

Lawyer of the week Tessa Gregory

Tessa Gregory, a partner at Leigh Day, acted for six refugee families stranded on a British military base in Cyprus for 20 years. Shortly before a final Supreme Court hearing, the Home Office granted the families indefinite leave to enter the UK for permanent residence “on an exceptional basis outside the immigration rules” under the Immigration Act 1971.

What were the main challenges in this case?

When we were first instructed, in early 2015, our clients had spent 16 years living on the base — we had to grapple with the constitutional and legal complexity of



the case and had to get to grips with years of evidence, including previous proceedings and an ever-changing relationship between the base and the Republic of Cyprus. We were the families’ final hope.

What’s the best decision you’ve taken? Moving into human rights and environmental law. It is a privilege to work in an area where political, personal and professional beliefs align.

Who has inspired you? Many colleagues and clients; my dad, a philosophy lecturer with a law degree who first taught me law; and all of my

family — most recently my two-year-old daughter, who can’t pronounce “lawyer” and is often heard to say proudly: “My mumma is a liar.”

What’s the funniest thing that has happened to you? Coming out of the Special Immigration Appeals Commission to make a press statement alongside my client Ekaterina Zatuliveter, who was wrongly accused of being a Russian spy, to be greeted by a cameraman shouting: “Get that woman out of the way.” “That woman” was me and it was all caught on national television.

What’s the best advice you’ve received? Always get the right team in place. Without the incredible work of counsel — Raza Husain, QC,

Tom Hickman, Jason Pobjoy and Eddie Craven, and former colleague Frank Conway — the families would never have got this result.

Which three qualities should a lawyer have? Good judgment, a sense of humour and dogged determination.

What law would you enact? Outlaw the roll-out of Universal Credit. It is decimating lives across the country.

How would you like to be remembered? As a good mum, a decent lawyer and an outstanding tambourine player.

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