

Honorary Professor of Law

A Citation


The Right Honourable Lord Woolf of Barnes

LLB (Lond.); Hon LLD (Buckingham, Brist., Lond., Anglia PU, Manc. Met., Hull, Cran., Richmond, Cantab, Oxon, Exe., Birm., Wolv.); Hon FBA; Hon Fellow, Academy of Medical Sciences;
Judge of the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal; President of the Court of the Financial Centre, Qatar

The Right Honourable Lord Woolf of Barnes is one of the world's most distinguished jurists today. As a judge of the High Court of Justice from 1979 to 1986, a Lord Justice of Appeal from 1986 to 1992, a Lord of Appeal in Ordinary from 1992 to 1996, then Master of the Rolls from 1996 until 2000, and Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales from 2000 until 2005, Lord Woolf's long and distinguished judicial career has left a lasting legacy to the English legal system, particularly in the area of public law. Over this period, Lord Woolf was one of the leading intellectual lights in the development of public law. Lord Woolf's judicial and academic writings are among the most often cited in the courts of the Common Law world. As an academic writer, he was well-known as the Editor of one of the Common Law world's most revered tomes, *De Smith & Woolf's Judicial Review of Administrative Action*. The fact that public law is now such a vibrant branch of the Common Law, affording justice to ordinary citizens whose liberties are increasingly being regulated by the State, owes much to Lord Woolf's intellect, industry and his unwavering belief in the protection of the weak.

Lord Woolf's contribution is not just restricted to jurisprudential development. The *Woolf Report* of 1981 was described, deservedly so, as one of the most enlightened sets of recommendations for penal reform. It fundamentally transformed the way the criminal justice system operated in the United Kingdom, to the lasting benefit of the community. More recently, he pioneered the reform of the civil justice system in England and Wales and introduced changes to the British constitution that have altered the English legal landscape. His 1996 report *Access to Justice*, reforming the civil justice system, is known throughout the Common Law world as "the Woolf Report" and the subsequent implementation of that report, under his leadership, has inspired parallel reform in many Common Law jurisdictions. The Concordat that Lord Woolf negotiated on behalf of the Judiciary with the Government stands as a historical landmark for safeguarding the independence of the Judiciary.

Lord Woolf's distinguished judicial career was preceded by a successful career at the Bar. He was called to the Bar in 1955 by the Inner Temple. After acting as the Revenue Junior for two years, he became First Treasury Counsel in 1974. In this position, known as the "Treasury Devil", Lord Woolf appeared for the then Labour Government in some of the most important cases of the day, involving complex points of law and policy.



Amongst his many distinguished appointments Lord Woolf was Chairman of the Institute for Advanced Legal Studies and was Visitor and is Chairman of the Council of University College London where he is also Visiting Professor of Law. He has served as Pro-Chancellor of London University and has been awarded the honorary degrees of LLD, DSc and DLitt by twelve universities including the Universities of London, Oxford and Cambridge.

The President of the Law Society of England and Wales, in his Valedictory Address upon Lord Woolf's retirement as Lord Chief Justice, was moved to remark that he could not think of any Lord Chief Justice, indeed not any judge, who had so brilliantly combined "leadership, courage, intellect, generosity of spirit, warmth and commitment to public service". This aptly captures the essence of Lord Woolf as the Judge, the Reformer, the Judicial Leader, the Academic and the Man.

Lord Woolf is already well-known to Hong Kong as a Non-Permanent Judge of the Court of Final Appeal to which he brings his immense experience and humanity in helping shape the development of Hong Kong's new jurisprudential order. The Chinese University of Hong Kong is honoured to have among its academic ranks such a towering figure.
