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Review Article

The Social Impact of AI on Human Rights: An International Legal Perspective

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Abstract

The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) is quickly changing the social, political, and legal environment across the globe. Although AI can have a crucial impact on the common good, it is also an issue with unclear threats to human rights. This essay will discuss the social impacts of AI in terms of international law, the new norms, institutional reactions, and regulatory gaps. This work evaluates the impacts of AI on human rights, which appear in the domains of privacy, equality, the freedom of expression, due process, socio-economic inclusion, which uses international human rights law, case law, and global governance controversies. It emphasizes the growing dependence of AI-powered systems in the police force, welfare, hiring, border management, and the Internet, frequently with no adequate legalized measures in place. The paper employs a qualitative methodology, document analysis, and comparative legal argument to determine vulnerabilities present in the structure that are aggravated by hidden algorithms, liberal data mining, and bias of the marginalized groups, especially in the Global South. This paper argues that soft law is unsuitable to govern AI and proposes that hard law that would result in the accountability of AI systems should be developed. It further discusses the technical opaqueness of AI systems, especially Black Box problem, where an inability to audit and provide transparency is a major concern. The article also examines how the Presumption of Innocence has been undermined by AI, particularly in the context of predictive policing and sentencing suggestions wherein the assumptions spouse by the AI system flings the notion of innocence before guilt is established. Finally, the paper suggests international regulation in a gradual stage, which involves a harmonization of the region, followed by the treaty at the international level in order to make sure that AI development does not discredit human dignity or human rights but considers geopolitical issues and questions of digital sovereignty.

Keywords

Artificial Intelligence; Human Rights; International Law; Surveillance; Algorithmic Bias; Privacy; Digital Governance; Due Process; Global Regulation.

1. Introduction

The notion of artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a characteristic of the contemporary technology environment, and has had a profound effect on the decisions, which affect lives and societies across the globe. Governments and corporations actively employ AI in such spheres where human intuition was involved, security, justice, government administration, and communication. Nonetheless, when automated decision-making is introduced in such a social institution,

some basic issues about the harmony of AI with the generally accepted principles of human rights become relevant (Chan and Lo, 2025).

The current international law system failed to consider the emergence of AI because the numerous treaties that it is based on, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, were first signed many years before the rise of algorithmic governance. However, the fundamental principles of these frameworks, which are human dignity, non-discrimination, accountability, and the rule of law, continue to be at the centre of the evaluation of social implications of AI. This can be because the authors argue that AI machines can determine employment relationships, the fairness of trials, data privacy, and inclusivity of digital societies; hence, the human rights implications are substantial and cannot be ignored. In this paper, the author will discuss international legal implications of AI using the lens of AI practices in the context of rights protection. It looks backward on the reaction of world and local agencies, identifying those points where existing frameworks are not satisfactorily protecting. This paper does not just reveal signs of tension with the law, but seeks to comprehend the social implications of uncontrolled AI systems (Krook et al., 2025).

2. Literature Review

The topic of the spread of AI is rapidly advancing to a consensus among scholars that human rights are shifting fast, enlarging certain freedoms and narrowing others. Much of the literature highlights the apprehensions that AI systems, such as automated decision-making and predictive analytics, arouse about equality, non-discrimination, privacy, and accountability. Crawford and Eubanks state that algorithmic governance is associated with structural inequalities, specifically in welfare, policing, and immigration regulation, and its impact is usually not visible to the individuals victimized (Dari et al., 2025).

Soft law versus Hard law: There has been an increased criticism of the use of the soft law, i.e. voluntary guidelines and frameworks, in the governance of AI. According to scholars, these mechanisms are not adequate to deal with systemic risks of AI technologies. Alternatively, legally binding regulations would be more effective in tracking accountability and safeguarding human rights; this would be referred to as hard law. Those who criticize the status quo of international law believe that AI is probabilistic and dynamic, and transnational that it cannot be appropriately regulated with the help of such legal instruments as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The unregulated extraterritorialism in which AI technologies created in a specific jurisdiction can impact people in a different one only enhances the loopholes in the protection of human rights (Ally, 2025).

The debate of AI governance is also concerning the issue of technical opacity and the Black Box problem. Artificial intelligence systems, especially the ones that use machine learning are usually referred to as black boxes since their operation cannot be understood or observed by outsiders. Such transparency means that it is difficult to audit these systems and determine that they are conducting their operations in a way that do not violate human rights. With decisions influencing the lives of people, such as welfare allocation or criminal sentencing, this lack of transparency poses a significant threat to responsibility, whereby one would have hard time objecting to the decision made by an AI system (Ally, 2025).

AI technologies also tend to escalate into a threat to The Presumption of Innocence, particularly in forecasting policing actions and sentencing suggestions. Some AI systems are likely to suggest a potential future criminal act, and this tendency can also cause the occurrence of bias that over represents minority groups. People may be monitored or arrested in predictive policing based on predictive algorithms, which is not a real offence, instead of actual evidence of crime, and infringes the right to be considered innocent before being proved guilty. It is especially acute when it comes to probabilistic logic, which a large part of the AI decision-making processes relies on, where the people are assessed according to statistical probability, and not by the actual culpability (Dari et al., 2025).

Lastly, it is widely agreed that international regulation of AI needs to be done in phases amongst scholars. It will be challenging to have one global treaty on AI regulation due to the geopolitical issues, such as the issue of national interests and digital sovereignty. Rather, researchers suggest beginning with regional harmonization initiatives then graduating to an increasingly global concept. By so doing, this gradual process would enable developing regulatory mechanisms that would ultimately make AI systems develop in a manner that acknowledges human dignity and observes basic rights (Ferhataj et al., 2025).

3. Research Methodology

The qualitative research design adopted in this paper involves document analysis, comparative legal reasoning, and normative interpretation to explore the international legal implication of AI as it relates to human rights. The study is also based on human rights treaties, policy alternatives and case studies, which have been carried out relying on primary sources like international legal texts, UN resolutions followed by secondary sources like academic texts, peer-reviewed journals and policy documents. The proposed methodology consists of three steps; an initial document analysis will reveal the main themes to be examined to include the potential of AI in rights protection; the next step will be the comparative jurisdictional approach to find out the differences in the regulation of AI, especially in the Global Southern part of the world, through case studies, such as AI-driven surveillance and predictive policing. This methodology offers a comprehensive, interpretive review of this relationship dynamics between AI technologies and the human rights law.

4. Results & Discussion

- Case Study 1: Artificial Intelligence -based Surveillance in China: Among the clearest applications of social implications of AI, there is the application of AI as extensive surveillance in China, especially in Xinjiang, where facial recognition cameras are used to monitor and regulate Uighur Muslim numbers. The Chinese government has built a digital state of surveillance in which AI algorithms can monitor the daily action of its people, reduce freedom of expression, and limit movement. This surveillance that is supported by AI also targets marginalized groups disproportionately, which points to a severe human rights issue in which AI technologies enhance existing disparities. The lack of meaningful supervision and lack of transparency of the systems contribute to breach of fundamental rights, as guaranteed by the international human rights law, including right to privacy and freedom of movement. This is the example of the way the uncontrolled evolution of AI is one of the most dangerous threats to the preservation of fundamental rights, especially in authoritarian states with little legal protection.

- Case Study 2: Policing AI in the United States: Police departments in the United States have deployed AI-powered predictive policing systems like PredPol to predict the area of crimes and how to spot potential offenders. Although the purpose of these tools is to improve efficiency in law enforcement, they have been criticized because they reinforce the racial biases, they tend to target minority populations, especially black and Hispanic communities. The algorithms with which the AI is implemented make use of past data related to crime, thus citing systemic biases, thus reinforcing discriminatory behavior. The practices bring serious questions to the Presumption of Innocence since people are regarded as the possible criminals in terms of statistical probability, instead of the real evidence. Such AI systems applied in policing contravene the principle of presumptions innocent until proven guilty, which is a pillar of international criminal law (Dari et al., 2025).

- Case Study 3: immigration control AI in the European Union: Asylum applications and immigration control has also been administered by the European Union using AI. Nevertheless, AI in asylum determination operations have resulted in a wide number of false identifications and discriminating prejudices against the refugees and the asylum seekers, particularly in conflict-ridden or underdeveloped states. The 2019 incident in which AI-based tools employed by some of the EU countries did not consider the dynamics of individual cases, including trauma or political persecution, resulted in incorrect rejections of claims. This is an indication that AI can unwillingly contravene the principle of non-refoulement, which forbids deporting people to a nation where they might become persecuted. It demonstrates the inherent shortcomings of soft law approaches toward the regulation of AI such that voluntary ethical standards and principles cannot offer legally binding protections to human rights when it comes to the area of migration (Ferhataj et al., 2025).

The current literature review and analysis of the case study demonstrate that there is an urgent necessity to implement more powerful and enforceable legal regulations to govern AI. The imbalance in dealing with marginalized groups and in particular with the Global South, the inability of the soft law mechanisms to protect people is an urgent issue that needs to be addressed further. The technical unintelligibility of AI systems also makes it even more difficult to hold people accountable, and the impairment of the Presumption of Innocence in fields such as predictive policing demands a powerful legal rebuttal. With AI already defining the global environment, there is a need to ensure that the law of the land is adapted to these circumstances with a more gradual and regionalized approach to the regulation.

The privacy and surveillance has been turned into an automated and ongoing process by AI. States are employing facial recognition cameras, biometric databases and predictive policing devices to patrol places, follow individuals and monitor

behavior. On the one hand, these tools can be helpful to increase safety, however, they also endanger the right to privacy and enable the intrusion of state activities. Dissent in the political sphere of the country, harassment of journalists, and opposition can be suppressed in Arab countries where the activity of AI-based surveillance remains unsupervised, and courts are weak. Equally, national businesses perform profiled advertising, forecasting, and streamlining and accumulate large volumes of personal information. Such data ecosystems can be used to profile an individual to affect the employment rate, insurance rates and even voting. Although the international legal system does protect some, it does not oblige the transnational technology corporations so it still does not provide gaps in human rights protection (Cheong et al., 2025).

The impacts of AI systems on equality and non-discrimination play an important role in the international human rights law. Algorithms can be used to make decisions on housing, credit, welfare, and employment, and historical data tends to be biased, which continues the perpetration of discrimination. The victims in most cases are not aware of the algorithms, which make decisions, and this lacks accountability. This is disproportionately affecting discriminated groups including ethnic minorities, migrants, and poor people. Robotic border-control systems, such as, can categorize certain passengers as high-risk based on opaque designs and it is possible that algorithms used in hiring will bias or result in the blocking of various applicants to the job based on their socio-economic background. These practices are in defiance of the international human rights instruments that guarantee equality and non-discrimination (Nadella et al., 2025).

There is a concern on due process and accountability with respect to increasing the use of AI in the judicial, administrative and policing sectors. When algorithms are used to make sentencing, parole, or risk evaluation decisions, people usually struggle to appeal against such decisions because of the unclear character of them. Proprietary algorithms are one additional scope of opaque decision making and since no rules or legislation insist on explaining their processes, states can offload important processes to unregulated systems. This compromises the right to a fair trial, presumption of innocence, and right to appeal against the decisions that have effects on the freedoms of individuals (TAHA & OMOTOSO, 2025).

AI is also playing a role in the freedom of speech and digital governance. The system of automated content moderation is required to contain abusive, deceptive, or even violent information on the Internet resources. Although these systems are essential towards guaranteeing online safety, they have the capability of censoring harmless speech, especially in such regions as political satire or cultural sub-text. The decisions of how information is ingested by AI systems are constituted by recommendation algorithms which affect political debate and discourse. Such systems can increase polarization, or advance certain stories, jeopardizing the principle of media pluralism and the freedom of information (Bashir et al., 2025).

Another aspect where AI is taking a drastic effect is socio-economic inclusion. The welfare delivery, healthcare prioritization, and educational assessment are also examples of AI-developed systems that are increasingly implemented to define eligibility to receive services, risk factors, and resource allocation. Misjudgments or prejudices in these systems can deny the powerless people the support they need leading to social exclusion. This increase the impacts of AI in developing countries because strong institutions and skilled labor to govern such systems are not in place (Corfmat et al., 2025).

The international law on human rights can be used to provide certain norms that deal with the social aspects of AI, although there is a lack of enforcement mechanisms. Although treaties commit states, they do not explicitly control mighty technology corporations that take part in the creation of AI. AI governance does not exist in any unified system worldwide, and states have to seek support in case systems apply to national laws and voluntary ethical codes of conduct. The regional organizations have made certain strides in Europe but harmonization used globally is far away. The development of efficient regulatory frameworks is not simple in the resources-poor countries and contributes to the global inequality in AI regulation (Vozna and Costantini, 2025).

The cross-section between AI and human rights has a number of structural challenges. The systems of AI add to the existing inequality in power distribution because states and corporations will be able to control, surveillance, and evaluate individuals without significant approval. Such dynamic disregards privacy and autonomy especially in areas where democratic measures are abducted. There is extensive algorithmic discrimination. The systems based on data are usually biased in the society, which has existed in the historical data, resulting in an accountability gap where one does not have a means to hold his/her decisions to account. This leads to discrimination of the marginalized groups, which has grave consequences of equality in the international human rights law.

The existing international laws are not enough to regulate AI on a global basis. Soft law tools provide guidance that is not enforced, although it means AI systems are largely deregulated in jurisdictions. The law enforcement systems are not

centralized and collaboration between jurisdictions is minimal thus further enhancing the abuse of human rights. The power of AI on socio-economic rights is rising. The welfare/healthcare systems can be automated to be efficient but also more exclusionary. Without proper supervision, the vulnerable groups can easily be pushed into being excluded in the system level, particularly in the developing states.

Appendage AI also acts on the public discourse and democracy. Although automated moderation is a way of making the internet safe, it may also have the side effect of censoring out legitimate speech and recommendation algorithms can end up affecting the field of politics, compromising media pluralism and freedom of speech. In general, social AI impact is both widespread and multi-layered and is closely intertwined with the basic human rights. The absence of the common international regulation practice exposes people to severe damage, proving that the global, legally binding strategy to the regulation of AI is required.

5. Conclusions & Recommendations

The concept of artificial intelligence is transforming the field of human rights. It has provided more efficiency, innovation and possible benefits to people, but at the same time it poses extreme challenges that have recently been taken up in international law. The social effect of AI can be observed in the areas of privacy, equality, due process, freedom of expression and socio-economic inclusion. Without such tough regulations, AI surveillance, the discriminatory algorithms, and loss of due process, the foundational pillars of human rights will be obstructed. The current legal frameworks are disjointed, and even there is no unified international reaction to regulate AI and secure rights, at the international level. Inequalities in the regulation of AI among the states make these problems worse. This necessitates a global binding legal language that incorporates law, technical and ethical fronts. In a move to make sure that AI is in line with human dignity, they need proactive governance, building institutional capacity, and collaborating with other countries. The future of human rights in an AI-driven world will be determined by how international actors will effectively react to the emergent risks without stepping down technological advancements.

5.1. Recommendations

- Designing a Binding International Framework: States must cooperate by agreeing to sign an international treaty that would regulate AI development by support of the principles of human rights. This treaty would offer an international framework of laws that would formulate proper priorities in terms of transparency, human oversight and accountability of AI systems. Nowadays, the task of governing AI is based mostly on soft law, rules of conduct and morality that are not legally binding. The use of AI technologies should be built and implemented with the help of a binding treaty to ensure that the rights of people are not infringed in harmful fields like surveillance, policing, and welfare. The treaty would also facilitate states to organize their activities against the possible misuses of the AI technologies, providing the international norm of AI governance.

- Improve Institutional Controls: The use of AI should be controlled by independent nationally and regionally based organizations that will handle the use of AI in sectors that are generally risky such as policing, welfare, healthcare, and border security. It would be the duty of these organizations to make sure that human rights are not infringed upon by the AI systems and more often than not, they should undertake periodic audits and investigations to determine the implications of the systems. To clarify, in the policing industry, these organizations might look into how predictive policing algorithms are applied and whether or not it is disproportionate to marginalized groups. Governments can also reduce the risks associated with AI by establishing autonomous overseers to help it manage any potential risks that may be perpetrated by AI systems, such as violating human rights.

- The Requirement to Disclose Algorithms is Mandatory: They should make governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that utilize AI technologies disclose detailed information about their systems. This would entail data sources, circumstances in which the algorithms make decisions, and any possible biases in the system. Transparency of AI systems is important to enable a fair and accountable system. To illustrate, in case a government relies on an AI system to distribute welfare, people must comprehend its mechanism of operation, gathering of data, as well as the presence of some biases that might result in discrimination. Compulsory disclosure would give the audience, civil society, and regulators a platform to hold AI systems responsible and make sure that they will not continue discrimination and human rights abuse.

- Human-in-the-Loop Decision-Making: Although AI has a growing involvement in decision making processes, humans must still play a substantial role in such processes that are of paramount importance such as in policing, welfare, migration, and justice. The systems run by AIs cannot be complete autonomy since they can make wrong or other biased decisions. It needs to have a human-in-the-loop solution where human has the capability of reviewing and making exceptions to the AI-based decisions. As an example, a human judge or an officer in the criminal justice system must be in a position to analyze AI-generated sentencing suggestions or risk analysis and reject them whenever he deems that the algorithm is imperfect or unfair. This will make AI systems always a tool to human decision-making, and they should not take the role of human decision-making when it concerns issues that deal with personal liberties.

- Safeguard Vulnerable Populations: The vulnerable populations targeted by AI systems include the migrants, minority groups, and the low-income communities. Such groups are generally more prone to suffer through the discriminatory practices, whereby the AI systems can be used to repay the current biases due to the data they are trained with. To save these groups of people, governments need to take specific actions to avoid these algorithms harming them. As an example, the immigration system, based on AI to make decisions, should be devised to prevent biases towards the migrants a particular country or ethnicity. Moreover, they ought to have safeguards in place to make sure that the marginalized groups are not deprived of the benefits like healthcare or social welfare provided because of the misclassification of the community by AI or algorithmic errors.

- Encourage Ethical Data Practices: AI decision-making is based on data, and it is paramount to make sure that there is a set of data collection practices throughout the international data privacy standards to protect the rights of individuals. AI systems tend to be based on enormous sources of personal data, and therefore misuse of personal information that can compromise a person. As such, the data collection must be reduced and only the necessary data collected to meet the objectives of the system. The consent process ought to be taken to a higher level of transparency whereby, people have complete knowledge of how their data are used and make informed consent. Data ethics will assist in safeguarding the privacy of people and prevent harmful usage of personal data by the AI technologies.

- Improve Digital and Public Awareness: Artificial intelligence has taken over all aspects of human life, and it is essential to ensure people are aware of how the AI systems would affect their rights. The digital literacy programs need to be introduced to make the people familiar with the working of AI, how it is impacting their lives and how they can protect their rights in an ever-growing digitalized world. Education of the masses can enable people to be aware when their rights are compromised against by AI and demand the AI systems to be more accountable and transparent. When citizens are educated, they tend to demand accountable governance and make sure that their human rights are not violated in the digital age.

- Facilitate Multistakeholder Cooperation: To build an AI ecosystem with a human-centered approach, the collaboration of the civil society, governments, academia, and the private sector is necessary. All the stakeholders have to play a part in making sure that AI development and implementation are responsible, ethical, and in accordance with human rights. The civil society is able to keep the governments and corporations accountable, and the governments can make legal and regulatory frameworks. Research and analysis of the impact of AI in the society can be provided by academics, and AI systems would have human rights principles designed and implemented in the private sector. The cooperation of multiple stakeholders is necessary in the development of AI ecosystems, where human dignity should be considered and where the establishment and application of AI technologies will not violate the main rights.

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Author(s) Contributions

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Conflict of Interest

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