

Karim Ghaly KC

Call: 2001 | Silk: 2017

"...often said to be one of the very top talents of his generation."

The Legal 500



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Karim Ghaly KC specialises in the litigation and arbitration of substantial commercial disputes in the fields of construction and engineering, energy and natural resources, infrastructure, insurance, maritime projects and PPP/PFI.

He has acted as counsel, arbitrator or adjudicator in complex disputes arising out of projects in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, the Middle East, North America, South America and the UK.

Karim is recognised as one of the leading advocates in his areas of practice. He is recommended for Commercial Dispute Resolution, Construction, Energy and Natural Resources, International Arbitration, PPP/PFI and Professional Negligence by Chambers and Partners, Chambers Global, The Legal 500, The Legal 500 Middle East and Who's Who Legal.

Karim was named 'Construction Silk of the Year' at The Legal 500 Middle East and North Africa Awards 2026.

Expertise

Construction, Engineering & Infrastructure Disputes

"Karim is flawlessly prepared, incredibly trustworthy and an all-round star." Chambers Global 2024: Construction

"Karim's advocacy skills are unparalleled. His cross-examination technique delivers deathly blows." Legal 500 Middle East 2024: Construction

Karim represents governments, private employers, developers, contractors and professionals in disputes arising out of significant and complex construction, engineering and infrastructure projects across the world.

Cases of note:

- Represented the state-owned employer in a US\$1 billion dispute arising out of the construction of a new airport terminal and runway in the UAE. Issues included delay, disruption and variations. ICC Arbitration/UAE law.

Atkin Chambers

- Represented a Caribbean state in a US\$500m infrastructure dispute. Issues included structural defects, adequacy of seismic design, delay/disruption and variations. ICC Arbitration/English and NY law.
- Represented the main contractor JV in a US\$500m dispute arising out of the termination of a contract for the construction of a horse racing stadium in the UAE. ICC Arbitration/UAE law.
- Represented a state-owned SPV in a US\$150m dispute arising out of the construction of a desalination plant in the Middle East. ICC Arbitration/Omani law.
- Represented the employer in a US\$120m dispute arising out of the construction of a mixed-use development in Qatar. Issues included delay, disruption and defects. ICC Arbitration/Qatari law.
- Represented the MEP subcontractor in a US\$100m dispute arising out of an airport construction project in Oman. Issues included delay, the interpretation of the variation provisions and the applicability of the "back-to-back" provisions of the subcontract. ICC Arbitration/Omani law.
- Represented the employer in a US\$70m dispute arising out of the construction of a palace in Qatar. Issues included entitlement to terminate under Qatari law, delay, variations and defective works. ICC Arbitration/Qatari law.
- Represented the subcontractor in a US\$50m prolongation and variations claim arising out of a marine infrastructure project in Chile. Issues included delay, disruption and entitlement to payment for variations. ICC Arbitration/English and Swiss law.
- Represented the main contractor in two related US\$50m disputes, concerning the curtain walling to two of the tallest towers in Downtown Dubai. Issues included delay, disruption, variations, defects, the right to omit works and the applicability of the "back-to-back" provisions of the subcontract. DIAC Arbitration/UAE law.
- *FM Conway v The Rugby Football Union* [2023] EWCA Civ 418 – represented the contractor in an English Court of Appeal case arising from infrastructure works to Twickenham Stadium.
- Represented the developer in a US\$50m dispute arising out of a housing development in Bahrain. Issues included delay, disruption, defects and the enforceability of the LD provisions under Bahraini law. ICC Arbitration/Bahraini law.
- Represented the Indonesian shipyard in a rig-building dispute. Issues included liability for delay and entitlement to call upon the advance payment guarantees. SCMA Arbitration/Singapore law.
- Represented the main contractor in a dispute arising out of a major road building project in England. Issues included interpretation of the variation provisions of the contract and liability for defects. Adjudication.
- *Iliffe v Feltham Construction* [2015] EWCA Civ 715 – represented the main contractor in an English Court of Appeal case arising out of fire damage to the permanent and temporary works during construction.
- *Greenwich Millennium Village v Essex Services Group Plc* [2014] EWCA Civ 960 – represented the subcontractor in an English Court of Appeal case arising out of water damage to an apartment block.
- Represented the main contractor in a defective works dispute arising out of a light rail project in the UK. Adjudication.
- *Arabtec Construction LLC v Ultra Fuji International LLC* (CFI 004/2007) – represented the main contractor in the first construction dispute in the DIFC Court, concerning the construction of DIFC Gate Village. DIFC law.

Energy

"It is simply beautiful to watch him in action at cross-examination." Legal 500 2024: Energy

"A sharp intellect and incredibly hard-working". Chambers Global 2024: Energy and Natural Resources

Karim's work in this sector encompasses a range of industries including oil and gas, power generation, wind, solar, biofuel, electricity, onshore and offshore energy infrastructure, mining and water. He deals with issues ranging from JOA disputes (and JV disputes generally), PSA disputes, construction disputes, storage disputes and rig hire disputes. He represents and advises a diverse client base, ranging from national oil companies to institutional investors to specialist contractors.

Cases of note:

- Represented the contractor in a US\$650m dispute arising out of the construction and operation of a combined-cycle gas power plant in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. PCA Arbitration/KSA law.
- Represented a national oil company in a US\$500m claim/counterclaim concerning the redevelopment of an oil refinery. ICC Arbitration/English and NY law.
- *Resource Recovery Solutions v Derbyshire County Council & Derby City Council* [2023] EWHC 708 (TCC) – represented the public

- sector partners in £170m TCC dispute arising out of a PPP agreement for the provision and operation of an Energy from Waste plant.
- Acted for the operator and JV partners in a US\$200m dispute concerning defective tubing installed in water injection wells in an oil field offshore West Africa.
 - Represented the buyer in a US\$150m dispute arising out of a water purchase agreement and the related IWP. ICC Arbitration/Omani law.
 - Acted for the operator in a US\$100m dispute concerning the delayed construction of the deepwater infrastructure for a gas field in the South China Sea.
 - Represented the contractor in a US\$100m claim/counterclaim relating to the construction of a combined-cycle gas power plant in the Middle East. ICC Arbitration.
 - Represented the main contractor in a US\$75m dispute concerning delay to the construction of pipeline in the UAE. DIAC Arbitration/UAE law.
 - Acted for the operator in a US\$50m JOA dispute arising out of an African offshore oil and gas project. Issues included approval of joint operations and scope of operator's authority.
 - Represented the main contractor in a US\$50 claim arising out the construction of an LNG terminal in Chile. ICC Arbitration/English and Swiss law.
 - Represented the main contractor in a dispute arising out of a power generation project in Nigeria. ICC Arbitration.
 - Acted for the main contractor in a dispute concerning the construction of a desalination plant in Singapore.
 - *Stena Oilfield Services Limited v Tullow Ghana* – represented Tullow in a Commercial Court dispute arising out a contract for the provision of a drilling rig for a project offshore Ghana.
 - Represented a UK PPP in a £25m dispute concerning an offshore wind turbine drive train testing facility. Adjudication.

Insurance & Reinsurance

He is extremely clever and has an amazing work ethic." Chambers Global 2024: Commercial Dispute Resolution

"Incredibly bright with excellent advocacy and cross-examination skills." Legal 500 Middle East 2024: Commercial

Karim undertakes a range of insurance work including disputes over issues of coverage, non-disclosure, misrepresentation and breach of warranty.

He has substantial experience of contractors' all risks, professional indemnity and property insurance disputes arising from construction and engineering, infrastructure and energy projects.

Cases of note:

- *The Rugby Football Union v FM Conway Limited* [2022] EWHC 956 (TCC); *FM Conway v The Rugby Football Union* [2023] EWCA Civ 418 – represented FM Conway in a dispute which raised questions as to the scope of the co-insurance defence under an "all risks" project policy, the means by which identified and unidentified parties participate in a project policy and a contractor's insurable interest in the project property after the completion of its works.
- Represented the underwriter in a £50m marine cargo coverage dispute. Ad hoc Arbitration/English law.
- Represented the underwriter in a property insurance coverage dispute. LCIA Arbitration/English law.
- Acted for an NHS Trust in a dispute arising out of the insurance arrangements under a PFI agreement. Adjudication.

International Arbitration

"The best compliment I can pay him is that it's like working with a chess player who's already planned their moves several steps ahead of you or anyone else – he is a brilliant strategist, ferociously hard-working and a charmer." Chambers & Partners 2024: International Arbitration

"Karim's advocacy is at an altogether other level and his ability to score points in cross-examination is unrivalled." Chambers & Partners 2024: International Arbitration

The majority of Karim's work over the past 20 years has involved the resolution of substantial and complex international commercial disputes. He has acted as counsel or arbitrator in disputes arising out of contracts governed by, or subject to, the laws of states in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, North America and South America.

Cases of note:

- ICC Arbitration – represented the state-owned employer in a US\$1 billion dispute arising out of the construction of a new airport terminal and runway in the UAE. UAE law.
- ICC Arbitration – represented a national oil company in a US\$500m claim/counterclaim concerning the redevelopment of an oil refinery in the Caribbean.
- ICC Arbitration – represented the main contractor in a US\$500m termination dispute arising out of the construction of a landmark sports and civil infrastructure project in the Middle East.
- ICC Arbitration – represented the employer in a US\$120m dispute arising out of a contract for the provision of development management services to a Qatari developer. Qatari law.
- ICC Arbitration – represented the MEP subcontractor in a US\$100m dispute arising out of an airport construction project in Oman. Omani law.
- DIAC Arbitration – represented the main contractor in a US\$75m dispute concerning delay to the construction of pipeline in the UAE. UAE law.
- ICC Arbitration – represented the employer in a US\$70m dispute arising out of the construction of a palace in Qatar. Qatari law.
- DIAC Arbitration – acted for the main contractor in a US\$70m dispute arising out of the construction of two mixed-use towers in Dubai. UAE law.
- ICC Arbitration – represented the developer in a US\$50m dispute arising out of a housing development in Bahrain. Bahraini law.
- DIAC Arbitration – represented the main contractor in two related US\$50m disputes, concerning the curtain walling to two of the tallest towers in Downtown Dubai. UAE law.
- LCIA Arbitration – represented the underwriter in a property insurance coverage dispute. English law.
- SCMA Arbitration – represented a shipyard in a US\$50m dispute concerning the construction of a semi-submersible platform in Indonesia. Singapore law.

PPP / PFI

"Karim Ghaly is an absolute delight." Chambers Global 2024: Commercial Dispute Resolution

"Noted for his deep understanding of the mechanisms of PFI and PPP disputes." Chambers Global 2024: Construction

Karim has extensive experience of international PPP and UK PPP/PFI disputes. He has represented funders, public sector partners, projectcos and contractors. He has a deep knowledge of the issues that commonly arise in such projects, including the operation of payment mechanisms, benchmarking and market testing, SFPs and unavailability, termination and valuation on termination and funders' step-in rights. Karim has acted in PPP/PFI projects concerning hospitals, power generation facilities, roads, social housing and waste facilities.

Cases of note:

- *Resource Recovery Solutions v Derbyshire County Council & Derby City Council* [2023] EWHC 708 (TCC) – represented the public sector partners in £170m TCC dispute arising out of a PPP agreement for the provision and operation of an Energy from Waste plant.
- Acted as adjudicator in a £20m NHS PFI dispute arising out of alleged construction defects and maintenance failures. Issues included the operation of the payment mechanism, the correct operation of the helpdesk procedure, the scope of PPM and RM.
- Represented the funders of an NHS PFI Project in a dispute arising out of a ProjectCo Event of Default.
- Represented a road infrastructure PFI ProjectCo in a dispute over the scope of the reactive maintenance obligation and the operation of the PA payment mechanism. Adjudication.
- Represented a London NHS Trust in a dispute with ProjectCo over the operation of the PA payment mechanism. Adjudication.
- Represented a Greater Manchester social housing PFI ProjectCo in a dispute concerning the scope of its refurbishment obligations under the PA. Adjudication.

- Represented a waste PFI contractor in a dispute over the operation of the PA variation mechanism. Adjudication.
- Represented a West Midlands PFI ProjectCo in a series of disputes over its liability for unavailability deductions relating to fire safety issues and its ability to pass such deductions down to its construction and FM service subcontractors. Adjudication.
- Represented a Bahraini PPP ProjectCo in a US\$20m dispute arising out of a social housing PPP project in the Middle East. ICC Arbitration.
- Represented ProjectCo in a £70m dispute arising out of a social housing PFI project. Adjudication.
- Represented a Midlands NHS Trust in a dispute over its entitlement to levy deductions due to ProjectCo's failure to properly maintain the hospital MEP systems.
- Represented a North Eastern NHS PFI ProjectCo in a dispute over the Trust's entitlement to levy deductions for failings in the provision of the estates services.
- Represented a Greater Manchester NHS Trust in a £15m dispute over its entitlement to levy unavailability deductions relating to defective passive fire and smoke protection. Adjudication.
- Represented a South Eastern NHS Trust in a dispute over the correct operation of the PA variation mechanism.
- *Barts Health NHS Trust v Capital Hospitals Limited* – represented ProjectCo in a Commercial Court dispute concerning the omission of services.

Arbitrator

"Karim is one of the smartest members of the construction Bar, with a work ethic to match." Legal 500 2025: International arbitration: Arbitrators

Karim has acted as both presiding and co-arbitrator in a wide range of construction and commercial disputes.

Recent Arbitral Appointments:

- Party-nominated arbitrator in a US\$1.5 billion delay/disruption dispute between the employer and main contractor, arising out of the construction of a landmark shopping mall in the UAE. LCIA Arbitration/UAE law.
- Presiding arbitrator in a US\$80m dispute concerning the construction of a resort hotel in the UAE. DIAC Arbitration/UAE law.
- Party-nominated arbitrator in a petroleum storage dispute. Issues included whether the product characteristics were within the relevant port limits and whether the terminal had fulfilled its duties. DIAC Arbitration/UAE law.
- Party-nominated arbitrator in a US\$60m commercial dispute arising out of a long-term services agreement. ICC Arbitration/English law.
- Party-nominated arbitrator in a dispute concerning the construction of a mixed-use development in Qatar. ICC Arbitration/Qatari law.
- Party-nominated arbitrator in a dispute concerning the construction of a healthcare facility in the UAE. Issues included delay and variations. DIAC Arbitration/UAE law.

Qualifications and Awards

- Oxford University, St Edmund Hall: BA Jurisprudence, First Class (1995 – 1998)

Scholarships:

- St Edmund Hall Scholarship
- Princess Royal Scholarship, Inner Temple

Recent Recommendations

Karim is recommended by Chambers & Partners, Chambers Global, the Legal 500, the Legal 500 Middle East and Who's Who Legal in the following areas of practice:

- Commercial Dispute Resolution
- Construction
- Energy and Natural Resources
- International Arbitration
- PPP/PFI
- Professional Negligence

Karim's most recent quotes include:

"His cross-examination is incredible, and he has a complete grasp of the factual background to the case. He's really very impressive."
Commercial Dispute Resolution, Chambers UK Bar 2026

"Karim Ghaly is the best barrister I have worked with. He is incredibly effective at cross-examination."
Construction, Chambers UK Bar 2026

"Karim Ghaly was very user-friendly, and it was clear that he quickly got to grips with the technical elements of the claim. The decision was technically good and well reasoned."

"Karim is very able, good with clients and a very nice bloke."
Construction: Professional Negligence, Chambers UK Bar 2026

"Karim is absolutely amazing. His cross-examination is incredible, and he has a complete grasp of the factual background to the case."
Energy & Natural Resources, Chambers UK Bar 2026

"Karim is a legal genius. He is approachable and very easy to work with."
International Arbitration: Construction/Engineering, Chambers UK Bar 2026

"Clients liken Karim to a chess player – always several steps ahead of everyone else in the room. Extraordinary strategist, tenacious and pugnacious on his feet, and fantastic work-rate."
Construction, The Legal 500 2026

"Karim is a highly competent barrister offering excellent advocacy, strategy and most importantly, the ability to connect with the arbitrators. He's someone a party wouldn't want on his opposite side given his ability to get down to the details and find points appear to be seamlessly diminish the other side's case."
International Arbitration: Counsel, The Legal 500 2026

A full list of recommendations can be provided on request.

Appointments & Memberships

- Chartered Institute of Arbitrators
- London Court of International Arbitration
- International Council for Arbitration
- Technology and Construction Bar Association Committee Member

- Commercial Bar Association Africa Committee Member
- Society of Construction Law
- Fellow of the Society for Advanced Legal Studies, University of London