

The most pressing concern in International Human Rights Law

Nowadays protection of human rights is one of the main aims of every democratic state. Contrary to previous times we can observe great progress in how the human rights of different generations are safeguarded. For instance, people don't have to fight for 8 hour workday as it was a century ago and the right to life is protected as there is a strong penalty for a murder in all the states. However, the 21st century has brought to us new complicated challenges to human rights based on different causes which varying from climate change to poverty. But the biggest threat is connected with fast widespread of the information technologies that, despite all the advantages, also has a major negative impact on human rights. In this essay, the author will cover detailed arguments with examples which illustrate why uncontrolled digitalization is the most pressing concern to human rights law.

To start with, an important question has to be answered: why computational technologies can be a threat the human rights? Autonomous and intelligent systems have the potential to affect almost every aspect of our social, economic, political and private lives. Obviously, digital age gives more possibilities and wider horizons for human rights lawyers and activist, thus, the quality of legal aid has improved immensely. But on the other hand, people can use the advantages, such as anonymity, in malicious intents. For example, crimes can be organised through closed groups in social networks. Also, in 2017 one of the most popular social network Facebook revealed that the personal information of up to 87 million users, mostly in the United States, may have been improperly shared with political consultancy Cambridge Analytica.¹ These examples shows that humans have got extremely powerful tools with the development of the Internet and software. Thus, there is a strong need to regulate these relations carefully in way to prevent harm to any human rights.

Moreover, there is a further worry that increased machine autonomy will undermine the status of humans. As it can be watched in science fiction movies, there is fear that one day machines will get out of control and do harm to people. Who will

¹ Technology for human rights: UN Human Rights Office announces landmark partnership with Microsoft(access: <https://news.microsoft.com/2017/05/16/technology-for-human-rights/>)

be responsible for this? Furthermore, how to prevent such cases in the near future? Also, people should worry about the usage of robots and artificial intelligence in illegal and unequal political, economic and social contexts. Of course, governments and governmental agencies, political parties and private corporations, especially the leading tech companies, must commit to the ethical uses of AI. We also need effective and enforceable legislative control which includes regulations and the penalties for violation of the rules. But currently such wide legal tools are not implemented, thus, the danger still exists.

The last but not least, the society has to worry about the usage of modern technologies in the military sphere. For instance, this threat is particularly pertinent with respect to lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS), often described as killer robots.² As in just decades people are going to use an AI armed forces human rights scholars and activists, such as Christof Heyns, the former UN special rapporteur, fear that the use of LAWS will put autonomous robotic systems in charge of life and death decisions, with limited or no human control.

To sum up everything, it is indisputable fact that information technologies are connected to our everyday life and will be integrated even more and more with further technology progress. Therefore, it will have an impact on human rights law. The current task and the biggest challenge is to take control over it. With the help of legal tools and their immediate implementation it will be possible to reduce the unpredictable harm to the lowest level.

² Why technology puts human rights at risk(access: <https://theconversation.com/why-technology-puts-human-rights-at-risk-92087>)