



Complex Environments



**SPECIALIST LEGAL ADVICE AND SUPPORT IN  
COMPLEX AND HOSTILE ENVIRONMENTS**



An aerial photograph of a densely packed, informal settlement. The image shows a central road with several cars parked along both sides. The surrounding buildings are closely packed, with many showing signs of wear and makeshift construction. The overall scene suggests a complex and potentially hostile environment.

**“They are widely regarded as the leading law firm globally that responds to incidents in complex and hostile environments.”**

HFW is an international law firm with a team of over 700 lawyers working in 21 offices across the world.

Our specialist lawyers provide contentious and non-contentious legal advice to clients acting in commercial sectors including logistics, energy & resources, aviation, mining, construction, insurance, reinsurance, commodities, infrastructure, security, international trade, technology and shipping.





## “Their work is crucial, outstanding and depressingly necessary.”

The HFW Complex Environments team is an elite specialist practice group providing legal advice and operational solutions in relation to major incidents and disputes for corporations and their insurers in hostile and complex environments globally. We are trusted by many of the world's leading companies to handle and respond to incidents which pose an existential threat to the company's business, personnel, and reputation.

The team assemble and deploy the required multi-disciplinary expertise, project manage the response, and work side-by-side with clients throughout the lifecycle of an incident, offering legal advice and operational solutions in relation to:

- Major Incident Crisis Response
- War, Terrorism and Political Risk
- Seizure and Detention of People and Property
- Hijacking, Piracy, Kidnapping and Extortion
- Ransom Payments – including funding, logistics and compliance
- Drug Seizures and Smuggling
- Sabotage, Blockade and Civil Commotion
- Evacuation
- Unlawful Killing and Active Shooter
- Confiscation and Expropriation
- Special Projects
- Reputation Management
- Political Detention

We provide solutions to help manage and resolve major incidents in often dynamic and unpredictable regions and environments. The team is frequently called upon to work discretely and confidentially on some of the most high-profile and complex incidents globally, that often make headlines news. We help clients anticipate and mitigate potential liabilities and exposures. Through our agile and pioneering approach, a number of our incident resolution strategy blueprints have become industry standard.

We undertake on-the-ground urgent investigations, preserving and taking evidence to support potential litigation and intervention by authorities. We act as evidence custodians and, backed by legal privilege, we support clients in dealing with the multi-jurisdictional disputes and investigations that often develop after a major incident. The team assists with crucial communications strategy to align public relations, regulatory obligations, and engagement with stakeholders. We often work alongside our clients' internal crisis management team, operational responders, technical advisors, public relations team, brokers, and insurers.

Environmental, social and governance (ESG) principles pervade the team's work. Listed and regulated companies are amongst those who trust us to navigate compliance, anti-money laundering, bribery, terrorism, sanctions and statutory/regulatory notifications, which are particularly prevalent in challenging environments.

The Complex Environments team consists of experienced commercial litigators and specialist counsel with extensive global litigation experience, technical experts with specialist industry knowledge, ex-military personnel with combat experience, former government employees with sector experience and contacts, and media experts who can implement public relations strategies – all drawn from our global network.

The team also has a repertoire of global contacts commensurate with an international law firm which has engaged in crisis management worldwide for over 125 years. We utilise our sector and regional experience, and with our 20+ offices globally, we work across all time zones and provide a 24/7 global response.



Our Experience

- Our team has supported clients with resolution strategies during major incidents worldwide, including in recent times, Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Angola, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Benin, Bulgaria, Egypt, Ecuador, Guinea-Bissau, Indonesia, Iran, Ivory Coast, Libya, Mexico, Nigeria, Philippines, Russia, Somalia, South Africa, Syria, Sudan, Togo, Turkey, Ukraine, Venezuela, and Yemen, making use of our contacts in governments, the military, private military/security, financial institutions, regulatory, and intelligence agencies.
- Over the last 15 years, the team has helped to secure the release of over 2000 hostages and recovered billions of dollars' worth of property, bringing unparalleled experience in all forms of resolution strategy and ransom payment. Richard Neylon, who heads the Complex Environments team, is recognised as the leading lawyer globally in this field.
- We have worked to release personnel, property, vessels, commodities, cargo, artwork, artefacts, and cash, seized or detained by States, de facto authorities, and organised crime.
- We have specialist experience in managing the complex and sensitive response to terrorist incidents, particularly kidnappings and extortion, and we are very familiar with navigating the English Terrorism Act 2000 and international equivalents. We regularly interact with government agencies and law enforcement on these issues.
- We deal with allegations of smuggling, improper licensing, customs violations, interference with sovereign rights and resources, and international maritime boundary disputes.
- We were instructed by the insurers/operators of 25 vessels stranded in Ukrainian ports as a result of the Russia/Ukraine war. The team assisted with the initial crew evacuations and continues to handle complex trading disputes, constructive total loss (CTL)/coverage issues, and sale of post-CTL distressed maritime assets. The team also continues to work to secure the release of vessels, cargo, and other assets that remain stranded in Ukraine and Russia as a result of the war.
- We have worked with clients to develop bespoke claims management structures to deal with the exposures and volume claims that have arisen after major incidents, such as casualties, major loss and natural disasters, including the 2023 Turkey-Syria earthquake.
- We have designed and managed bidder platforms to structure invitations to tender and distressed asset sales, especially following major loss incidents and in hostile environments. In February 2023, we choreographed the distressed sale of 16 stranded vessels which became a total loss in a war zone, arising from the Ukraine/Russia war.
- We are regularly called upon to pursue urgent court applications such as preventative injunctions, freezing injunctions, production orders, anti-suit injunctions, and other protective measures. In a recently reported London High Court anti-suit injunction case, arising from a US\$ 40 million precious metal fraud, we forced our opponents back to London and then defeated their substantive claim.
- We co-founded the Hostage Support Partnership, a pro bono humanitarian organisation that works worldwide to free hostages, particularly those who do not have access to the means or resources to secure their release.
- Richard Neylon and the wider Complex Environments team have won various international awards and accolades from prominent organisations, including commendation and recognition by the United Nations Security Council for pro bono work securing the release of "forgotten hostages".
- The Complex Environments team's cases frequently overlap with HFW's criminal, regulatory, security, and sanctions specialisms, and the team works closely with the firm's Fraud and Insolvency, Global Investigations & Enforcement, Data Protection, and Cyber Security teams.





**For more information about the capabilities of our  
Complex Environments team, please contact:**



**RICHARD NEYLON**

Partner & Head of Complex Environments

**T** +44 (0)20 7264 8100

**M** +44 (0)7786 266919

**E** richard.neylon@hfw.com



**MICHAEL RITTER**

Partner, London

**T** +44 (0)20 7264 8449

**M** +44 (0)7879 604188

**E** michael.ritter@hfw.com



**SIMON MAXWELL**

Associate, London

**T** +44 (0)20 7264 8841

**M** +44 (0)7793 894783

**E** simon.maxwell@hfw.com



**JENNY SALMON**

Legal Director, London

**T** +44 (0)20 7264 850

**M** +44 (0)7827 891101

**E** jenny.salmon@hfw.com



**TUNDE ADESOKAN**

Consultant, Lagos

**M** +44 (0)7879 486925

**M** +234 (0)703 306 0022

**E** tunde.adesokan@hfw.com



**JOHANNA OHLMAN**

Associate, London

**T** +44 (0)20 7264 8835

**M** +44 (0)7970 793939

**E** johanna.ohlman@hfw.com



**PAOLO GHIRARDANI**

Partner, London

**T** +44 (0)20 7264 8090

**M** +44 (0)7831 808027

**E** paolo.ghirardani@hfw.com



**STANISLAS LEQUETTE**

Partner, Paris

**T** +33 1 44 94 40 50

**M** +33 6 84 33 05 22

**E** stanislas.lequette@hfw.com



**GEORGE LAMPLOUGH**

Partner, Hong Kong

**T** +852 3983 7788

**M** +852 9194 6581

**E** george.lamplough@hfw.com



**DIMITRI VASSOS**

Partner, Piraeus

**T** +30 210 429 3978

**M** +30 6 946 288 065

**E** dimitri.vassos@hfw.com



**SAM WAKERLEY**

Partner, Dubai

**T** +971 4 423 0530

**M** +971 50 654 4508

**E** sam.wakerley@hfw.com



**CONOR MCINTOSH**

Associate, London

**T** +44 (0)20 7264 8171

**M** +44 (0)7790 815060

**E** conor.mcintosh@hfw.com



**ELEANOR DUPREZ**

Associate, London

**T** +44 (0)20 7264 8729

**M** +44 (0)7970 7988223

**E** eleanor.duprez@hfw.com



**GINA MCDERMOTT**

Complex Environments Co-Ordinator  
London

**T** +44 (0)20 7264 8769

**M** +44 (0)7483 956200

**E** gina.mcdermott@hfw.com



**Please scan here**

To visit our website

**HFW has over 700 lawyers working in offices across the Americas, Europe,  
the Middle East and Asia Pacific. For further information about our complex  
environments capabilities, please visit [hfw.com/Complex-Environments](https://hfw.com/Complex-Environments).**

© 2025 Holman Fenwick Willan LLP. All rights reserved. Ref: 004236-May-25

Americas | Europe | Middle East | Asia Pacific