Artificial Intelligence and Contemporary Slavery (26.5.25)

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This article discusses the intersection of contemporary slavery and artificial intelligence (AI), emphasizing the need to respect the life and dignity of every human being during the production and use of AI systems and in preventing and combating contemporary slavery, particularly in the context of migrants and refugees.

This could be achieved by fully implementing existing national, regional, and international legal instruments. Where necessary and possible, new legal instruments should be adopted to address specific AI-related issues.

A balanced and comprehensive approach must be found that respects the fundamental human rights of migrants and refugees while also respecting the national sovereignty of countries of origin, transit, and destination. An approach based solely on securing borders will drive "people on the move" into the hands of smugglers and traffickers.

Using AI to deal with migrants and refugees is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, AI could expedite legal immigration and the granting of refugee status. On the other hand, it could also block access and allow for the discriminatory treatment of immigration candidates and asylum seekers.

All platforms should be used to discuss issues and facilitate negotiated solutions: United Nations, regional (African Union, ASEAN, Council of Europe, Organization of American States, etc.), sub-regional (such as CBSS[2], ECOWAS, SADC), and trans-regional organizations such as the G7, G20[3], Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Commonwealth, Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), OSCE, business, academia, and inter-religious meetings.

The interconnected issues of migration, refugee flows, and human trafficking pose an urgent and complex global challenge. The 2024 World Migration Report[4] of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that there will be 281 million international migrants, including refugees fleeing conflict and persecution. Many of these migrants are often subjected to exploitation through human trafficking, which is a grave violation of human rights. Human trafficking affects more than 50 million people worldwide and generates approximately $236 billion annually through forced labour, sexual exploitation, child trafficking, and organ trafficking. The existence of modern-day slavery underscores the need for comprehensive solutions to protect vulnerable populations. Global advocacy and local action are needed to protect the life and dignity of every person, regardless of legal status. This includes protection of the family, the right to religious freedom, the right to education, the right to health, the right to decent work, and respect for the environment (integral ecology, in the spirit of *Laudato Si'*)[5]; integration of migrants and refugees into host communities and addressing the root causes of these migratory movements. This includes armed conflict, human rights abuses, war crimes, genocide, corruption, obstacles to local development trafficking (including human trafficking), and modern forms of slavery. We must promote international cooperation at all levels. This includes

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[2] Council of the Baltic Sea States, "Building Collaboration and Trust", [online] https://cbss.org/, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[3] G20, "G20 and Artificial Intelligence: information integrity and adaptation in times of climate crisis", June 10, 2024, [online] https://g20.gov.br/, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[4] Marie MCAULIFFE & Linda A. OUCHO (eds.), *World Migration Report 2024*, Organization for Migration (IOM), Geneva, 2024, [online] https://publications.iom.int, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[5] The Holy Father Francis, *Encyclical Letter Laudato Si' on Care for our Common Home*, Rome, 2015, [online] https://www.vatican, accessed on May 18, 2025. In Chapter 4, "Integral Ecology", this document highlights a central response of the encyclical to the links between social and environmental issues. In the words of Pope Francis, "Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live" (LS 139). As a result, integral ecology recognizes that our interactions with the environment are woven into economic, political, social, cultural, and ethical dimensions. There is a Laudato Si' action platform that enables Catholic institutions and individuals to commit to the path of total sustainability in the spirit of Laudato Si'.

partnerships with governments (federal, state, and city), regional organizations, universal international organizations, local communities, refugees, migrants, diaspora groups, and religious communities.

According to the 2024 Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID)[6], there are currently more than 117 million people worldwide who have been displaced due to violence, conflict, political oppression, discrimination, other forms of persecution, and serious disturbances to public order. Over 68 million people remain displaced within their own countries, while the rest have sought international protection across borders. Over the past year, new conflicts have displaced millions, while ongoing crises have prevented many in protracted displacement situations from returning home. The war in Sudan, which reignited in 2023, forced nearly 9 million people to flee within and from the country. The war in Ukraine entered its third year, with millions of refugees continuing to benefit from temporary protection and similar arrangements abroad. In Haiti, gang violence has intensified, resulting in increased internal and cross-border displacement[7].

Human trafficking is a complex and dynamic crime that takes place in a wide variety of contexts and difficult to detect. One of the most significant challenges in developing targeted counter-trafficking responses and measuring their impact is the lack of reliable, high-quality data related to the scale of human trafficking and the profile of victims[8]. Traffickers operate across borders, making it difficult for authorities to track and dismantle their networks. Furthermore, because human trafficking is a clandestine crime, many cases go unreported. Thus, the accurate scale of human trafficking is likely higher than current estimates suggest[9].

AI is having an increasing influence on human trafficking and other forms of modern slavery. There are significant dangers and ethical challenges associated with AI, including the exploitation of workers and consumers, as well as the use of large amounts of natural resources to develop and sustain AI systems. A short and simple definition of AI is "Artificial intelligence is a machine's ability to perform some cognitive functions we usually associate with human minds"[10].

AI refers to developing computer systems that can perform tasks typically requiring human intelligence. These tasks include learning from experience, recognizing patterns, solving problems, making decisions, understanding natural language, and exhibiting creativity. AI systems are designed to simulate cognitive functions such as perception, reasoning, and decision-making, enabling machines to carry out complex tasks autonomously or semi-autonomously[11]. AI can be broadly categorized into narrow AI (ANI) and general AI (AGI)[12]. Narrow AI, also known as weak AI, is designed for specific tasks in a limited domain, such as facial recognition, speech recognition, or recommendation systems. This is the type of AI most used today. General AI (AGI), or strong AI, refers to a more advanced form of AI that can understand, learn, and apply knowledge across a wide range of tasks at a human level of competence that can accomplish a wide variety of tasks by carrying out learning from one domain to

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[6]Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2*024 Global Report on Internal Displacement*, 2024, [online] https://api.internal-displacement.org/, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[7] The High Commissioner, *Considerations of reports of the Standing Committee International protection: Note on international protection*, GA Res., 75th session, UN Doc. A/AC.96.75/3 (2024), [online] https://www.refworld.org, accessed on May 19, 2025.

[8] United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *A Year in Review: Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Section*, Vienna, 2024, [online] https://www.unodc.org, accessed on May 20, 2025.

International Organization for Migration, *Human Trafficking in the World: Global Dataset*, [online] https://traffickingdata.iom.int, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[9] National Defense Academy & Austrian Ministry of Defense and Sports & Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (eds.), *Strategies Against Human Trafficking: The Role of the Security Sector*, Vienna and Geneva, Cornelius Friesendorf, 2009.

[10] McKinsey & Company, "What is AI (artificial intelligence)?", April 3, 2024, [online] https://www.mckinsey.com, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[11] Uniconverge Technologies, "Difference between AI and Robotics", July 3, 2024, [online] https://www.uniconvergetech.in, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[12] International Organization for Standardization, "What is artificial intelligence (AI)?", *ISO*, [online] https://www.iso.org, accessed on May 20, 2025.

another, as humans do. Strong AI aims to create intelligent machines indistinguishable from the human mind[13]. General AI is what artificial intelligence experts are currently working towards.

Then there is the Artificial superintelligence (ASI), which operates beyond human-level intelligence and can outsmart humans in potentially every field of knowledge and activity. However, ASI is a hypothetical concept because no system has achieved it yet. Nevertheless, it is a widely discussed and debated topic in AI. Proponents of ASI believe it has the potential to solve many of the world's most complex problems, from climate change to disease eradication, and change the world as we know it. However, others have concerns about the risks associated with ASI, such as the loss of human control over machines and the potential for machines to become self-aware or a threat to human existence[14].

Artificial intelligence is rife with contradictions. It is a powerful tool with the potential to improve its current capabilities. While AI has the potential to improve human existence, it also threatens to exacerbate social divisions and render millions of people obsolete. Although AI's inner workings are highly technical, non-technical individuals can and should understand its basic principles and the concerns it raises. As AI's influence and impact spread, it will be crucial to involve people and experts from diverse backgrounds to guide this technology in ways that enhance human capabilities and lead to positive outcomes[15].

Of focal importance is the protection of human life and dignity, including its religious dimension[16]. Human beings cannot be treated as animals, slaves, or machines. Ethical concerns about AI should be addressed with input from religious leaders. The life and dignity of each person should be affirmed and promoted as a creature of God and called to Eternal Life[17].

I. Artificial intelligence in combating human trafficking

By harnessing AI's power, Governments, law enforcement agencies, international organizations, NGOs, and think tanks can improve their ability to identify, track, and prevent human trafficking activities by harnessing the power of AI[18]. AI systems can analyse large amounts of data from various sources, such as social media, online advertisements, and financial transactions, to detect patterns and anomalies that may indicate trafficking activity. For instance, AI algorithms can identify suspicious job postings or travel itineraries matching known trafficking patterns. This enables authorities to intervene more quickly and effectively[19].

Furthermore, AI can help identify victims by analysing images, videos, and other digital content to match missing persons with potential trafficking victims. Machine learning models can be trained to recognize the signs of exploitation in online content, helping to uncover hidden networks of traffickers[20].

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[13] International Business Machines Corporation, "What is Strong AI?", *IBM*, [online] https://www.ibm.com, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[14] University of Wolverhampton, "What are the different types of artificial intelligence?", June 7, 2023, [online] https://online.wlv.ac.uk, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[15] Desautels Faculty of Management, McGill University, "Artificial Intelligence", *World Economic Forum*, [online] https://intelligence.weforum.org, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[16] Víctor Manuel Card. FERNÁNDEZ, *Declaration of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith "Dignitas Infinita" on Human Dignity*, Rome, 2024, 61-62. php and 41-42. php, [online] https://press.vatican.va, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[17] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "The Ethics of Artificial Intelligence: The Commitment of the Abrahamic Religions to the Rome Call", *FAO*, January 10, 2023, [online] https://www.fao.org, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[18] Julia DEEB-SWIHART, Alex ENDERT & Amy BRUCKMAN DEEB-SWIHART, "Ethical Tensions in Application of AI for Addressing Human Trafficking: A Human Rights Perspective", *Proceeding of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction* 6, "Interact", CSCW2/November 2022, [online] https://dl.acm.org/doi/pdf/10.1145/3555186, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[19] Amina C. IJIGA, Toyosi M. OLOLA, Lawrence A. ENYEJO, Francis A. AKPA, Timilehin I. OLATUNDE & Frederick I. OLAJIDE, "Advanced surveillance and detection systems using deep learning to combat human trafficking", *Magna Scientia Advanced Research and Reviews*, 11(01)/June 2024, p. 267-286, [online] https://doi.org/10.30574/msarr.2024.11.1.0091, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[20] Mike BERMEO, Silvana ESCOBAR & Erick CUENCA, "Human Trafficking in Social Networks: A Review of Machine Learning Techniques", *Communications in Computer and Information Science*, 1885/October 2023, p. 22-36, [online] http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-45438-7_2, accessed on May 20, 2025.

However, using AI to combat human trafficking comes with challenges. Concerns include privacy[21], data security, and the potential for AI systems to make errors that could result in false accusations or missed opportunities to rescue victims. Furthermore, as traffickers increasingly use sophisticated technologies, there is a constant need for advancements in AI to stay ahead of these criminals[22].

Maximizing AI's potential in this fight requires collaboration between Governments, tech companies, and civil society. Developing ethical AI systems that respect human rights while effectively targeting traffickers is essential[23]. Public awareness campaigns and education on the responsible use of AI can also significantly empower communities to protect themselves from exploitation, including children victims of child sexual abuse material (CSAM)[24]. Although human trafficking remains a serious global problem affecting millions, integrating AI into anti-trafficking efforts offers a promising way to help disrupt and, ultimately, dismantle human trafficking networks. With the right strategies and ethical considerations, AI can be a powerful ally in the ongoing fight to end human trafficking and restore freedom and dignity to its victims.

AI has some negative aspects. Indeed, AI requires millions of slave labourers to "feed the machine"[25]. AI can be used to promote slave labour[26] by spreading fraudulent job offers[27]. AI could be used to recruit, exploit, and control slave labour[28]. AI could be used in online slave labour, online marketing of babies or organs for sale, online sexual exploitation, AI produced child sexual abuse material (CSAM)[29], including online distribution of child sexual abuse material, online forced criminality, and spreading hatred and undermining social cohesion, thus increasing vulnerability to human trafficking. AI could provide means to enslave people through "mind control"[30]. Both HT and

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Marqueze KENNEDY, "Image Recognition: tech against child trafficking. Counter-trafficking to 40", Medium, April 4, 2022, [online] https://medium.com, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[21] Arthur H. MICHEL, "The ACLU Fights for Your Constitutional Right to Make Deepfakes", *WIRED*, July 24, 2024, [online] https://www.wired.com, accessed on May 20, 2025.

Electronic Frontier Foundation, "Security Theater REALized and Flying without REAL ID", EFF, [online] https://www.eff.org/, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[22] Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, *2024 Trafficking in Persons Report*, U.S Department of State, 2024, [online] https://www.state.gov, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[23] Eleanor BIRD, Jasmin FOX-SKELLY, Nicola JENNER, Ruth LARBEY, Emma WEITKAMP & Alan WINFIELD, *The ethics of artificial intelligence: Issues and initiatives*, Panel for the Future of Science and Technology, European Parliamentary Research Service, 2020, [online] https://www.europarl.europa.eu, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[24] Marek GREGORCYK, "New! How AI is leading the fight against online child abuse", *United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute*, March 22, 2023, [online] https://unicri.org, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[25] Callum CANT, James MULDOON & Mark GRAHAM, Feeding the Machine. The Hidden Human Labor Powering A.I., Bloomsbury Publishing, 2024[1st], [online] https://www.bloomsbury.com, accessed on May 20, 2025.

Caroline HASKINS, "The Low-Paid Humans Behind AI's Smarts Ask Biden to Free Them From 'Modern Day Slavery'", *WIRED*, May 22, 2024, [online] https://www.wired.com, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[26] Gabriel HOPKINS, "How AI and data fusion are turning the tide in the battle against modern slavery", *Fintech Futures*, May 31, 2022, [online] https://www.fintechfutures.com, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[27] Greg IACURCI, "Job scams surged 118% in 2023, aided by AI. Here's how to stop them", *CNBC*, July 7, 2024, [online] https://www.cnbc.com, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[28] Group of Expert on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, *Online and technology-facilitated trafficking in human beings: Full Report*, Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 2022, [online] https://rm.coe.int, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[29] Deanna DAVY & Samantha LUNDRIGAN, *n° 1 Artificial intelligence-produced child sexual abuse material: Insights from Dark Web forum posts*, International Policing and Public Protection Research Institute, 2024, [online] http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.31104.44801, accessed on May 20, 2025.

Internet Watch Foundation, *What has changed in the AI CSAM landscape?*, United Kingdoms, IWF, 2024, [online] https://www.iwf.org.uk

Shruthi KRISHNA, Fiona DUBROSA & Ruth MILANAIK, "Rising Threats of AI-Driven Child Sexual Abuse Material", *Pediatrics* 153 (2), January 2024, [online] https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2023-063954, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[30] Jean-Marc RICKLI, Federico MANTELASSI & Gwyn GLASSER, *Peace of Mind: Cognitive Warfare and the Governance of Subversion in the 21st Century, GCSP Policy Brief n° 9*, Geneva, Geneva Centre for Security Policy, 2023, [online] https://www.gcsp.ch, accessed on May 20, 2025.

Emile LOZA DE SILES, "Slavery AI", *Washington and Lee Journal of Civil Rights and Social Justice*, 30(2)/2024, p. 93, [online] https://scholarlycommons.law.wlu.edu, accessed on May 20, 2025.

Steven A. HASSAN, "How AI Can Be Used to Manipulate People, Absent regulations, AI offers a powerful tool for cults and dictators", *Psychology Today*, April 6, 2023, [online] https://www.psychologytoday.com, accessed on May 20, 2025.

AI could be used, separately or together, to destroy[31] the environment and require vast amounts of raw materials[32] and natural resources. "By 2030, AI could use twice the energy of all of France [...] Generative AI is responsible for as much global emissions as the aviation sector; training one large language model sees enough water daily to cool data centers with three Olympic-sized swimming pools"[33]. Although AI is often considered as "clean tech", it could exacerbate the effects of climate change[34] [35]monitor supply chains and financial transactions, as well as identify traffickers and victims[36] AI could strengthen early warning systems for climate-related extreme events and other natural disasters, thereby reducing the risk of human trafficking. AI could contribute significantly to climate mitigation by monitoring greenhouse gas emissions monitoring, improving the power sector, manufacturing and materials innovation, optimizing the food system, and reducing road transport emissions. AI could also provide appropriate recommendations for Government action and for companies using AI to address climate change.

How should we deal with the positive and the negative sides of AI? In his 2024 book, *The Singularity Is Nearer: When We Merge with AI,* Ray Kurzweil concludes that:

> The reality is that nearly every aspect of life is getting progressively better as a result of exponentially improving technology, adding that technology tends to spawn a virtuous circle advancing nearly every aspect of human well-being, including literacy, education, wealth, sanitation, health, democratization, and reduction in violence arguing that AI is the pivotal technology that will allow us to meet the pressing challenges that confront us, including overcoming disease, poverty, environmental degradation and all of our human frailties. We have the moral imperative to realize this promise of new technologies [37].

Yuval Noah Harari, in his most recent book, N*exus. A Brief History of Information Networks from the Stone Age to AI*[38]*,* quotes Kurzweil and is more skeptical: he mentions the warnings issued by philosophers, social scientists, and leading experts and entrepreneurs such as the Turing-Award winner Yoshua Bengio, Geoffrey Hinton, Sam Altman, Elon Musk and Mustafa Suleyman (Author of *The Coming Wave. Technology, Power, and the 21st Century's Greatest Dilemma)* that AI could destroy our civilization. He also notes that in 2023, nearly thirty Governments, including those of China, the United States, and the United Kingdom, signed the B*letchley Declaration on AI*[39]. This declaration acknowledges that "there is potential for serious, even catastrophic, harm, either deliberate or unintentional, stemming from the most significant capabilities of these AI models".

In the spring of 2023, the White House convened an emergency meeting of leading AI CEOs, and the U.S. Senate held a hearing in which OpenAI CEO Sam Altman said that AI "could do significant harm to the world [...] If this technology goes wrong, it can go very wrong"[40].

In response, leaders at the G7 meeting in Japan announced the *"Hiroshima AI Process"*[41] a series of international meetings to address AI governance. After continuous discussions including an

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[31] Kevin BALES, *Blood and Earth. Modern Slavery, Ecocide, and the Secret to Saving the World*, New York, Spiegel & Grau, 2016[1st], p. 1-253, [online] https://christusliberat.org, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[32] The multi-stakeholder High-level Advisory Body on Artificial, *Governing AI for Humanity*, New York, United Nations, 2024, p. 31, [online] https://www.un.org, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[33] Golestan S. RADWAN, Chief Digital Officer of UNEP, "AI for Good Summit", May 30, 2024.

[34] Sara KINELL, *Artificial Intelligence and Climate Change*, ETH Zürich, 2023, [online] https://www.research-collection, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[35] NAVEX One Whistleblowing and Incident Management solution is an example of a platform designed to handle sensitive cases like trafficking reports efficiently and confidentially.

[36] FAST Initiative, "Mobilizing the Financial Sector Against Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking", United Nations University Centre for Policy Research, [online] https://www.fastinitiative.org/, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[37] Ray KURZWEIL, *The Singularity Is Nearer: When We Merge with AI*, Viking, 2024.

[38] Yuval N. HARARI, *Nexus: A Brief History of Information Networks from the Stone Age to AI*, Random House, 2024, [online] https://www.ynharari.com/, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[39] *The Bletchley Declaration*, AI Safety Summit, November 1-2, 2023, [online] https://www.gov.uk/, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[40] Blair LEVIN & Larry DOWNES, "Who Is Going to Regulate AI?", *Harvard Business Review,* May 19, 2023, [online] https://hbr.org, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[41] Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, "Hiroshima AI Process", [online] https://www.soumu.go.jp, accessed on May 20, 2025.

interim minister-level meeting in September and a multi-stakeholder high-level meeting at IGF Kyoto 2023 in October, "*the Hiroshima AI Process Comprehensive Policy Framework*"[42], the first international framework that includes guiding principles and code of conduct aimed at promoting the safe, secure and trustworthy advanced AI systems, was successfully agreed upon at the G7 Digital & Tech Ministers' Meeting in December and was endorsed by the G7 Leaders in the same month[43].

II. Forced labour in the production of AI systems and human trafficking in the digital economy

In recent years, human trafficking has increasingly moved online. Many victims are forced to work in various forms of digital exploitation. This shift has created new challenges in the fight against trafficking as traffickers use technology to expand their operations and reach a broader audience and remain anonymous. Victims of online exploitation are often coerced into activities such as forced labour in the "gig economy" (a labor market characterized by the prevalence of short-term contracts or freelance work)[44], sexual exploitation through live streaming or pornography, and even forced participation in cybercrime.

We are seeing not only the extent but also the effects of forced labour through AI. Callum Cant, James Muldoon, Mark Graham, three researchers from Oxford University, write in their book *Feeding the Machine: The Hidden Human Labor Powering A.I.*:

> Silicon Valley has sold us the illusion that artificial intelligence is a frictionless technology that will bring wealth and prosperity to humanity. But hidden beneath this smooth surface lies the grim reality of a precarious global workforce of millions laboring under often appalling conditions to make A.I. possible. This book presents an urgent, riveting investigation of the intricate network that maintains this exploitative system, revealing the untold truth of A.I. Based on hundreds of interviews and thousands of hours of fieldwork over more than a decade, Feeding the Machine describes the lives of the workers deliberately concealed from view and the power structures that determine their future[45].

Data-set analysts and creators enable autonomous vehicles and their AI to distinguish between traffic lights and street signs. The same goes for training machine learning algorithms. These algorithms would not be as developed as they are now without millions of workers, who often endure slave-like working conditions, to train them.

Furthermore, we see not only the extent but also the effects of forced labour occurring due to AI. Workers at data annotations/content moderation centres in Kenya and Uganda must complete between 500-1000 tickets per day within their 10-hour shift. Their specific job as manual moderators forces them to review hundreds of sexually explicit and violent videos that algorithms have flagged. One moderator reported: "Most of us are damaged psychologically, some have attempted suicide […] some of our spouses have left us, and we can't get them back". Very little support was offered to workers after witnessing traumatic videos:

> One of the content moderation centres we visited were left crying and shaking after witnessing beheading videos, and were told by management that at some point during the week they could have a 30-minute break to see a "wellness counsellor" – a colleague who had no formal training as a psychologist" Not only were these policies a violation of mental health

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[42] Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, "Documents of Achievement", [online] https://whttps://www.soumu.go.jp/, accessed on May 20, 2025.
[43] Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, "Hiroshima AI Process", [online] https://www.soumu.go.jp, accessed on May 20, 2025.
[44] International Labour Organization, *Realizing decent work in the platform economy*, 113th Session of the ILO Conference, 2025, [online] https://www.ilo.org/, accessed on May 20, 2025.
[45] Callum CANT, James MULDOON & Mark GRAHAM, *Feeding the Machine: The Hidden Human Labor Powering A.I.,* Edinburgh, Canongate, 2024.

services but moreover first-hand recounts state "I collapsed in the office"; "I went into a severe depression"; "I had to go to hospital"; "they had no concern for our wellbeing"[46].

One of the ways traffickers exploit victims online is through forced labour in the digital economy. This can include making individuals work long hours under duress in activities like data entry, content moderation, or other online jobs that often go unnoticed. These victims are frequently paid little or nothing, and they are typically forced to work in harsh conditions, with threats of violence or other forms of coercion used to keep them compliant.

For example, in Southeast Asia, there have been cases where people are trafficked to work in online scam operations. Victims are forced to work in "boiler rooms", where they engage in fraudulent activities such as online gambling or investment scams. According to estimates, thousands of individuals, particularly from vulnerable communities, have been trapped in such operations, with traffickers exploiting the anonymity of the internet to carry out their crimes[47].

III. Sexual exploitation through online platforms

Sexual exploitation has also seen a significant shift in the digital realm. Traffickers use online platforms to advertise and sell victims for sex, often under the guise of escort services or other legitimate businesses[48]. In many cases, victims are forced to perform sexual acts on live-streaming platforms or create explicit content for distribution on pornography websites[49].

The scale of this issue is staggering. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO)[50], over 6.3 million people are victims of forced sexual exploitation globally, with a significant portion of these cases involving online activities. In the United States alone, it is estimated that thousands of cases of online sexual exploitation are reported each year, with traffickers using social media, dating apps, and other online platforms to recruit and exploit victims.

A specific example includes the rise of "webcam slavery," where victims, often women and minors, are forced to perform sexual acts in front of a webcam for paying customers. This form of exploitation is particularly insidious because it allows traffickers to reach a global market while keeping their operations hidden from traditional law enforcement methods[51].

IV. Forced criminality and cybercrime

Another trend is the use of trafficking victims in forced criminality, particularly in cybercrime. Traffickers compel victims to engage in illegal activities such as hacking, online fraud, or money

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[46] James MULDOON, Mark GRAHAM & Callum CANT, "Meet Mercy and Anita – the African workers driving the AI revolution, for just over a dollar an hour", *The Guardian*, July 6, 2024, [online] https://www.theguardian.com, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[47] UNICRI & Thailand Institute For Justice, *Countering Emerging Threats and Challenges of Transitional Organized Crimes From Thailand's Perspective in the Context of the ASEAN Community*, Bangkok, 2021, [online] https://unicri.it/, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[48] United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020: "Chapter 5. Traffickers Use of the Internet"*, Vienna, January 2021 [online] https://www.unodc.org, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[49] OSCE Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings ,*Mapping the online landscape of risks of trafficking in human beings on sexual services websites across the OSCE region*, Vienna, August 2023, [online] https://www.osce.org, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[50] International Labour Organization, "Data and research on forced labour", [online] https://www.ilo.org/topics/, accessed on May 20, 2025.

International Organization for Migration, Walk Free & International Labour Organization, *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage: Executive Summary*, Geneva, September 2022, [online] https://www.ilo.org/, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[51] Kieran GUILBERT, "Chasing shadows: can technology save the slaves it snared?", *Reuters*, June 21, 2018, [online] https://www.reuters.com/, accessed on May 20, 2025.

laundering. These victims are often forced to work in underground cybercrime rings, subjected to intense pressure and harsh conditions[52].

For instance, in some regions, criminal organizations have trafficked individuals to carry out phishing schemes, identity theft, and other forms of online fraud. These victims are not only exploited but also exposed to significant legal risks, as they are often the ones caught and prosecuted while the traffickers remain in the shadows[53].

The scale of forced criminality involving human trafficking victims is difficult to quantify, but this form of exploitation is growing alongside the expansion of digital technology. Reports from law enforcement agencies suggest that thousands of individuals globally may be involved in such schemes, with many cases going unreported due to the clandestine nature of these operations[54].

V. Legal framework and future pathways

In recent years, the rapid development of AI has prompted the release of numerous binding and non-binding treaties and agreements to regulate its impact. These initiatives, spearheaded by governments, international organizations, and tech companies, focus on establishing ethical guidelines, promoting transparency, and ensuring AI is used responsibly. Binding treaties typically involve legal obligations, while non-binding agreements serve as frameworks for cooperation and voluntary adherence to best practices. This growing body of regulations reflects a global effort to address AI's potential risks and opportunities, balancing innovation with protecting fundamental rights and societal interests. Some are listed below.

Despite recent and ongoing efforts by Governments, international organizations, academia, business, and spiritual leaders, a global governance framework for AI still needs to be developed. Notable declarations and legal instruments exist like: the OECD AI Principles (Adopted in 2019 and updated in 2024)[55], he G20 AI Principle (2019)[56], the Rome Call for AI Ethics (February 2020)[57], the GPAI Ministerial Declaration (2023)[58], the G7 Ministerial Statement on Hiroshima AI Process (2023)[59], the Seoul Ministerial Statement (2024)[60], the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (November 2021)[61], the Bletchley Declaration by Countries Attending the AI Safety Summit (November 2023)[62] and ILO International Labor Conference (June 2024), promoting "a renewed social contract"[63].

On the 17th of May 2024, the Council of Europe adopted the first-ever international legally binding treaty aimed at ensuring the respect of human rights, the rule of law, and democracy legal

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[52] UNODC Regional Office for Southeast Asia and the Pacific, *Casinos, cyber fraud, and trafficking in persons for forced criminality in Southeast Asia*, Bangkok, August 2023, [online] https://www.unodc.org/, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[53] UN OHCHR Regional Office for South-East Asia, *Online Scam Operations and Trafficking into Forced Criminality in Southeast Asia: Recommendations for a Human Rights Response,* Bangkok, 2023, [online] https://bangkok.ohchr.org/, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[54] International Organization for Migration, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, *IOM's Regional Situation Report on Trafficking in Persons into Forced Criminality in Online Scamming Centres in Southeast Asia*, Bangkok, February 2024, [online] https://roasiapacific.iom.int/, accessed May 20, 2025.

[55] OECD, "AI Principles", [online] https://www.oecd.org/, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[56] G20, "AI Principles", [online] https://www.mofa.go.jp/, accessed May 20, 2025.

[57] RenAissance Foundation, "Rome Call for an AI Ethics", February 28, 2025, [online] https://www.romecall.org/, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[58] The Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence, *Ministerial Declaration*, 5th Session of the Ministerial Council, December 2023, [online] https://gpai.ai/, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[59] "G7 Leaders' Statement on the Hiroshima AI Process", October 20, 2023 [online] https://g7g20-documents.org/, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[60] Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Korea, "Annex Seoul Statement of Intent toward International Cooperation on AI Safety Science", May 23, 2024, [online] https://overseas.mofa.go.kr/, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[61] UNESCO, *Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence*, November 2021, [online] https://unesdoc.unesco.org/, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[62] *The Bletchley Declaration*, AI Safety Summit, November 1-2, 2023, [online] https://www.gov.uk/, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[63] ILO, *Towards a renewed social contract*, International Labour Conference, 112th Session, 2024, [online] https://www.ilo.org/, accessed on May 20, 2025.

standards in the use of AI systems, the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law[64]. The treaty, which is also open to non-European countries, sets out a legal framework that covers the entire lifecycle of AI systems and addresses the risks they may pose while promoting responsible innovation. The convention adopts a risk-based approach to designing, developing, using, and decommissioning AI systems, which requires careful consideration of any potential negative consequences of using AI systems.

The European Union AI Act (Regulation (EU) 2024/1689)[65] lays down harmonized rules on artificial intelligence and provides AI developers and deployers with precise requirements and obligations regarding specific uses of AI. The AI Act is the first-ever legal framework on AI, which addresses the risks of AI and positions Europe to play a leading role globally. It came into force in August 2024. Some provisions of the AI Act are already fully applicable. However, some requirements on the high-risk AI systems and other provisions will only be applicable at the end of a transitional period (i.e., the time between entry into force and the date of applicability)[66].

The United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence (HLAB-AI) released its final report, "Governing AI for Humanity"[67], on the 19th of September 2024[68]. This report outlines a blueprint for addressing AI-related risks and sharing its transformative potential globally. First, it urges the UN to lay the foundations of the first globally inclusive and distributed architecture for AI governance based on international cooperation. Then it proposes seven recommendations to address gaps in current AI governance arrangements. Finally, it calls on all Governments and stakeholders to work together to govern AI and foster the development and protection of all human rights. This includes light institutional mechanisms to complement existing efforts and foster inclusive global AI governance arrangements that are agile, adaptive, and effective to keep pace with AI's evolution.

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the "*UN Global Digital Compact*"[69] on September 22, 2024, at the UN Summit for the Future. Like the Global Compact on Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees, it is not a binding instrument. The Outcome Documents of the Summit of the Future[70] are the *"Pact of the Future,"* the *"Global Digital Compact,"* and the *"Declaration on Future Generations."* Annexed to the Pact, the "*Global Digital Compact*" is the first comprehensive global framework for digital cooperation. It explicitly includes human rights and concrete commitments to accelerate progress on the 2030 Agenda and emphasizes the role of non-state stakeholders. It makes the first global commitment to digital public goods and digital public infrastructure to open-source data, models, standards, and data governance. In the Compact, leaders also agreed on ambitious steps to make the digital space safer through greater accountability of tech companies, social media platforms, and actions to tackle disinformation and online harms. The Compact includes an agreement on a roadmap for global AI governance through establishing an AI Scientific Panel, global policy dialogue on AI, and providing a "*Global Fund for AI capacity building*". As the Secretary-General stated:

> We know AI is rapidly advancing, but where is it taking us: to more freedom or more conflict? To a more sustainable world or greater inequality? To be better informed or easier to manipulate? Two resolutions in the General Assembly, the Global Digital Compact, and the recommendations of the High-Level Body on AI can lay the foundations for inclusive governance of AI. Without a global approach to its management, artificial intelligence could lead to artificial divisions across the board – a Great Fracture with two internets, two markets,

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[64] Council of Europe, F*ramework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law*, Treaty Series – n° 225, [online] https://rm.coe.int/, accessed on May 20, 2025.
[65] European Parliament and Council of the European Union, Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence, June 13, 2024,[online] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/, accessed on May 20, 2025.
[66] "Shapin Europe's digital future", *European Commission*, [online] https://digital-strategy.ec, accessed on May 20, 2025.
[67] The multi-stakeholder High-level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence, *Governing AI for Humanity*, September 2024, [online] https://www.un.org/, accessed on May 20, 2025.
[68] *Ibid*., p. 77.
[69] *Global Digital Compact*, GA Res., UN Doc. A/RES/79/L.2 (2024), [online] https://www.un.org, accessed on May 20, 2025.
[70] Summit of the Future Outcome Documents, *Pact for the Future Global Digital Compact and Declaration on Future Generations*, United Nations, 2024, [online] https://www.un.org, accessed on May 20, 2025.

and two economies - with every country forced to pick a side and enormous consequences for all. The United Nations is uniquely placed to promote cooperation on AI – based on the values of the Charter and international law. Let's move forward together to make AI a force for good[71].

VI. The religious side

Spiritual leaders have expressed concern about the use of artificial intelligence. Their original contribution may be vital.

The 2020 Rome "*Call for an AI Ethics*"[72] was conceived and promoted by the Pontifical Academy for Life and subsequently by the RenAIssance Foundation.

Following the signing of the "Rome Call" by the leaders of the three Abrahamic faiths (Christianity, Islam, and Judaism) in 2023, in the name of peaceful coexistence and shared values, and to reinforce the idea that a multi-religious approach to vital issues such as AI ethics is the way forward, religious leaders from around the world met in Hiroshima, Japan, in August 2024 to sign the "*Rome Call for AI Ethics*", underscoring the vital importance of guiding the development of artificial intelligence with ethical principles that promote peace.

The World Council of Churches (WCC). The WCC's *Statement on the Unregulated Development of Artificial Intelligence*[73] emphasizes the need for AI to be developed and used to promote justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.

The Evangelical Church of Germany ("Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland" (EKD), representing the Protestant Church in Germany, has similarly addressed the ethical implications of AI in a 2021 document *Freiheit digital. Die Zehn Gebote des digitalen Wandelns (Digital freedom. The ten commandments of digital change)*[74]. The EKD has called for a critical and reflective approach to AI, emphasizing that technology should be used to align with Christian values of justice, peace, and the preservation of Creation.

The Church of England's General Synod on 26 February 2024 publicly affirmed the place of work as a critical component in "human flourishing" in an era when Artificial Intelligence is driving a "new fast-moving industrial revolution"[75].

In his statement at the Summit of the Future, H.M.E.H. Fra' John DUNLAP[76], the Grand Master of the Sovereign Order of Malta, underlined that the Sovereign Order of Malta[77] shares the sense of hope and the determination that inspires the Pact of the Future adopted by the Summit[78]. He stressed that the Sovereign Order of Malta looks in positive terms and with confidence in the future. He noted:

> Technology and scientific innovation, artificial intelligence in particular, may carry substantial improvements and advances for humankind, but the international community should never lose sight of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, to which the Order of Malta traditionally devotes its humanitarian activities. [...] The Order attaches utmost importance to the goal – highlighted by the Pact for the Future - of promoting a culture of peace, inclusion, tolerance, and peaceful co-existence by eradicating, among other things, religious discrimination. Religion is an integral part of the human personality and cultural and social life

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[71] "Secretary-General's remarks at the Opening of the General Debate of the Seventy-ninth Session of the General Assembly"
[72] Press Release, "The Call for AI Ethics was signed in Rome", *RenAIssance Foundation*, February 2, 2022, [online] https://www.romecall.org, accessed May 20, 2025.
[73] Central Committee, *Statement on the Unregulated Development of Artificial Intelligence*, Geneva, World Council Committee, 2023, [online] https://www.oikoumene.org, accessed May 20, 2025.
[74] The Evangelical Church of Germany, *Freiheit digital. Die Zehn Gebote in Zeiten des digitalen Wandels*, Leipzig, 2021, [online] https://www.ekd-digital.de, accessed May 20, 2025.
[75] The Church of England, "Synod affirms work as key to 'human dignity and purpose' in the face of AI revolution", February 26, 2024, [online] https://www.churchofengland.org, accessed May 20, 2025.
[76] Fra' John DUNLAP, *Statement by his most Eminent Highness at the United Nations Summit of the Future*, New York, 2024, [online] https://estatements.unmeetings.org/estatements, accessed on May 20, 2025.
[77] Sovereign Order of Malta, "Grand Master addresses UN Summit for the future and meets with Secretary General Guterres", *Order of Malta*, September 23, 2024, [online] https://www.orderofmalta.int, accessed on May 20, 2025.
[78] *The Pact for the Future*, GA Res., 79th session, UN Doc. A/RES/79/1 (2024), [online] https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/79/1, accessed on May 20, 2025.

worldwide, and religious freedom and dialogue among religions can be powerful vehicles of conflict mediation, social advancement, and sustainable development[79].

VII. The ethical side

The critical issue in both AI and contemporary slavery is the respect for the specific human nature of the human person: the human person is neither an animal nor a slave, let alone a machine[80]. As Paolo Benanti highlights, the governance of artificial intelligence should not take on dehumanizing forms [81].

As we stand at the intersection of unprecedented technological advancement and profound ethical challenges, one key question emerges: How can we use AI to free contemporary enslaved people and prevent the misuse of AI that reduces human beings to mere machines? How can we fully restore human nature, life, and dignity?

VIII. Using AI to free contemporary enslaved people

AI holds the potential to combat modern slavery and human trafficking[82], offering powerful tools to identify, track, and dismantle trafficking networks. By leveraging AI in the following ways, we can work towards liberating millions of people trapped in conditions of slavery.

With the Data Analysis and Pattern Recognition. Indeed, AI can process vast amounts of data from sources such as social media, financial transactions, and travel records to identify patterns indicative of trafficking. Machine learning algorithms can analyze these patterns to predict and pinpoint locations where trafficking is likely to occur, enabling law enforcement to act swiftly.

In Victim Identification. AI-driven facial recognition and image analysis technologies can help identify trafficking victims by matching images from online platforms with missing persons' databases. This can be especially effective in locating individuals forced into online sexual exploitation or other forms of digital servitude.

To Disrupt Trafficking Networks. AI can monitor online activity and disrupt the digital operations of trafficking networks. By identifying suspicious communications, transactions, and advertisements, AI can help authorities shut down these networks and rescue victims.

To empower Survivors. AI can support efforts to assist trafficking survivors by connecting them with resources and services. AI-driven chatbots, for example, can provide survivors with immediate access to legal advice, mental health support, and safe housing options, helping them rebuild their lives.

Nevertheless, we must avoid the misuse of AI to prevent dehumanisation. While AI can be a powerful tool for good, it also risks being misused in ways that dehumanize individuals and reduce them to mere machines. To prevent this, it is crucial to establish ethical guidelines and governance frameworks that prioritize human dignity and protect against the following risks.

To avoid the Automation of Decision-Making. AI should not be allowed to make decisions that affect human lives in ways that undermine human agency. For example, AI systems used in criminal justice, hiring, or healthcare must be designed to complement, not replace, human judgment. Safeguards should be in place to ensure that humans remain in control of critical decisions, with AI serving as a tool to enhance rather than replace human reasoning.

To prevent the Surveillance and to empower the Privacy. In surveillance, AI poses significant risks to privacy and personal freedom. Governments and corporations must be held accountable to ensure that AI-driven surveillance technologies are not used to oppress or control populations. Privacy protections must be strengthened to prevent AI from becoming a tool of authoritarianism.

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[79] Fra' John DUNLAP, *Statement by his most Eminent Highness at the United Nations Summit of the Future*, New York, 2024, [online] https://estatements.unmeetings.org/estatements, accessed on May 20, 2025.
[80] Ray KURZWEI, *The Age of Spiritual Machines: When Computers Exceed Human Intelligence*, New York, Penguin, 1999.
[81] Paolo BENANTI, *Le macchine sapienti : Intelligenze artificiali e decisioni umane*, Marietti 1820, 2019, p. 73.
[82] Ryszard PIOTROWICZ, "Utilising AI technology to improve modern slavery survivor support", Modern Slavery & Human Rights, Policy & Evidence Centre led by the University of Oxford, July 2024, [online] https://files.modernslaverypec.org, accessed May 20, 2025.

To avoid Bias and Discrimination. AI systems can perpetuate and amplify existing biases if not carefully designed and monitored. It is essential to develop AI that is fair, transparent, and free from biases that could lead to discrimination against marginalized groups. This includes rigorous testing and ongoing oversight to detect and mitigate any biases in AI algorithms.

To develop Ethical AI. The development of AI technologies must be guided by ethical principles prioritizing human welfare over profit or efficiency. This includes a commitment to transparency, accountability, and the protection of human rights. AI developers and companies should be required to adhere to ethical standards and be held accountable for the impact of their technologies on society.

IX. Respect for and restoration of the Nature, Life, and Dignity of the human person

The phrase "You Shall Be as Gods"[83] captures the profound potential and responsibility that comes with the power of AI. As we push the boundaries of what technology can achieve, we must ensure that our advances are consistent with respect for all dimensions of human nature and dignity.

Implementing a Human-Centered AI should be developed with the primary goal of enhancing human well-being and dignity. This means designing AI systems that empower individuals, foster creativity and free will, and support human flourishing. AI should serve as a tool that amplifies our humanity rather than diminishing it[84].

AI should be used to free humans from menial, repetitive tasks, allowing more time for uniquely human creative and empathetic pursuits. By automating routine work, AI can give people more opportunities to engage in activities that bring fulfilment and contribute to the common good[85].

Leaders in AI development and governance must embrace ethical leadership, recognizing the power of AI to shape humanity's future. This includes using AI in just, equitable, and respectful ways for all people, regardless of their background or circumstances[86].

AI continues to evolve, there is a need for ongoing spiritual and moral reflection on its role in society. Religious and philosophical traditions can offer valuable insights into the ethical use of AI, reminding us of the importance of humility, compassion, and respect for the inherent dignity of every person[87].

Finally, AI should not be an obstacle but a tool for understanding and defending every person's human nature in all its dimensions: physical, psychological, cultural, and spiritual[88].

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[83] Quote from Genesis 3:5: "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil".

[84] Luciano FLORIDI, *et al.*, "AI4People-An Ethical Framework for a Good AI Society: Opportunities, Risks, Principles, and Recommendations", *Minds and Machines,* 28(8)/2018, p. 689-707, [online] https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[85] Margot EDELMAN, "Why the human touch is needed to harness AI tools for communications", New York, *World Economic Forum*, June 18, 2024, [online] https://www.weforum.org, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[86] Natalia DÍAZ-RODRÍGUEZ, *et al*., "Connecting the dots in trustworthy Artificial Intelligence: From AI principles, ethics, and key requirements to responsible AI systems and regulation" *Information Fusion,* 99/November 2024, [online] https://doi.org/, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[87] Alberto NÚÑEZ, "What can ethics and spirituality contribute to the development of AI"*,* Barcelona*, Esade*, September 17, 2024, [online] https://dobetter.esade.edu, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[88] Víctor Manuel Card. FERNÁNDEZ, *Declaration of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith "Dignitas Infinita" on Human Dignity*, Rome, 2024, [online] https://press.vatican.va 61-62. php and 41-42. php, accessed on May 20, 2025.

Ján FIGEL, *The Strong and Deep Nexus Between Human Dignity and Religious Freedom*, BYU Law, January 19, 2024, [online] https://talkabout.iclrs.org, accessed on May 20, 2025.

Department for External Church Relations, Basic Teaching on Human Dignity, Freedom and Rights, The Russian Orthodox Church, 2008, [online] https://old.mospat.ru/en/documents/dignity-freedom-rights/, accessed on May 20, 2025.

Hershey H. FRIEDMAN, Human Dignity and the Jewish Tradition, SSRN Electronic Journal, July 2008, [online] https://www.researchgate.net, accessed on May 20, 2025.

Sayyid M.H. LAVASANI, Seyed M. KALANTARKOUSHEH, *The Roots of Human Dignity according to Quranic Verses,* Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences, 7(10)/2013, p. 393-397, [online] https://www.ajbasweb.com, accessed on May 20, 2025.

Marcus DÜWEL, Jens BRAAVIG, Roger BROWNSORD & Dietmar MIETH, *The Cambridge Handbook of Human Dignity. Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Cambridge, 2014, [online] https://fr.scribd.com, accessed on May 20, 2025.

Conclusion

The challenge before us is to harness the power of AI to free those enslaved by modern forms of oppression while ensuring that AI itself does not become a tool of dehumanization. By grounding AI development in ethical principles that respect human nature, dignity, creativity, and freedom, we can use this transformative technology to restore and elevate the human spirit. In doing so, we fulfil the potential of "You Shall Be as Gods" not as a declaration of hubris but as a call to responsibly steward the gifts of Creation in ways that honour and uplift the divine image within each of us.

There are several recommendations for moving forward. First, religious institutions could collaborate on interfaith initiatives to promote a global ethical framework for AI that aligns with shared values of human dignity, justice, and peace. Governments, tech companies, and religious institutions should also collaborate to develop AI systems that prioritize ethical considerations, with input from diverse stakeholders, including religious leaders. Moreover, religious institutions can play a crucial role in raising awareness about the ethical implications of AI, helping to educate their communities on how to engage with AI in ways that uphold moral values. These organizations should advocate for international standards and regulations that ensure AI is developed and used in ways that respect human rights and promote the common good.

To limit the damage that AI could cause, three legal approaches could be considered.

Firstly, we must ensure the effective implementation of existing legal instruments in the areas of human rights, labour, refugee, international environmental, international criminal, and international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflicts. This requires sufficient financial and human resources to implement these instruments at national, regional and global levels[89].

AI Research Group of the Centre for Digital Culture, "Encountering Artificial Intelligence: Ethical and Anthropological Investigations", *Journal of Moral Theology*, 1/December 2023, p. i-262, [online] https://doi.org/10.55476/001c.91230, accessed on May 20, 2025.

Brian P. GREEN, "A Catholic Vision for a Positive Future with Divine, Human, and Artificial Intelligence", *Future of Life Institute*, June 18, 2024, [online] https://futureoflife.org, accessed on May 20, 2025.

Brian P. GREEN, "Epilogue on AI and Moral Theology: Weaving Threads and Entangling Them Further", *Journal of Moral Theology*, 11(1)/2022, p. 232-249, [online] https://doi.org/10.55476/001c.34132, accessed on May 20, 2025.

Brian P. GREEN, "The Vatican and Artificial Intelligence: An Interview with Bishop Paul Tighe", *Journal of Moral Theology,* 11(1)/April 2022, p. 212-231, [online] https://jmt.scholasticahq.com, accessed May 20, 2025.

Levi CHECKETTS, "Artificial Intelligence and the Marginalization of the Poor", *Journal of Moral Theology*, 11(1)/April 2022, p. 87-111, [online] https://jmt.scholasticahq.com, accessed on May 20, 2025.

Mark GRAVES, "Theological Foundations for Moral Artificial Intelligence", *Journal of Moral Theology*, 11(1)/April 2022, p. 182-211, [online] https://doi.org/10.55476/001c.34130, accessed on May 20, 2025.

Octavion M. MACHIDON, "Analyzing the Anthropological Implications of Artificial Intelligence through the Theology of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI", *Journal of Moral Theology*, 13(2)/July 2024, p. 114-35, [online] https://doi.org/10.55476/001c.121945, accessed on May 20, 2025.

Matthew GAUDET & Brian P. GREEN, "Artificial Intelligence", *Journal of Moral Theology*, 11(1)/April 2022, [online] https://www.academyforlife.va, accessed on May 20, 2025.

Jordan J. WALES, "Metaphysics, Meaning, and Morality: A Theological Reflection on AI", *Journal of Moral Theology,* 11(1)/April 2022, [online] https://doi.org/10.55476/001c.34129, accessed on May 20, 2025.

Andrea VICINI, "Artificial Intelligence and Social Control: Ethical Issues and Theological Resources", *Journal of Moral Theology*, 11(1)/April 2022, p. 41-69, [online] https://doi.org/10.55476/001c.34123, accessed on May 20, 2025.

Brian P. GREEN, Matthew J. GAUDET, Levi CHECKETTS, Brian CUTTER, *et al*., "Artificial Intelligence and Moral Theology: A Conversation" *Journal of Moral Theology*, 11(1)/April 2022, [online] https://doi.org/10.55476/001c.34122, accessed on May 20, 2025.

Paolo BENANTI, *Le Macchine sapienti: Intelligenze artificiali e decisioni umane,* Bologna, Marietti 1820, 2019.

Paolo BENANTI, *La condizione tecno-umana. Domande di senso nell'era della tecnologia.* Bologna, Edizioni Dehoniane Bologna, 2016.

Ruth TSURIA & Yossi TSURIA, "Artificial Intelligence's Understanding of Religion: Investigating the Moralistic Approaches Presented by Generative Artificial Intelligence Tools", *Religions*, 15(3)/March 2024, [online] https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15030375, accessed on May 20, 2025.

[89] The multi-stakeholder High-level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence, *Governing AI for Humanity*, September 2024, p. 17. [online] https://www.un.org/, accessed on May 20, 2025.

Secondly, gaps could be filled, and coherence could be brought to international responses to AI governance[90] within the United Nations system through twice-yearly intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder policy dialogue meetings on the opportunities and risks of AI[91] in New York and Geneva. "The United Nations could be the vehicle for a new social contract on AI"[92]. The challenge may be to bring all stakeholders to the table and to act swiftly: "The world of technology and innovation is moving so fast that regulations can hardly keep up […]"[93].

Finally, we must mobilise public opinion[94] and activate humanitarian diplomacy[95] to encourage Governments and businesses to adopt and implement limits on AI. A coalition of Governments, United Nations agencies, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement[96], businesses[97], academics, spiritual leaders, and NGOs, could be instrumental in limiting the harmful effects of AI, as the coalitions that succeeded in adopting the Ottawa Convention in 1997 and establishing the International Criminal Court were[98]. Since 2019, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has been consulting informally with various stakeholders, including civil society, businesses, States and other experts, regarding the scope of its forthcoming project on business and human rights in technology, known as the "B-Tech Project"[99]. The B-Tech Project will provide authoritative guidance and resources for implementing the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs)[100] in technology. Mobilizing sufficient human and financial resources is essential to regulate AI development, protect human rights, and end modern slavery[101].

Pope Leo XIV recently called for international cooperation in dealing with IA: "Truth […] does not create division, but rather enables us to confront all the more resolutely the challenges of our time, such

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[90] The multi-stakeholder High-level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence, *Governing AI for Humanity*, September 2024, p. 17. [online] https://www.un.org/, accessed on May 20, 2025, p. 9.
[91] *Ibid.*, p. 12.
[92] *Ibid.*, p.21.
[93] Anu BRADFORD, *Digital Empires. The Global Battle to Regulate Technology*, Oxford University Press, 2023, [online] https://global.oup.com, accessed on May 20, 2025.
Guiseppe PERESSOTTI, "Digital Empires: The Global Battle to Regulate Technology", *The London School of Economics and Political Science*, June 17, 2024, [online] https://blogs.lse.ac.uk, accessed on May 20, 2025.
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[95] Michel VEUTHEY, "Humanitarian Diplomacy: Saving it When it is Most Needed", *in* Alexandre VAUTRAVERS & Yvita FOX (eds.), *Humanitarian Space. Webster University Geneva 16th Humanitarian Conference*, Geneva, Webster University, 2012, p. 195-208, [online] https://christusliberat.org, accessed on May 20, 2025.
[96] Tilman RODENHAUSER, "Focus on cyber operations that cause physical damage is not enough", *7th substantive meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies 2021-2025*, New York, March 6, 2024, [online] https://www.icrc.org, accessed on May 20, 2025.
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ICRC, *Protecting civilians and other protected persons and objects against the potential human cost of ICT activities during armed conflict*, 34th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Resolution, October 2024, [online] https://rcrcconference.org, accessed on May 20, 2025.
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Pierrick DEVIDAL, "Back to basics with a digital twist: humanitarian principles and dilemmas in the digital age", *Humanitarian Law & Policy*, February 2, 2023, [online] https://blogs.icrc.org/, accessed on May 20, 2025.
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[97] OHCHR, "13th United Nations Forum on Business and Human Rights: Geneva. 25-27 November 2024", *United Nations*, 2024, [online] https://www.ohchr.org, accessed on May 20, 2025.
[98] Michel VEUTHEY, "Implementing International Humanitarian Law: Old and New ways", *in* Bertrand G. RAMCHARAN (ed.), *Human Rights Protection in the Field.,* Leiden/Boston, Martinus Nijhoff, 2006, p. 87-117.
[99] OHCHR, *Taking Action to Address Human Rights Risks Related to End-Use: A B-Tech Foundational Paper*, 2020, [online] https://www.ohchr.org/, accessed on May 20, 2025.
[100] OHCHR, "B-Tech Project", [online] https://www.ohchr.org/, accessed on May 20, 2025. OHCHR, *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations "Protect, Respect and Remedy Framework*, 2011, [online] https://www.ohchr.org/, accessed on May 20, 2025.
[101] Santa Marta Group, "Strategic Goals", 2022, [online], https://santamartagroup.org/about/strategic-goals, accessed May 20, 2025.

as […] the ethical use of artificial intelligence […] require[ing] commitment and cooperation on the part of all […]" [102].

Regarding the use of AI, he asked for "responsibility and discernment in order to ensure that it can be used for the good of all, so that it can benefit all of humanity"[103] and added "the Church offers to everyone the treasury of her social teaching in response to another industrial revolution and to developments in the field of artificial intelligence that pose new challenges for the defense of human dignity, justice and labour"[104].

[102] LEO XIV, *Audience to Members of the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See*, May 16, 2025, [online] https://www.vatican.va/, accessed on May 20, 2025.
[103]LEO XIV, *Address of the Holy Father Leo XIV to representatives of the media,* Monday May 12, 2025, [online] https://www.vatican.va/, accessed on May 20, 2025.
[104] LEO XIV, *Address of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV to the College of Cardinals,* May 10, 2025, [online] https://www.vatican.va/, accessed on May 20, 2025.