

A. KAYUM AHMED

EDUCATION

- Feb. 2019 Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in International and Comparative Education
Columbia University, United States
- Sep. 2016 Master of Studies (M.St.) in International Human Rights Law *with distinction*
University of Oxford, United Kingdom
- May 2010 Post-Graduate Diploma in Trade Law and Policy (PgDM) *with distinction*
Graduate School of Business, University of Cape Town, South Africa
- Sep. 2004 Master of Laws (LL.M.) in Public International Law
Leiden University, The Netherlands
- Mar. 2004 Master of Arts (M.A.) in Anthropology *cum laude*
University of the Western Cape, South Africa
- Dec. 2001 Bachelor of Arts (Honors) *with distinction*, Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.) *with distinction*
University of Cape Town, South Africa

WORK EXPERIENCE

- 2026-present **Barnard College**, New York
Human Rights Program
Design and teach interdisciplinary undergraduate courses on human rights theory and practice, equipping students to critically engage contemporary challenges in democracy, justice, inequality, and social transformation through innovative pedagogical approaches that integrate art, music, and experiential learning.
- 2022-2025 **Human Rights Watch**, New York
Special Advisor (2022-2024) & Program Lead, Global Health Initiative (2024-present) 50% part-time
Led Human Rights Watch's global strategy on the right to health and founded the organization's Global Health Initiative, advancing interdisciplinary approaches to health equity, Indigenous rights, environmental justice, and accountability within global health governance.
- 2024-2025 **Fight Inequality Alliance**, Virtual
Lead, Political Education (50% part-time)
Designed and led global political education and leadership programs that strengthened civic engagement and movement-building around economic inequality, social justice, and democratic participation through intersectional and community-centered approaches.
- 2021-2024 **Columbia University School of Public Health**, New York
Assistant Professor
Teach graduate classes in *Health & Human Rights Advocacy*, and *Indigenous Epistemologies and Public Health*, that center decolonial theory, health equity, planetary health, and Indigenous knowledge systems.
- 2018-2022 **Open Society Foundations**, New York
Director: Access & Accountability Division, Public Health Program (2018-2021) & Special Advisor (2021-2022)
Led the Public Health Program's global strategy on access to medicines and oversaw the Division's global health and human rights advocacy campaign on equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines.
- 2010-2015 **South African Human Rights Commission**, Johannesburg
Chief Executive Officer
Provided executive leadership for the strategic implementation of the Commission's constitutional and human rights mandate, overseeing approximately 45,000 cases and leading a national institution of 178 staff across ten offices. Directed major institutional reforms that strengthened governance, modernized complaints systems, and significantly improved public responsiveness and case resolution.
- 2004-2010 **Parliament of South Africa**, Cape Town
Director: Multilateral Relations, International Relations Section
Responsible for providing strategic advice and guidance to the Speaker on diplomatic relations between Parliament and various multilateral institutions including the United Nations and European Parliament.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS (2023-2026)

Books, Articles, and Chapters

A. Kayum Ahmed, *Theorizing Fallism: Rhodes Must Fall and the Global Movement to Decolonize the University*, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS (2026)

A. Kayum Ahmed, “You Can Feel That the Land is in Pain:” Stories from Indigenous Chamorro Activists Resisting US Colonization in Guam, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH (2025)

Yara M. Asi, Bram Wispelwey, Nadia Abuelezam, A. Kayum Ahmed, and Goleen Samari, Racism as a Threat to Palestinian Health Equity, HEALTH EQUITY (2024)

David Kunichoff, A. Kayum Ahmed, Bram Wispelwey, David Mills, Yara Assi, and Weaam Hammoudeh, Assessing the geospatial proximity of craters from highly destructive bombs to hospitals in the Gaza Strip from October 7th to November 17th, 2023, PLOS (2024)

Bram Wispelwey, David Mills, Yara Assi, Weaam Hammoudeh, David Kunichoff, and A. Kayum Ahmed, Are civilian lives being spared in Gaza? Mortality data during the first stage of war, Oct 7-Nov 24, 2023, BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL, GLOBAL HEALTH (2024)

Yara Asi, David Mills, Gregg Greenough, Dennis Kunichoff, Saira Khan, Jamon Van Den Hoek, Corey Scher, Osama Tannous, Sawsan Abdulrahim, Nadine Bahour, Bram Wispelwey, Weeam Hammoudeh, and A. Kayum Ahmed, *Nowhere and no one is safe’: Spatial analysis of damage to critical civilian infrastructure in the Gaza Strip during the first phase of the Israeli military campaign, 7 October to 22 November 2023*, CONFLICT & HEALTH JOURNAL (2024)

Gillian MacNaughton and A. Kayum Ahmed, *Economic Inequality and the Right to Health: On Neoliberalism, Corporatization, and Coloniality*, HEALTH & HUMAN RIGHTS JOURNAL (2023)

A. Kayum Ahmed, Julia Bleckner, & Kyle Knight, *COVID-19 Showcased Failed Global Cooperation*, HARVARD SYMPOSIUM CO-EDITED BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS AND THE GLOBAL HEALTH LAW CONSORTIUM (2023)

A. Kayum Ahmed, Joe Baker, & Hadrien Coumans, *Wïlamàlsëwakàn [Good Health]: Reimagining the Right to Health through Lenape Epistemologies*, HEALTH & HUMAN RIGHTS JOURNAL (2023)

A. Kayum Ahmed, *Toward multiplanetary existence? The human rights obligations of corporations on Mars*, OPEN GLOBAL RIGHTS (2023)

A. Kayum Ahmed, *A Proper ‘Pandemic Treaty’ Would Value Universal Access Over Profit*, OPENDEMOCRACY (2023)

VISITING, BOARD & COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

Current **Board Member**, Initiative for Access, Medicines, and Knowledge (I-MAK)

Current **Fundraising Committee Member**, Visualizing Palestine

2018-2025 **Committee Member**, JD Leebron Scholarship Selection Committee, Columbia Law School

2018-2015 **Committee Member**, LLM Global Public Service Fellowship Selection Committee, Columbia Law School

2024-2025 **Visiting Scholar**, Birzeit University

2022-2024 **Board Member**, The LAB (San Francisco)

2023-2024 **Visiting Scientist**, FXB Center for Health & Human Rights, Harvard University

2023-2024 **Co-Faculty Lead on Racial Equity**, New York City Pandemic Response Institute

2022-2023 **Guest Editor**, Health & Human Rights Journal

2012-2021 **Board Member**, Community Development Resources Association, South Africa