Impacts of AI

Technologies on Palestinian Lives and Narratives

7amleh - The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media

February 2024

Position Paper on

Impacts of AI Technologies on Palestinian Lives and Narratives

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⭕ OVERVIEW

Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies are being deployed globally without sufficient safeguards, regulatory frameworks, or measures to ensure the protection of human rights. The lack of oversight and due diligence across sectors, including the integration of AI into communications, surveillance, and military applications, is rapidly giving rise to new threats and dangers, especially for oppressed and vulnerable groups.

AI technologies can significantly impact the dynamics between dominant and oppressed groups, as they intersect with existing power structures and intensify digital divides. Without a human-rights-centred approach to research, development, and deployment, AI technologies have the potential to supercharge the violation of human rights at scale.

This paper offers an overview of the threats and dangers posed by AI technologies on Palestinians and advocates, across sectors and in both localised and globalised dimensions. Palestinian human rights are at heightened risk and already endangered by the integration of AI with dominant communications, political, and military systems. AI technologies can intensify existing inequalities and generate new forms of oppression, danger, and bias, for Palestinians and advocates.

By examining AI technologies across domains, such as content creation, surveillance, and militaristic applications, this report presents a broad overview of AI's impact on Palestinian lives and narratives. It applies a human-rights-centered approach, building on 7amleh's (The Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media) core mission of safeguarding Palestinian human and digital rights. This overview aims to serve as a reference and guideline for approaching issues related to AI and Palestinian human rights, considering existing research, advocacy, and Palestinian lived experience.

Most AI research and development is concentrated in the Global North, predominantly using language and data sets that disproportionately represent hegemonic actors while under-representing marginalised groups. Disparate digital infrastructures and unequal access to technologies have created an 'AI divide' between the Global North and the Global South[1].

In the context of Israel and Palestine, the AI divide is extreme and leads to harmful and possibly deadly outcomes for Palestinians. Israel's technological, militaristic, and economic supremacy has determined how AI-related technologies are integrated into Palestinian life, posing critical threats to Palestinian human rights.

Israel, a global military and tech leader, is rapidly integrating AI technologies into its weaponry, cybersecurity, and surveillance systems. Palestinians in the occupied territory (OPT) and Israel, face myriad risks and dangers from AI-enhanced systems which undermine their basic human rights, including AI-based facial recognition technologies, automated weapons, social media monitoring, and military targeting.

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1 "The 'AI divide' between the Global North and the Global South," World Economic Forum. Available at: https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/01/davos23-ai-divide-global-north-global-south/

Israel's integration of AI technologies into existing surveillance and militaristic systems has put Palestinians' fundamental freedoms at risk, such as the freedom of speech, movement, assembly, and the right to work. Critical violations of Palestinian human rights in the OPT include Israel's use of AI-powered systems for mass surveillance, such as the Wolf Pack system[2] in the West Bank. While in Gaza, Israel has used machine learning and automation, to generate targets for bombing [3]. These examples set dangerous precedents as to how AI-related technologies can have detrimental effects on civilian populations and warrant an emergency response from the global community to safeguard internationally protected human rights[4].

Deficient regulatory frameworks and global power discrepancies contribute to the overwhelmingly negative impact of AI technologies on Palestinian lives and narratives; however, primarily, these harmful effects are a consequence of Israel's unrestrained use of AI technologies to intensify its occupation, military dominance, and control.

Additionally, Palestinians and advocates face risks and dangers from commercial and civilian applications of AI technologies internationally, such as popular generative AI platforms, which are increasingly used to create Synthetic content and curate media.

AI technologies are being used in content creation globally. As AI-based tools become more popular, they affect cultural production and exert influence on global perceptions of Palestinian people and narratives. Increasingly, anti-Palestinian bias and misinformation are being reported in popular AI-based tools, many of which have also been highlighted for encoding gender, race, ethnicity, and class-based biases [5].

Despite the gravity of these risks and dangers, public understanding of how AI-based technologies can violate human rights is limited. Mainstream media has focused on speculative and sensationalised threats posed by AI, such as existential risks caused by the advent of artificial general intelligence, while largely obscuring or ignoring the real and present dangers threatening marginalised groups[6]. The lack of a politically and socially engaged analysis of AI coupled with longstanding media bias against Palestinians, has resulted in little public awareness of the risks and dangers AI-related technologies pose to Palestinian lives and narratives. Additionally, poor general comprehension of how AI technology functions compounds the problem.

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2 "Israel/OPT: Israeli authorities are using facial recognition technology to entrench apartheid," Amnesty International. Available at: https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/05/israel-opt-israeli-authorities-are-using-facial-recognition-technology-to-entrench-apartheid/

3 Abraham, Yuval, "'A mass assassination factory': Inside Israel's calculated bombing of Gaza, +972 Magazine, November 30, 2023. Available at: https://www.972mag.com/mass-assassination-factory-israel-calculated-bombing-gaza/

4 For the UN's guiding principles on human rights and generative AI, see "Advancing Responsible Development and Deployment of Generative AI," A UN B-Tech foundational paper, November 2023. Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/business/b-tech/advancing-responsible-development-and-deployment-of-GenAI.pdf

5 Bender, E. M.; Gebru, T.; McMillan-Major, A. & Shmitchell, "On the Dangers of Stochastic Parrots: Can Language Models Be Too Big?", ‹Proceedings of the 2021 ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency›, Association for Computer Machinery. Available at: https://archive.org/details/stochastic-parrots-3442188.3445922

6 For more on how AI's hypothetical risks obscure real problems today, see "Statement from the listed authors of Stochastic Parrots on the 'AI pause' letter," available at: https://www.dair-institute.org/blog/letter-statement-March2023/

By engaging with principles of ethical and understandable AI, this report makes the impacts of AI technologies on Palestinian human rights accessible to wide audiences, focusing on the following categories:

- **Content creation (synthetic media)**
- **Content moderation, censorship, and curation**
- **Surveillance**
- **Automated warfare and weapons**

AI technologies hold the possibility for ethical and responsible usage that respects the human rights of all individuals and groups. The recommendations section at the end of the document suggests possibilities for leveraging AI to support human-rights-oriented outcomes for Palestinians and advocates. However, safeguarding human rights from both existing and potential harms must take precedence if AI technologies are to realise this potential.

Aligning with 7amleh's focus on safeguarding Palestinian human rights within digital spaces and technologies, this study aims to function as a resource and catalyst for advancing further research and advocacy for the protection of human rights in AI-based systems.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- As AI technologies become rapidly deployed across communications, surveillance, and military sectors, what are the emergent dangers and risks posed by these technologies on Palestinian lives and narratives?
- Which AI technologies are being used to repress, dehumanise, or harm Palestinians and Palestine advocates in Israel, the OPT, and internationally, and how are they being utilised?

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used to identify and expand on the risks posed by AI for this paper is desktop research, including information and insights from published articles from reputable media sources, academic papers, reports, relevant organisations, and books.

○ WHAT IS AI

Broadly speaking, AI is a field of computer science in which computers or software programs perform tasks that ordinally require human intelligence. This includes human language comprehension, pattern recognition, and problem-solving.

The following brief list defines a few key features and programs of AI technologies, with relevant examples:

- **Machine learning:** A vast majority of AI systems in use today use machine learning, which allows machines to learn from data. This technology enables computers to make decisions or predictions without being programmed to do so for each task.

- **Generative AI:** This is a type of AI that generates new content, such as images, text, or sounds. It is trained on data sets, which inform the information, patterns, and logic it employs to create new original content or media.

- **Examples:** ChatGPT, Bard, Midjourney, DALL-E, Jaspar

- **Large language model (LLM):** This is a type of AI that comprehends and generates human language. It is trained on text and responds to written prompts.

- **Examples:** GPT, LaMDA (used in Goolge's Bard'), LLaMA (used by Meta AI).

- **Machine vision:** This is a technology that enables computers to process visual information. Machine vision is used in AI systems, such as facial recognition technologies, surveillance, drones, and warfare systems.

- **Data sets:** Data sets are used to train AI for machine learning. The data determines how the AI will make predictions, understand patterns, or make decisions. Problems often arise from biases in data sets, as AI extrapolates and generalises from its training data.

- **Black box:** This refers to a situation where the AI's processes and decision-making are not transparent or understandable to humans. This lack of transparency makes it difficult to ensure that AI systems are fair and ethical; furthermore, AI-based or AI-enhanced decision-making erodes human and organisational accountability.

- **AI ethics:** This is a field that deals with the social implications and potential harms of AI, including issues related to human rights, justice, and privacy. Key approaches in this field include explainable AI, trustworthy AI, and responsible AI, which are strategies for developing more ethical AI and reducing the adverse effects of AI on communities and individuals. Critical ethical concerns in AI ethics encompass addressing bias, transparency, environmental impact, inclusivity, social impact, and economic implications.

AI IN CONTENT CREATION

AI tools are being utilised in content creation, generating text, images, and videos, which is also referred to as **synthetic media**. AI-generated images and texts are rapidly being integrated into cultural and political expression, for example in the creation of artistic media, disinformation, and propaganda. Synthetic media has the potential to influence cultural production, freedom of expression, and public opinion.

Popular consumer tools for AI-generated content include Midjourney, DALL-E, Adobe AI Images, the Bing Image Generator, ChatGPT, and Bard. These platforms use generative AI and LLMs to create and modify synthetic media.

Increasingly, there have been reports of discriminatory and biased outcomes emerging in AI-based content creation. This is often the result of **encoded biases in data sets**, often scraped without consent from the web, reproducing the internet's existing biases at scale. Several media outlets and journalists have reported on AI bias concerning Palestine, highlighting numerous recent examples, **such as:**

- The Guardian reported anti-Palestinian bias in media created through the Meta-owned WhatsApp's image generator[7], which repeatedly showed images of gun-toting children when prompted with the words 'Palestinian' and 'Muslim boy Palestinian.'

- Many users have reported biases in LLM[8] such as ChatGPT and Bard, when prompted with questions related to Palestine; either responding with selective or misleading information or censoring or repressing responses[9].

- Motherboard reported that Adobe is selling AI-generated images of Gaza and Israel[10], showing destroyed buildings, scenes of bombardment, and fake explosions. Many of these scenes are generated by users and appear convincingly photorealistic, yet they are not consistently labelled as AI-generated images.

Media coverage and flagging of AI bias regarding Palestinian representation in synthetic media are vital in raising awareness as to the dangers of replicating and automating biases at scale. These reports highlight the critical need for ethical AI development in coordination with AI ethics groups or oversight committees. These committees should secure diverse and representative data sets, alongside protecting Palestinians and advocates from negative stereotyping, defamation, and discrimination.

7 Bhuiyan, Johana. "WhatsApp's AI shows gun-wielding children when prompted with 'Palestine," The Guardian, November 3, 2023. Availableat:https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/nov/02/whatsapps-ai-palestine-kids-gun-gaza-bias-israel

8 Navlakha, Meera, "Google Bard, ChatGPT: Are AI chatbots suppressing information about Israel and Palestine?", Mashable, October 26, 2023. Available at:
https://mashable.com/article/ai-chatbot-israel-palestine-chatgpt-google-bard

9 Twitter thread, available at: https://twitter.com/peligrietzer/status/1716449638960509270

10 Gault, Matthew "Adobe is selling AI-generated images of violence in Gaza and Israel," Vice Magazine, November 7, 2023. Available at: https://www.vice.com/en/article/3akj3k/adobe-is-selling-fake-ai-generated-images-of-violence-in-gaza-and-israel

In addition to biases arising in synthetic media, dangers arise from the use of AI to create convincing **disinformation** and **propaganda.** During the current war on Gaza, synthetic media has been used to influence opinions by political actors and activists from all sides. Many of these instances are not aimed at deceiving viewers into mistaking synthetic media for real events, but rather to generate images that demonstrate support[11]. However, several instances of **AI-generated deepfakes** have emerged, which could deceive viewers, especially those not well-versed in generative AI. One example of this is a deep-faked video of Palestinian-Dutch model Bella Hadid apologising and showing remorse for her support of Palestinians[12].

While tools exist for detecting the use of AI in media, they are not fool-proof or definitive. Greater issues arise when people discredit genuine images by claiming they are synthetic media, or conversely, present synthetic media as real. This creates challenges in verifying authentic images or media, opening the door to the production of convincing and relatively inexpensive propaganda at scale.

Synthetic media generated by AI has the potential to influence the public's perception of Palestinian people or narratives, as well as cause harm because of discrimination or threatening content.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OCHR) has established B-Tech to apply human rights frameworks to AI technologies[13]. In alignment with B-Tech's taxonomy, the use of synthetic AI-generated media can impact Palestinian human rights and narratives in several key ways: by causing physical and mental harm, reinforcing negative stereotypes or biases, manipulating public opinion, and limiting freedom of expression[14].

⭕ AI IN CONTENT MODERATION, CENSORSHIP, AND CURATION:

AI technologies are becoming integrated more widely with content moderation on major social media sites such as Meta, LinkedIn, and TikTok. AI-enhanced content moderation allows digital platforms to automate and rapidly deploy policy recommendations on large amounts of user-generated content, by identifying patterns in data sets classified as violating company policies or community guidelines.

To date, numerous organisations and users have pointed out bias in existing content moderation

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11 Bedingfield, Will, "Generative AI is playing a surprising role in Israel-Hamas Disinformation," Wired, October 30, 2023. Available at:https://www.wired.com/story/israel-hamas-war-generative-artificial-intelligence-disinformation/

12 "Pro-Israel activists deep fake Bella Hadid video showing Palestine 'remorse'", The New Arab, October 30, 2023. Available at: https://www.newarab.com/news/pro-israel-activists-deep-fake-bella-hadid-palestine-video

13 "Advancing Responsible Development and Deployment of Generative AI," A UN B-Tech foundational paper, November, 2023. Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/business/b-tech/taxonomy-GenAI-Human-Rights-Harms.pdf

14 "Taxonomy of Human Rights Risks Connected to Generative AI", B-Tech supplement, United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. Available at: www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/business/b-tech/taxonomy-GenAI-Human-Rights-Harms.pdf

on social media. Countless creators of pro-Palestinian content have criticised discriminatory content moderation practices. These violations have been widely documented by 7amleh, including a surge of censorship and targeting of Palestinians and advocates since October 7th[15]. 7amleh has also documented the over-moderation of Arabic content and the under-moderation of Hebrew content on Meta[16].

Without adequate safety measures in place, the use of AI-enhanced content moderation will **scale existing moderation bias and disparate enforcement** and further erode the transparency and accountability of social media companies. Based on social media's current track record, automated and rapid content moderation processes will scale up the repression of free speech when it comes to Palestinian perspectives and advocacy, likely resulting in a dramatic increase in shadow bans and deleted posts or accounts.

Furthermore, it is unclear how AI-enhanced technologies are playing a role in state-sponsored social media monitoring, such as Israel's "anti-terrorism" laws. 7amleh has outlined the dangers of these new counterterrorism laws[17], which further entrench Israel's surveillance of Palestinians and create a chilling effect on freedom of speech and expression.

AI-powered algorithms are also being used in **search engines, content optimisation, and recommendation systems.** These technologies learn from user data to generate relevant results. One example of this is Microsoft's Bing search engine, which uses AI to enhance search experiences and provide relevant search results. However, users have accused Bing's chatbot of being inaccurate, biased, and sometimes rude[18].

AI-enhanced search engines are an example of how AI-generated bias and misinformation can appear in concealed and imperceptible ways. Users attempting to access unbiased information or knowledge through search engines would be unaware that they were being manipulated or influenced by biased results. While there is already significant bias against Palestinian narratives and experiences in the mainstream media[19], AI-enhanced search engine bias could further erode public understanding and access to accurate information or knowledge.

While little has been reported to date regarding bias and discrimination in AI-based content curation concerning Palestinian narratives, we can anticipate the need for greater transparency and due diligence regarding how these systems operate and build knowledge from their training data sets. For example, it is feasible that AI-enhanced technologies will recommend

15 "Briefing on the Palestinian digital rights situation since October 7, 2023", 7amleh report. Available at: https://7amleh.org/2023/11/01/briefing-on-the-palestinian-digital-rights-situation-since-october-7th-2023

16 "Meta, let Palestine speak!!", 7amleh web page. Available at: https://meta.7amleh.org

17 "New Law Prohibiting the Consumption of Terrorist Publications", 7amleh position paper, November 20, 2023. Available at: https://7amleh.org/2023/11/20/7amleh-releases-a-position-paper-on-the-israeli-law-prohibiting-the-consumption-of-terrorist-publications#:~:text=November%2020%2C%202023%2C%207amleh%20%2D,its%20repercussions%20on%20the%20ground.

18 Pearson, Jordan "Users report Microsoft's 'unhinged' Bing AI is lying, berating them," Vice Magazine, February 15, 2023. Available at: https://www.vice.com/en/article/3ad39b/microsoft-bing-ai-unhinged-lying-berating-users

19 Johnson, Adam and Ali, Othman "Coverage of Gaza war in the New York Times and other major newspapers heavily favoured Israel, analysis shows," The Intercept, January 9, 2024. Available at: https://theintercept.com/2024/01/09/newspapers-israel-palestine-bias-new-york-times/#:~:text=The%20New%20York%20Times%2C%20Washington,analysis%20of%20major%20media%20coverage.

media such as books or videos that omit Palestinian perspectives; or pro-Israel content could be recommended or ranked higher due to biased content curation.

AI AND SURVEILLANCE

AI-based surveillance systems, employed by both state and non-state actors in military, commercial, and civilian applications, often result in violations of human rights. Governments and other authorities increasingly integrate AI technologies to monitor both domestic and international actors. Non-governmental actors and corporations can benefit and capitalise from harmful uses of AI-based surveillance systems.

Advanced AI-based surveillance systems frequently use facial recognition, communications monitoring, social media algorithms, CCTVs, and other video-based analytics to track and monitor individuals and groups.

Israel is a global leader in military and surveillance tech, with AI being its latest hype[20]. Israel's military exports in 2022 amounted to $12.55 billion[21], including surveillance tech. Israel has sold its spyware tools to government and state actors worldwide, often promoting these technologies as being 'battle tested'[22] on Palestinians.

In areas subjected to Israeli military rule, such as parts of Hebron and East Jerusalem, the Israeli armyhas installed a vast network of surveillance technologies in civilian areas. Palestinians subjected to these systems are without adequate protection of their privacy rights, allowing companies working with the Israeli military to test their surveillance prototypes and technologies on local populations before they are exported globally[23]. Examples of Israel's surveillance and spyware tools include NSO Group's Pegasus software, which is remotely installed on smart phones, and facial recognition firm Oosto which develops technologies used at checkpoints[24].

Israel is utilising AI technologies in surveillance systems across the OPT to further entrench the occupation, exact collective punishment, and intensify mass surveillance. These technologies include 'Wolf Pack,' a database of Palestinians which use facial recognition technologies and contains profiles of 'virtually every Palestinian in the West Bank' and a security rating for each person[25].

20 Hever, Shiv "Israel is already weaponizing AI- but not in the ways it claims to be," Truthout, July 2, 2023. Available at: https://truthout.org/articles/israel-is-already-weaponizing-ai-but-not-in-the-ways-it-claims-to-be/

21 "Israel reports record $12.5 billion defence exports, 24% of them to Arab partners", Reuters, June 13, 2023. Available at: https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/israel-reports-record-125-bln-defence-exports-24-them-arab-partners-2023-06-13/#:~:text=Israel%20reports%20record%20%2412.5%20billion,them%20to%20Arab%20partners%20%7C%20Reuters

22 Loewenstein, Antony "How Palestine became Israel's spyware test-bed," New Internationalist, October 19, 2023. Available at: https://newint.org/features/2023/10/02/spy-games

23 Goodfriend, Sophia, "How the occupation fuels Tel Aviv's booming AI sector", Foreign Policy, February 21, 2022. Available at: https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/02/21/palestine-israel-ai-surveillance-tech-hebron-occupation-privacy/

24 Brewster, Thomas. "Israeli facial recognition once did border checks in the West Bank. Now it snoops on casinos across America," Forbes, September 1, 2022. Available at: https://www.forbes.com/sites/thomasbrewster/2022/09/01/oosto-israel-facial-recognition-surveillance-on-casinos-in-america/?sh=780092ac4131

25 Dwoskin, Elizabeth, "Israel escalates surveillance of Palestinians with facial recognition program in the West Bank," The

Amnesty International issued a report, entitled 'Automated Apartheid', which focuses on Israel's use of **facial recognition technology** in the West Bank and East Jerusalem[26]. These AI-enhanced facial recognition technologies integrate with existing surveillance systems such as Wolf Pack[27] and Mabat 2000[28], which integrates facial recognition technologies with CCTVs around the Old City. Under Israel's occupation, AI surveillance systems connect to CCTV cameras, drone footage, biometric data, and other data sets and analytics related to Palestinians. Amnesty International found that in Hebron and East Jerusalem, Israel is deploying facial recognition technologies to monitor Palestinians' movements[29], determining whether individuals would pass or be denied entry at checkpoints.

In the West Bank and East Jerusalem, Israel's use of AI-powered surveillance technologies is being used to supercharge the occupation, violating Palestinian human rights, in particular, freedom of movement, assembly, privacy, and expression. Furthermore, mass surveillance technologies have a chilling effect and make daily life unbearable for Palestinians trapped under occupation and oppression.

Amnesty International's report identifies some companies that are implicated in the use of oppressive facial recognition systems. This includes Hikvision cameras, which are installed across the West Bank monitor. Hikvision is a Chinese company that claims it can automatically detect Uyghur individuals[30], an example of how AI surveillance technologies are exported in oppressive contexts around the world. **Ethnicity-detecting AI surveillance technology** raises questions as to whether these systems can detect Palestinian faces and appearances, as well as those of other marginalised and racialised groups around the world. Furthermore, there are a growing number of documented cases highlighting misuse of these technologies by state actors. Facial recognition technologies are deployed by police forces globally and can be utilised in **protests**, including footage from CCTV cameras and those captured by officers[31].

While surveillance technologies can be used by state actors against other states or domestic populations, including vulnerable groups, non-state actors can also exploit or profit from the use of AI-based technologies for harmful purposes, such as hackers, criminal gangs, and terrorist organisations[32]. Both state and non-state actors exploit the lack of meaningful and

Washington Post, November 8, 2021. Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/israel-palestinians-surveillance-facial-recognition/2021/11/05/3787bf42-26b2-11ec-8739-5cb6aba30a30_story.html

26 "Automated Apartheid: How facial recognition fragments, segregates, and controls Palestinians in the OPT," Amnesty International report, May 2, 2023. Available at: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/6701/2023/en/

27 "Israel/OPT: Israeli authorities are using facial recognition technology to entrench apartheid," Amnesty International web page. Available at: https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/05/israel-opt-israeli-authorities-are-using-facial-recognition-technology-to-entrench-apartheid/

28 "Ban the scan, automated apartheid: facial recognition entrenches the oppression of Palestinian people," Amnesty International web page. Available at: https://banthescan.amnesty.org/opt/

29 Kawash, Ameera, "The system learns to recognize you: Amnesty calls out automated apartheid," +972 Magazine, May 2, 2023,. Available at: https://www.972mag.com/amnesty-automated-apartheid-mahmoudi/

30 Bhuiyan, Johana, "How Chinese firm linked to repression of Uyghurs aids Israeli surveillance in West Bank," The Guardian, November 11, 2023. https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/nov/11/west-bank-palestinians-surveillance-cameras-hikvisiona

31 Burgess, Matt, "Police use of face recognition is sweeping the UK," Wired, September 11,2023. Available at: https://www.wired.co.uk/article/uk-police-face-recognition-expansion

32 "Algorithms and terrorism: the malicious use of Artificial Intelligence for terrorist purposes," a joint report by the UNICRI and UNCCT, 2021. Available at: https://unicri.it/News/Algorithms-Terrorism-Malicious-Use-Artificial-Intelligence-Terrorist-Purposes

enforceable regulations in AI-based surveillance technologies.

Israel's booming surveillance sector and its capacity to sell intrusive technologies including AI-enhanced systems to governments worldwide also serve as a 'strategic weapon'. According to Antony Loewenstein, author of 'The Palestinian Laboratory', sales of military and surveillance technologies to state actors, including rogue states, reshape geopolitics and dampen those states' criticism of Israel's ongoing occupation and abuses of Palestinian human rights[33]. The sale of powerful and invasive surveillance tools, such as Pegasus, have contributed to Israel's 'spyware diplomacy' or ability to promote or influence foreign policies through the sale of repressive technologies[34].

⬤ AI AND AUTOMATED WARFARE

Increasingly, Israel is weaponizing AI technologies[35]. The application of AI for military purposes, including **autonomous weapons** and **AI-enhanced target selection**, poses the most nefarious threat to Palestinians living under Israeli occupation and oppression. Israel is **testing AI-powered military technologies** on Palestinians. Most recently and critically, Israel has been using machine learning and automation to generate targets for bombing in its war on Gaza.

Israeli forces have used autonomous weapons and AI-driven drones against Palestinians in the West Bank. In Hebron, an **automated gun** called 'Smart Shooter' fires stun grenades as a method of crowd dispersal. In autonomous weapons system, human decision making is augmented or replaced by AI based technologies, further eroding human accountability and decision making.

In the current war against Gaza, Israeli forces are using AI to recommend and select military targets, called **'the Gospel'**. This system, which utilises deadly machine learning, builds on an Israeli army database of suspected militants, which experts believe is combined with data from drone footage, cellular analysis, and surveillance footage. The AI **accelerates target selection** and results in what +972 Magazine calls a "mass assassination factory."[36]

While Israel claims the AI-enhanced system minimises civilian casualties, critics argue that the system is aimed at the maximum devastation of Gaza while providing a technological justification[37]. The system rapidly identifies targets faster than human capability and is the

33 Loewenstein, Antony "How Palestine became Israel's spyware test-bed," New Internationalist, October 19, 2023. Available at: https://newint.org/features/2023/10/02/spy-games

34 Jones, Marc Owen. "The new unsustainable order of Arab digital autocracy," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Available at: https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/05/03/new-unsustainable-order-of-arab-digital-autocracy-pub-89525

35 Hever, Shiv "Israel is already weaponizing AI- but not in the ways it claims to be," Truthout, July 2, 2023. Available at: https://truthout.org/articles/israel-is-already-weaponizing-ai-but-not-in-the-ways-it-claims-to-be/

36 Abraham, Yuval, "'A mass assassination factory': Inside Israel's calculated bombing of Gaza", +972 Magazine, November 30, 2023. Available at: https://www.972mag.com/mass-assassination-factory-israel-calculated-bombing-gaza/

37 Brumfiel, Geoff "Israel is using an AI system to find targets in Gaza. Experts say it›s just the start", National Public Radio (NPR). Available at: https://www.npr.org/2023/12/14/1218643254/israel-is-using-an-ai-system-to-find-targets-in-gaza-experts-say-its-just-the-st

largest scale utilisation of AI technologies in warfare up to date.

Militaristic AI opens grave ethical concerns, including the scalability and rapidity of attacks powered by machine learning, the evasion of responsibility from humans to machines, the questionable capacity of AI to distinguish between civilians and combatants, and the prevalence of glitches and errors in these systems.

EXISTING INITIATIVES AND STANDARDS

Despite the immediate dangers posed by AI-enhanced warfare, meaningful and enforceable international regulation is lacking. To date, a handful of organisations and initiatives have been created to protect human rights and safety in AI applications using a cross-border and multistakeholder approach, among them:

- **The UN Secretary-General's AI Advisory Body:** This new agency, initiated in 2023, is tasked with addressing global challenges and risks associated with AI, and to study how AI can be used to align with human rights and sustainable development goals.

- **The UK AI Safety Summit:** The UK government hosted a summit on the safety of AI 'frontier models', which refers to advanced models and capabilities, including those used in military domains. Outcomes include signing a commitment to build shared frameworks for AI safety risks.

- **The EU AI Act:** Proposed in 2021, the EU's AI Act is designed to regulate AI within the EU. AI applications are organised into categories from 'high risk', AI which poses a significant threat to the health and safety of individuals, to 'low risk' AI, which must meet transparency obligations, such as used in chatbots or the creation of synthetic media.

However, despite the promise of these initiatives, they could take years to have an effect. It is unclear if states and corporate actors will act responsibly to put human rights frameworks at the centre of AI use and development. This paper demonstrates the numerous risks and dangers posed by AI to Palestinians and advocates, which require urgent and immediate action. As a final reflection, 7amleh's recommendations act within its mission of safeguarding Palestinian digital rights and can be put into motion immediately to address, monitor, and raise awareness as to the impacts of AI on Palestinian human and digital rights.

◯ CONCLUSION

This paper has collated information and evidence from all sectors to provide a broad overview of the impacts of AI on Palestinian lives and narratives. This includes what is classified by the EU AI Act as 'high-risk AI' (such as the danger of death, serious risk to health, and freedom of movement) and 'low-risk AI' (for example, the danger to freedom of speech and expression).

While additional research and specialised knowledge are required to fully investigate and unpack each type of infringement and risk, from militaristic applications to consumer uses, it is advantageous to take a wide and holistic overview to assess the impacts and harms caused by AI on Palestinian human and digital rights. Furthermore, both civilian and militaristic applications are interconnected, as technologies can pass from militaristic applications to civilian use; likewise, civilian or consumer use can normalise militaristic or overly oppressive applications of AI technologies.

Overwhelmingly, this report has documented the harms and dangers caused by AI technologies for Palestinians and advocates. However, there are examples of AI being used to uplift and safeguard Palestinian human rights; in one promising case, AI and natural language processing technologies have been deployed to analyse data that substantiates media bias against Palestinians[38].

AI poses dangerous new threats because it can be scaled, automated, and replicated around the world. While this paper has focused on Palestinians and advocates, the technologies and techniques referenced in this paper can be exported globally and deployed as repressive or invasive technologies against vulnerable populations or individuals anywhere in the world.

There is an urgent need for immediate and coordinated international action to safeguard Palestinian human rights from AI-related risks and to hold Israel accountable for its actions in this domain. These measures, aimed at increasing AI safety and ethics for all people, should limit nations and actors, like Israel and Israeli firms tied to human rights abuses, from benefiting and profiting from the lucrative international sales of AI-based technologies which cause grave harm to societies and individuals.

Without meaningful and enforceable AI regulations based on a human rights approach, populations around the world are at risk of having their rights violated by AI, especially marginalised and vulnerable groups.

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38 Data analysis produced by Dana Najjar and Jan Lietava, available at: https://github.com/liet-git/bbc-bias

◯ RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **A global campaign to raise awareness about AI technologies that are harmful or deadly to Palestinians.** Initiate and lead a global campaign to raise awareness of the dangers posed by AI technologies on Palestinian lives. This could include high-risk surveillance and militarised applications of AI, as well as lower-risk threats posed by online surveillance, monitoring, and biased content moderation.

2. **AI Palestine watchdog group.** Found a committee or group tasked with lobbying, demanding accountability, and pressuring tech companies that are complicit in using AI against Palestinians and advocates.

3. **Palestine in AI ethics, safety, and bias testing.** Develop a relationship with AI ethics, safety, and debiasing departments of AI technology companies and demand transparency and documentation of AI bias and testing concerning Palestinians and Palestinian narratives. Provide guidelines and recommendations to tech companies concerning Palestine and demand that these be incorporated as part of their AI safety, ethics, and bias testing.

4. **Access to training data sets.** Demand transparency and access to data sets used to train AI in popular systems concerning Palestine and Palestinians. Data sets scraped from the internet are highly problematic and unethical. Synthetic data is introduced to correct biased outputs in current debiasing strategies. Data used to train AI should be attributed, documented, and made publicly available.

5. **Education.** Develop educational materials and media to help Palestinian communities, social media users, and advocates understand how AI works and what dangers it poses.

6. **AI detection tools.** Research and recommend AI detection tools that can be used to detect synthetic media, deep fakes, and propaganda. This can be used by media monitors, journalists, and the public.

7. **Palestinian AI.** Develop AI to uplift and amplify Palestinian narratives and voices. For example, ChatGPT can be trained on content that centers Palestinian histories and narratives. The data sets used to train Palestinian AI could include a publicly available repository of reputable books, archival materials, and testimonies. A Palestinian AI chatbot , PalestineGPT, can be used as a resource for the public to generate alternative text or images and benchmark, by comparison, the anti-Palestinian bias of the master version of ChatGPT.

8. **Use AI to monitor repression and oppression.** AI can be used to monitor human rights violations, media bias, spatial analysis of inequalities, and violence in conflict zones by analysing multiple data sources[39].

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39 For examples, see DAIR (Distributed AI Research) use of AI to analyse spatial apartheid in South Africa (see: https://openreview.net/forum?id=WV0waZz9dTF) and Dana Najjar and Jan Lietava's data analysis of media bias available at: https://github.com/liet-git/bbc-bias

February 2024