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# Delinking the "Human" from Human Rights: Artificial Intelligence, Transhumanism and the Future of Human Rights

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# Going Against the Grain

University of Dayton Human Rights Center  
Social Practice of Human Rights Conference, Oct. 1-4, 2019

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## **Delinking the “Human” from Human Rights: Artificial Intelligence, Transhumanism and the Future of Human Rights**

**Presented by:**

**A. Kayum Ahmed**, *Columbia University*

**Session:** Tech and “Human” Rights

**Abstract:**

Human rights discourses are deeply embedded in an epistemic anthropocentrism that centers the human in human rights. However, conceptions of what constitutes the human are being eroded through the development of artificial intelligence, bio-hacking and transhumanism, all of which, support the emergence of new kinds of humans. These emergent humans include the enhanced human who possesses abilities that compel us to reconsider the parameters of humanness, as well as computer systems that demonstrate characteristics thought of as uniquely human. The blurring of the divide between human and machine therefore compels us to reconsider our understanding of the human in human rights, including the possibility of delinking the human from human rights.

**Presenter information:**

A. Kayum Ahmed is Division Director at the Open Society Foundations (OSF) in New York where he leads the global portfolio on access to medicines and innovation in the Public Health Program. He also teaches a class on socio-economic rights at Columbia Law School.

Before joining OSF, Kayum served as Chief Executive Officer of the South African Human Rights Commission from 2010 to 2015. During this period, he led a team of 178 colleagues to monitor, protect and promote human rights in South Africa, and oversaw the management of nearly 45,000 human rights cases.

He holds a Ph.D. in education from Columbia University, various degrees in law from the universities of Oxford (MS.t), Cape Town (LL.B.), and Leiden (LL.M.), as well as degrees in anthropology (M.A.) and theology (B.A. Hons).