

Skadden counsel heads to Cadwalader



Melis Acuner

Laura Roddy, 24 May 2018

A counsel at Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom, who successfully represented two UAE energy companies in a dispute with the Iraqi regional government of Kurdistan, has moved to Cadwalader Wickersham & Taft to build its practice in London.

On 17 May, **Melis Acuner** joined the US firm as counsel after spending 10 years at Skadden in London as both associate and counsel, bringing with her associate **Emma Farrow**.

Acuner tells *GAR*, she has “thoroughly enjoyed” enjoyed her time at Skadden and is now “very excited about this chapter in my career.”

“Cadwalader has a terrific brand in disputes and I am looking forward to helping them cement their growing reputation in the international arbitration sphere,” she says.

Jason Halper, head of Cadwalader’s global litigation group in New York, describes Acuner as an “exceptional” lawyer who is highly regarded by her clients and tells *GAR* the firm is “delighted” to welcome her.

“Melis is a key addition for us as we continue to execute our plan to grow our disputes practice in London and expand the firm’s coordinated transatlantic litigation practice,” he says.

Greg Petrick, managing partner of Cadwalader’s London office, says she is “the kind of high-quality, client-focused and entrepreneurial trusted advisor” the firm values.

While working at Skadden, Acuner was part of a team that represented Crescent Petroleum and Dana Gas in an LCIA claim against Kurdistan, winning US\$1.98 billion. The dispute later settled, with Kurdistan agreeing to pay US\$1 billion and grant new oil and gas exploration blocks to the companies.

More recently, she has been instructed by Crescent Petroleum and Dana Gas again in an LCIA claim brought against Hungary's MOL Group.

She has also represented United Capital Partners Group in parallel arbitration and multijurisdictional litigation proceedings relating to interests in Russia's largest social online networking service, VKontakte, which settled in 2014 following the US\$1.47 billion sale of a stake in VK.com Limited to Mail.ru Group Limited.

Before working at Skadden, Acuner was an associate at White & Case in Paris for four years and before that, worked at the now defunct Paris law firm Coudert Brothers, where she advised oil and gas companies on energy arbitrations in Eastern Europe.

In 2016 and 2017, Acuner was named a Future Leader in arbitration by GAR's sister publication, Who's Who Legal. Sources consulted by the publication said she "gets things done and always delivers", "is able to withstand very considerable pressure while maintaining composure and good humour" and "can tell it like it is while retaining the clients' trust and confidence."

She is a member of the ICC Commission on Arbitration.

Acuner is also active in pro bono work on international human rights, most recently leading a team from Skadden in producing a report on the legal rights of women and girl asylum seekers in the European Union with UN Women.

Skadden has yet to respond to a request for comment.

The associate who has accompanied Acuner to Cadwalader, Farrow, began at Skadden in 2011, after completing a Bachelor of Laws at Oxford and has represented oil and gas companies and governments in disputes in the Middle East, Eastern Europe and Africa. She was also part of the team that wrote the report with UN Women.