

Lawyer of the Week: Per Danielsen

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Per Danielsen, the founding partner of the Oslo firm Danielsen & Co, acts for Suraia Rais, second wife of the man who was the subject of the book *The Bookseller of Kabul* by the Norwegian author Aasne Seierstad.

Mrs Rais was awarded damages by the Oslo District Court of 125,000 kroner (£26,000) for the violation of her privacy by both the author and publisher.

What were the main challenges in this case and possible implications?

The main challenge was to convince the Norwegian court of the strong wind of change in the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), which now protects private life, honour and reputation more than some years back.

One important implication is that the era when the media in one country may publish defamatory allegations about individuals in another country may gradually be over.

Even people in poor countries such as Afghanistan can no longer be treated as if they are without the same human rights as you and me. It is impossible to keep libel and slander hidden in one country as before, thanks to the internet.

What was your worst day as a lawyer?

Losing a libel case before the Norwegian Supreme Court in 2005 by three votes to two.

What was your most memorable experience as a lawyer?



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Winning the same case in Strasbourg four years later, unanimously, after having brought an application before the ECHR against Norway, proving that the majority was wrong.

Who has been the most influential person in your life and why?

Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher have individually and jointly created a better world for all of us to live in. No more Iron Curtain, no more extreme socialism in any European country, only moderate social democracy. Even liberalism is given a chance. Everything is more balanced, thanks to them. Goodbye, communism and extremism!

Why did you become a lawyer?

By fortunate accident. I initially started law school because I did not know what better to do. My only thought was to get a good education.

What would your advice be to anyone wanting a career in law?

That theoretical law school at university sucks; real life is much better.

If you had not become a lawyer, what would you have chosen and why?

I started out as a journalist and writer of editorials in the Norwegian daily *Aftenposten* before I became a lawyer. Instead of practising law, I guess I now would have been an editor — sued by someone like myself, perhaps?

Where do you see yourself in ten years?

Still appearing in court almost every second week all year round.

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