schemes to bribery, political corruption and wide-ranging conspiracies to defraud. His proceeds of crime practice sees him advise and represent individuals in civil recovery disputes with the National Crime Agency.

Recent instructions:

R v X (2022 – 2024)

Misconduct in public office

R v C (2022 – 2023)

Instructed for corporate defendant in bribery prosecution

R v C (2022)

Argument concerning the extra-territorial reach of Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000

Operation Barbados (2022 – 2023)

Cheating the Public Revenue – Missing Trader Fraud

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R v M

Prosecution for insolvency offences

SFO v G (2021)

Investment scheme investigation

BEIS v G (2021 – 2022)

Director's Disqualification Proceedings

R v B (2021)

Corruption and fraud prosecution.

R v C (2021)

Prosecution for misconduct in public office

Re: X (2020-2021)

Advising company directors in a bribery and corruption investigation

Operation Obi-Wan (2020-2021)

Hidden income and Value Added Tax fraud

Operation Tennessine (2019-2020)

Allegations of International £ multi-million banking fraud and money laundering. Leading counsel for the first defendant.

HMRC v CL (2019)

The defence of a company director and restauranteur against allegations of Value Added Tax and Corporation Tax evasion.

North Wales Police v D (2019)

Post acquittal representation of defendant against an application by police for account freezing and forfeiture orders.

BEIS v K (2018)

Defence counsel for the leading defendant in a prosecution brought on behalf of the Insolvency Service. The case concerned the alleged abuse of a series of limited and the creditors voluntary liquidation scheme in order to evade debts to creditors and to pursue property investment transactions. Large scale confiscation proceedings that followed were defeated entirely.

Operation Observe (2018)

The successful defence of a businessman accused of fraud and money laundering. The prosecution alleged his involvement in an high value conspiracy to defraud members of the public through the offering for sale of

tickets to sporting events. The case received widespread publicity both before and during trial (see here).

R v J (2018)

Mis-selling of investment products.

T v T (2018)

The successful defence of a businessman against a private prosecution brought by an ex-business partner accusing him of fraud and misuse of the letter of credit scheme.

The proceedings arose out of an international action brought in the High Court by a contractual counterparty.

NCA v E (2018)

Instructed for the respondent in Part V (High Court) Civil Recovery Proceedings.

Operation Dogstar (2018)

The successful defence of a City worker accused of participation in fraudulent equity release loan applications and mortgage fraud.

NCA v D (2017)

Instructed for the respondent in Part V (High Court) and Part VI (Tax Tribunal) Civil Recovery Proceedings.

Operation Cotton (2015-2017)

Leading Junior representing a defendant accused of conspiracy to defraud arising out of the operation of a collective investment scheme, the largest land banking scheme prosecution brought by the FCA.

R v A (2017)

International fraud and £12m money laundering operation.

R v V (2017)

Representing a businessman accused of a series of frauds on investors, the public revenue and government institutions.

R v C (2017)

Investment fraud involving the sale of carbon credits to the public.

R v DS (2015)

The successful defence of a Barclays employee against allegations of money laundering arising out of an investigation by the Hi-tech crime unit into a series of multi million pound frauds.

Operation Isidor (2015)

Representing a property developer accused of involvement in a long running money laundering and mortgage fraud conspiracy with allegations of involvement in organised crime.

Operation Vara (2014)

£15m international gold smuggling duty and VAT fraud.

Criminal Defence

Ranked as a leader in Crime by both the Legal 500 and Chambers & Partners for a number of years Leon is a highly experienced and committed defence advocate. He has a wide ranging and diverse defence practice with its roots in defending in cases involving serious and organised crime. His current practice has a heavy bias on defending those accused of serious financial misconduct. He is however regularly instructed to appear in cases of homicide and serious violence, rape and other serious sexual offending where specialist witness handling of vulnerable complainants is called for, drug and human trafficking, computer hacking and cases brought under the Modern Slavery Act.

In addition Leon continues to represent police officers accused of a variety of criminal offences, from perverting the course of justice to driving offences to violent crime to attempted poisoning. These are invariably cases where the allegations – regardless of gravity – have very serious consequences for the reputation and careers of those on trial. Leon's cross-discipline experience in both criminal and regulatory fields allows him to provide specialist advice to police officers under investigation.

Recent Instructions:

R v UC (2023)

Forensic scientist accused of misconduct in public office. Press coverage: BBC | The Times

R v H (2023)

Murder – Shooting.

R v J (2022)

Appeal to High Court in Kenya to overturn conviction for human trafficking. Press coverage here.

R v B (2022)

£12m sterling counterfeiting conspiracy.

R v A (2022)

Murder 'Joint enterprise' stabbing.

R v F (2022)

Prosecution following a fatal accident involving death of off duty police officer.

R v B (2022)

Stalking, revenge pornography and voyeurism prosecution.

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R v C (2022)

Child cruelty.

R v R (2021)

Murder.

R v M (2021)

Prosecution of bank worker for alleged sexual offences following a vigilante group ‘sting’ operation.

R v S (2021)

Child cruelty.

R v H (2020)

Murder – stabbing.

R v U (2020)

Murder ‘Joint enterprise’ stabbing.

R v X (2020)

Police officers accused of perverting the course of justice.

R v D (2019)

The successful defence of an individual accused of modern slavery offences.

NCA v S (2019)

Leading junior for the defence in the largest prosecution brought for importation and production of anabolic steroids (BBC report here).

R v K (2019)

Representing a man accused of being a ‘high society drug dealer’. The case received widespread publicity following conviction (The Times report here).

R v A (2018)

The defendant was a footballer who had been extradited to face an allegation of rape that was, by the time of trial, years old. The case required careful and considered cross examination of a number of witnesses – both complainant and those to whom she complained at the time – and legal argument as to capacity to consent. The defendant was unanimously acquitted by the jury.

R v W (2018)

The successful defence of a businessman who had been accused of a serious sexual assault by a woman with whom he was in a casual sexual relationship.

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R v C (2018)

Representing the lead defendant in a very large scale conspiracy to pervert the course of justice.

R v Rooney (2017 – 2019)

The largest slavery prosecution brought to date against 11 members of the same extended family. The case was widely reported by the media once reporting restrictions were lifted (see one of the BBC reports here). Leon's client was one of only two who did not receive prison sentences for his role in the overall criminality. Leon is presently instructed to defend in a series of other cases involving allegations of slavery.

R v Various (2010- 2020)

Representing a series of building firms and sole traders accused of being 'rogue traders', in prosecutions brought across England and Wales by a variety of local authorities. These cases require the expert cross examination of surveyors and other construction experts as to the need for the construction work, its quality and market price.

R v F (2018)

Murder: the killing of a French tourist on a London street by a man heavily under the influence of cocaine.

R v M (2018)

Representing a coach driver accused of causing death by careless driving following a collision in Central London.

Criminal Regulatory

Leon provides advice to and represents corporate and professional/director clients in all types of Health and Safety at Work Act, Planning and Environmental Act cases and has a broad experience of defending in a wide range of regulatory prosecutions. He also represents corporate and private firearm and shotgun licence holders in appeals.

Recent Instructions:

Serious Injury

R v D

This criminal prosecution arose from the very serious injury to and blinding of a man employed by the defendant company to service and repair motor vehicles.

General Health and Safety

R v B

Defence of company director accused a series of offences contrary to the Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regulations 2013.

R v C

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Defending a private individual in a prosecution brought against a caravan site for breaches of the Health and Safety at Work Act arising out of the unsafe storage and maintenance of gas cylinders and appliances.

R v X Ltd

Defence of a company accused of breaches of the Work at Height Regulations.

Endangered Species

R v N (2018), R v S (2019), R v S (2022)

Instructed for the defence in three separate cases where private individuals were charged with breaches of the Control of Trade in Endangered Species Regulations 1997. The defendants had, either using various internet forums (Ebay and Instagram) or in retail trade purchased and then sold or offered for sale clothing made from pelts and skins and hair of endangered species. Those species were listed in the annexes to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). In two cases the defendants faced further charges brought under the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 for the fraudulent evasion of the regulation of the trade, and the fraudulent evasion of import and export duty. Non-custodial sentences were achieved in all three cases.

Planning Enforcement

R v X Ltd

Defending the Company and its directors in proceedings brought by the local authority for breaches of Town and Country Planning Act 1990, through the operation of a Shisha café

R v C and P Ltd

Defending both the company and its director in protracted confiscation proceedings arising out of historic breaches of planning notices.

R v P

A prosecution brought by the Environment Agency and the local authority for long term abuse of the regulations and serial breaches of enforcement notices over the operation of an unlicensed waste disposal system on green belt land. The case involved protracted legal argument and confiscation proceedings thereafter.

Labour

R v S

Defending a company director against allegations brought by the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority.

Environmental

R v E Ltd

A prosecution of a waste management company for serial breaches of the Environmental Permitting Regulations 2010 and for misconduct in insolvency proceedings.

R v X Ltd

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Defended both the company and its director for breaches of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 involving the unsafe disposal of asbestos.

Explosives and Firearms

R v A Ltd

The defence of a company with branches nationwide, accused of failing properly to store fireworks for sale.

R v E & B Ltd

Advice to and representation of a firearms manufacturing company in a protracted licensing dispute with the Metropolitan Police.

R v Various

Representation of private individuals in appeals to the Crown Court against the revocation of their shotgun/firearms licences by local police forces.

Private Prosecution

Graded at Grade 3 by the Crown Prosecution Service and with experience of prosecuting a wide variety of cases Leon Kazakos also advises on the bringing of private prosecutions in cases where the CPS have declined to prosecute.

Recent Instructions:

Re: J

Advice on the bringing of a private prosecution of a then serving cabinet minister for expenses fraud.

Re: G

Advice on the bringing of a private prosecution for a suspected fraud perpetrated by an insurance company against a contracting supplier.

Re: C

Advice on the bringing of a private prosecution of an insolvency practitioner (Administrator) for fraud in the conduct of a company's affairs.

Re: M

Advice to the defendant in civil proceedings about the bringing of a private prosecution for perjury.

Re: D

Advice on the bringing of a private prosecution for assault in the context of a divorce.

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Professional Discipline

Leon provides advice to and represents police officers and HMRC officers in professional disciplinary matters.

Recent Instructions:

AA v PC K

The officer was accused of discreditable conduct, of a breach of the Data Protection Act and of acting in breach if the standards of confidentiality after sharing information about an arrest with a colleague, information that then reached the victim of the incident.

The Appropriate Authority had argued that dismissal was the only suitable outcome after a contested hearing. Having heard argument the Panel were persuaded – despite characterising the behaviour as gross misconduct- that the officer should receive a final written warning, thus remaining in employment.

MP v Q

The successful defence of a police detective accused of a series of allegations of gross misconduct: including allegations of dishonesty. All allegations of dishonesty were found to be groundless with a large proportion of the case against the accused officer being stayed for abuse of process.

Re: B

Advising an accountant [whose clients include household name celebrities] facing an investigation in respect of both tax advice given and the operation of a tax avoidance scheme.

Re: JS

Advising an officer of HMRC facing disciplinary proceedings brought for suspected evasion/non declaration of Stamp Duty Land Tax arising out of his operation of a business undeclared to his employer.

Tax

An indirect tax evasion specialist Leon advises and represents individuals and companies who wish to appeal the decisions of HMRC to withhold input tax or to assess duty claims. He is also increasingly instructed at an early stage by companies who have become – or are concerned they may become – the subject of HMRC investigations. He appears before the First and Upper Tier Tax Tribunals, usually but not exclusively where dishonesty is alleged by HMRC. He brings his significant experience in defending in the criminal courts in tax and duty fraud to these cases along with a full understanding of the significant body of case law that has developed in the area of Missing Trader Fraud, and the developing position in the DOTAS regime.

Recent Instructions (2019 – 2020):

Leon is presently instructed to advise and represent corporates in a series of appeals to the FTT concerning:

Value Added Tax disputes (including Missing Trader Fraud)

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The Construction Industry Scheme
The Alcohol Wholesalers Registration Scheme
The Disclosure of Tax Avoidance Scheme (DOTAS) Regime
The Promotion of Tax Avoidance Scheme (POTAS) Regime
'Missing Trader' Value Added Tax disputes.

Accreditations

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Appointments & Memberships

- Advocacy Trainer (Lincoln's Inn)
- South Eastern Circuit
- Criminal Bar Association
- Fraud Lawyers Association
- Association of Regulatory and Disciplinary Lawyers
- Financial Services Lawyers Association
- Revenue Bar Association
- Private Prosecution Association

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