



Why British Expatriates are using Direct Access Barristers in Andalucía Spain

Haresh Sood - Barrister

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A new wave of legal services required

Having spent a significant amount of time in Sevilla, Spain, I have recently read many stories about British expatriates who have been caught in lengthy legal battles predominantly in the south of Spain in Andalucía. A lot of these expats have tried to save their homes from demolition and been subject to stringent Court Orders by the Spanish authorities and Courts. Margaret Townley and Gurney Davey are two of these people who had their homes demolished after being told they were built illegally. In some cases, to avoid the fines for building on illegal land, many people have demolished their own homes themselves which has gotten them into more legal bother.

There have been many people who have campaigned for this very issue such as Muara Hillen (MBE) who is the ex-president of Abusos Urbanísticos Almazora No! This organisation has fought tirelessly to assist expats in dealing with all the legal issues they face when they are abroad stuck in such painstaking legal battles.

Unfortunately, for these people, not only have they faced the sad loss of their life savings and property, they have also had to face the consequences of these legal issues when and if they return to the UK which many people thought they could do.

Over the years I have often dealt with a variety of legal matters for expatriates who are unable to access the UK legal system from their sunny home in Spain. However, these property demolition cases, have brought a new wave of legal issues, especially post Brexit as many try and make their way home after losing their homes.

Many times, these people are left in 'legal limbo' after having severed their ties with UK because when they return, they try and access a system they had stopped paying into. This means they sometimes get embroiled in disputes and complaints with U.K authorities which require expert legal assistance.

The existing problems

Many people who decide to move to Spain, do so for the sun, sea, sand, and sangria to escape from their daily grind which includes cold and rainy weather conditions of the UK. Over the years, I have handled several cases involving expatriates who have moved abroad to either start a new life or escape the back end of legal problems they faced at home. Behind them at home, expatriates often leave several unresolved legal problems which unfortunately rear their ugly head when they least expect them to. Examples of these can be problems with tenants they have in their UK homes, issues with the authorities, or simply having legal Orders varied post a breakdown of a marriage or civil or other contractual relationship. In all these cases, expats have always told me that they have found the service of Direct Access Barristers refreshing who are in Andalucía without the need to hire expensive law firms.

Access to UK Lawyers in Spain

One thing I have noticed in Spain, and in particular Andalucía is that, whilst many law firms exist, it is hard to find a lawyer who can provide easy, cost-effective legal advice to British expats in Spain on UK law. The more time I have spent there, and the more I have engaged with the locals, I have also discovered the Spaniards also want advice on UK matters especially after Brexit and struggle to find lawyers who can assist them in their language.

Accessing advice in isolation

When I have spoken to expats in Spain, most of them have no idea who to turn to. Even though the internet allows people to source lawyers in their local areas back home, some of them have always felt a disconnect to having a good service because their lawyers are not physically present.

Direct Access Barrister service in Andalucía

The growing trend I find is to use direct access barristers who in my experience act as very good consultants also. There are no hidden costs and fancy offices, but simple, good, cost-effective legal advice priced at a manageable and reasonable set of rates.

Conclusion

Whilst I do see that Direct Access Barristers can assist expats in Andalucía, I strongly recommend that clients always consult a Spanish Lawyer if they intend to buy property in Spain, this is one area where it is essential. I have learned that this is something that requires expert knowledge and whilst some people may not use lawyers in Spain, I find it is important people do as you would for any conveyancing in the UK.

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Haresh practices on several Civil matters including Employment and Media law. He is based partly in Sevilla, Spain for expatriates who wish to access legal advice from him living in Andalucía. Haresh speaks fluent Spanish.

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