



Shelby Scholars Lecture Series

GEERT J.M. CORSTENS

Former President, Supreme Court of the Netherlands

ABOUT OUR GUEST

Geert Josephus Maria Corstens is one of the Netherlands' most respected jurists and a leading voice on judicial independence and the rule of law. He served as President of the Supreme Court of the Netherlands from 2008 to 2014, following a distinguished career as a scholar, prosecutor, and justice. Known for his intellect, integrity, and commitment to democratic principles, Corstens continues to play a vital role in public and academic discussions on justice and governance.

Corstens studied law at the Catholic University of Nijmegen (now Radboud University), graduating cum laude in 1969. He earned his Ph.D. in Law from the University of Amsterdam in 1974, with a dissertation on prosecutorial policy that later influenced Dutch criminal procedure reform.

He briefly worked at the European Commission in Brussels before joining the Dutch judiciary in 1974 as a public prosecutor in Arnhem, gaining deep practical experience in criminal justice.

From 1982 to 1995, Corstens served as Professor of Criminal Law at Radboud University, where he became an authority on criminal procedure and comparative law. He was a member of the National Committee for the Reform of Criminal Procedure (1989–1993) and chaired several national research

and advisory boards focused on improving the quality and transparency of criminal justice.

In 1995, Corstens was appointed Justice of the Supreme Court of the Netherlands, and in 2006, he became Vice-President and chair of its Criminal Chamber. He was appointed President of the Supreme Court in 2008, serving until his retirement in 2014. During his presidency, he emphasized the independence and transparency of the judiciary; clear, public communication about court decisions; and the judiciary's duty to uphold the rule of law over political influence.

Under his leadership, the Court addressed significant cases such as the Srebrenica massacre liability, euthanasia law, and corporate disputes like ABN AMRO. His tenure also modernized how the Court communicates with the public, including the introduction of online and social media updates on rulings.

After retiring, Corstens remained active in both national and international legal affairs: president, Network of Presidents of Supreme Judicial Courts of the EU (2011–2015); appointing Authority, Iran–United States Claims Tribunal (since 2013); member, IOC Commission on Ethics; Chair, HiiL (Hague Institute for Innovation of Law) Programmatic Steering Board; and chair, Foundation “War Requiem – Bridge to the Future”

(Arnhem). He continues to advocate for an open, resilient constitutional state and advises on international arbitration and legal ethics.

Even after retirement, Corstens remains a visible figure in Dutch public life. His television interviews, lectures, and writings address

pressing issues such as judicial ethics, public accountability, and governmental overreach. His clarity and civility in explaining complex legal issues have earned him a reputation as both an educator and a moral voice in contemporary debates on justice.

*Monday, November 17, 2025
10 AM at Tuomey Hall*