

David Kaye

David Kaye is an expert on and practitioner of international human rights and humanitarian law, with decades of experience working with and advocating before governments, United Nations (UN) bodies, and regional and national institutions and courts worldwide. Known for his work on online and offline freedom of expression, he is a professor of law at the University of California, Irvine, a professor of human rights law in the Oxford/George Washington University summer school, the U.S. Member of the European Commission for Democracy through Law (“Venice Commission”), a member of the High Level Panel of Legal Experts on Media Freedom, and a 2025-2026 Perry World House Distinguished Fellow at the University of Pennsylvania. In 2023 – 2024, he held the Fulbright Distinguished Professor Chair in Public International Law at Lund University, Sweden.

David’s global profile owes especially to his six years (2014 – 2020) as United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression. A global spokesman for human rights and technology, he issued groundbreaking reports at the intersection of freedom of speech and democracy, including online hate speech, the surveillance industry, encryption and anonymity, and whistleblowers and journalistic sources. He is often credited with pushing the technology industry toward the adoption of human rights standards in its content moderation and inspiring key aspects of progressive tech regulation around the world (while being a leading critic of authoritarian regulation and repression of speech and privacy). His work for the UN has been widely cited by governments, international organizations, courts, academics and human rights defenders. His high-level missions to Japan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Mexico, Liberia, Ecuador and Ethiopia spotlighted serious human rights abuses.

David has published in national and international law journals, lectured at universities, international organizations and other public forums around the world, and testified before legislative bodies and filed amicus pleadings with national tribunals and regional human rights courts and commissions worldwide. His well-regarded 2019 book, *Speech Police: The Global Struggle to Govern the Internet* (Columbia Global Reports), remains one of the standard treatments of the ways in which companies, governments and activists struggle to define the rules for online expression and the impact that struggle is having on democratic institutions. He has appeared on a wide set of broadcast media and podcasts, and he is quoted regularly and has published essays in such publications as *Foreign Affairs*, *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Guardian*, *Reuters*, *Slate*, *Foreign Policy*, *Just Security*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *Tech Policy Press*, *Dallas Morning News*, *The LA Review of Books* and *Open Global Rights*. In addition to his work on human rights and freedom of expression, his academic research and writing have focused on accountability for serious human rights abuses, international humanitarian law, and the international law governing use of force.

From 2020 to 2024, he served as the independent chair of the Board of the Global Network Initiative, and he presently serves as a Trustee of the leading global free speech organization, ARTICLE 19. He is a life member of the Council on Foreign Relations, a former member of the Executive Council of the American Society of International Law, and an active member of the California State Bar. He is co-convenor of the EDU Coalition, a project to defend universities and academic freedom.

Prior to joining UC Irvine, David launched the first major human rights law program in southern California at UCLA School of Law. He began his career with the U.S. Department of State, where he developed expertise in international humanitarian law, dispute settlement, and other major issues in international law and policy, concluding as a lawyer at the U.S. Embassy in The Hague. He led the post-9/11 arguments against the Bush White House in favor of application of the Geneva Conventions to those held custody in the so-called war on terror and, while a U.S. Government lawyer in The Hague, was a key interlocutor with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Criminal Court (ICC).