



PRESS RELEASE

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## **LAPG announces winners of the 2024 Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year awards**

**Solicitor behind legal challenges that halted flights to Rwanda named as winner of Outstanding Achievement award.**

**Former MP Karen Buck honoured for commitment to legal aid and housing justice with a Special Award from LAPG Board.**

**Toufique Hossain**, Director of Public Law at Duncan Lewis Solicitors, has been named as winner of the top accolade that the Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year judges can give, in recognition of a string of successful legal challenges to the Rwanda scheme.

The Rwanda case was described by LALY24 compere broadcaster Symeon Brown as 'more highly contested than probably any other litigation'. What was a Conservative Party flagship policy is now expected to be scrapped by the incoming Labour government.

(Full list of LALY winners is below)

**Dame Karen Buck**, the former MP for Westminster North, who stood down before the 4 July election, was presented with a Special Award by LAPG's Board in recognition of her commitment to legal aid and housing justice, and for being the driving force behind the Homes (Fitness for Habitation) Act 2018.

LAPG co-chair Jenny Beck KC (Hon) described Karen Buck as 'a warrior for social justice'. Adding: 'She is a constituency MP who really understands the importance of decent, safe, secure and suitable housing, and even more unusually, also understands what legal aid lawyers do and why it matters.'

This is only the sixth time in the 22 year history of the LALYs that the Board has made an award of this kind.

The climax of the ceremony in central London on 5 July was the Outstanding Achievement award. The LALY judges said the Rwanda litigation had required from Toufique Hossain and his team 'not just legal brilliance, but relentless speed, dogged determination, unshakeable tenacity, some sheer bloody-mindedness - and also personal courage in the face of political and media attacks'.



Accepting the award, Toufique said there had been times during the case when 'the pressure, the political climate seemed unbearable'. He went on to describe the Rwanda policy as 'incompetent, cruel, an affront to the rule of law and to basic human dignity'.

Also honoured by the LALY judges was **Sophie Naftalin** from Bhatt Murphy, who was named winner in the Public Law category. Sophie was praised as 'a trailblazer and force to be reckoned with' for her work with the families of women killed by abusive partners or who have taken their own lives following abuse. Sophie represented the family of Kellie Sutton to successfully challenge an initial inquest finding that Kellie died by suicide. In an unprecedented ruling, a new inquest found that although Kellie's death was self-inflicted, it was caused by domestic abuse, so as to constitute the criminal offence of manslaughter.

For further info and photos, contact LAPG CEO Chris Minnoch: [chris.minnoch@lapg.co.uk](mailto:chris.minnoch@lapg.co.uk)

Full list of winners, below:

**1. Legal Aid Newcomer**

Ollie Persey - Garden Court Chambers

**2. Legal Aid Support Staffer/Support Team**

Family Billing Team - AFG LAW

**3. Housing Law**

Rose Pritchard - Community Law Partnership

**4. Family Legal Aid incl. Children's Rights**

Jenny Newton - TV Edwards

**5. Criminal Defence**

Amy Cox - Sonn Macmillan Walker Solicitors

**6. Legal Aid Barrister**

Mani Singh Basi - 4PB

**7. Legal Aid Firm/Not-for-Profit Agency**

Public Interest Law Centre

**8. Regional Legal Aid Firm/Not-for-Profit Agency**

TRP Solicitors

**9. Social Welfare Law**

Esme Madill - Islington Law Centre

**10. Disability Rights**

Tam Gill - Gledhill Gill Solicitors



**11. Public Law**

Sophie Naftalin - Bhatt Murphy

**12. Outstanding Achievement**

Toufique Hossain - Duncan Lewis

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**13. LAPG Board Special Award**

Dame Karen Buck

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