The Catholic Church condemns the use of AI in war — 'No machine should ever choose to take the life of a human being'.

https://fortune.com/2025/01/30/catholic-church-condemns-ai-pope-francis-war/

By Stuart Dyos

January 30, 2025 at 8:56 AM GMT

The Vatican, the governing authority of the Catholic Church, published an ethical framework on AI, advising Catholics about its potential misuses.

The Vatican forewarned the "shadow of evil" carried by the dangers of artificial intelligence this week.

The leaders of the Catholic Church released a document emphasizing necessary awareness of AI's capabilities. Specifically, the paper outlined the church's ethical framework on AI's use in warfare and emphasized the problematic nature of weaponization of AI. The use of remote military operations has contributed to a "lessened perception" of devastation caused by the weapon systems and the "burden of responsibility," the document said.

The Vatican urged that it's "critically important," to understand AI's ethical impact on humankind. "This involves not only mitigating risks and preventing harm but also ensuring that its applications are used to promote human progress and the common good," the document said. AI should be used as a tool to supplement human intelligence rather than "replace its richness."

Approved by Pope Francis on Jan.14, a Vatican team from the dicastery for the doctrine of faith and the dicastery for culture and education worked on the new framework for six months, consulting consultants in the field.

The document said that although the future of AI is unpredictable, autonomous machines should remain adjunct to the power of humans.

"The atrocities committed throughout history are enough to raise deep concerns about the potential abuses of AI," the document said. "No machine should ever choose to take the life of a human being."

Additionally, the Vatican warned of AI's capabilities to spread misinformation, destroying societal trust. "AI-generated fake media can gradually undermine the foundations of society," the document said. The Vatican suggested cautious regulations as misinformation can fuel "political polarization and social unrest."

Throughout the entirety of the document, the church lays out more of its perspectives surrounding AI in terms of its impact on relationships, work, health care, education, and security.

The document referenced Pope Francis' 2024 World Peace Day Message when referring to autonomous military action. He said as artificial intelligence lacks the "unique human capacity for moral judgement and ethical decision making," AI should not have the power to operate deadly machinery.

Pope Francis requested militaries discontinue the use of these systems saying, "an effective and concrete commitment to introduce ever greater and proper human control."

In another written letter, Pope Francis addressed the world's major political, economic, and business players at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland last week. He wrote that AI can intensify a growing "crisis of truth."

He made similar remarks at a Group of 7 meeting last year. Pope Francis said that AI "represents a true cognitive-industrial revolution, which will contribute to the creation of a new social system characterized by complex epochal transformations."

Additionally, the Vatican issued a regulatory document outlining its guidelines for the use of AI within the organization last month.