Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing

<u>Artificial Intelligence: The Consequences for Human Rights</u>

May 22, 2018
3:00 – 4:30 PM
2255 Rayburn House Office Building

<u>Opening Remarks as prepared for delivery</u>

Good afternoon, and welcome to the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission's hearing on Artificial Intelligence and the consequences for Human Rights. My interest in today's topic is two-fold: as Co-Chair of this Commission, I am interested in key trends in human rights, and as a member of the House Subcommittee on Research and Technology, I am also a watcher of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence.

Much has been written about artificial intelligence, or "AI" for short. AI is not one single technology, but a whole new class of programs that will fundamentally change how computers process information. Even though AI technology is relatively new, it already profoundly affects fields as diverse as health care, education, law enforcement, sales and many others.

In the right hands, AI technologies have the power to do profound good by saving lives and reducing the cost of essential services. As some of our panelists will note, AI even has potential to be a powerful tool to help advance the work that human rights defenders are doing.

Unfortunately, as we have learned time and again, there is no such thing as a technology that is exclusively used for good causes: in the wrong hands, AI has the potential to negatively affect many aspects of our lives, and that includes human rights.

In remarks I recently delivered to the European Parliament's subcommittee on Human Rights, I stated "There have been numerous press reports of the massive deployment of surveillance technology against Uyghurs in China, including the use of Artificial Intelligence software and

facial recognition software." The Chinese government's tactics against the Uyghur people in Xinjiang Province have been a laboratory for cutting edge surveillance technology that is Orwellian – and the repercussions of that misuse of technology could extend far beyond China.

This hearing is designed to discuss those broader repercussions, and to explore ways that these threats can be – if not controlled or totally prevented – at least countered in meaningful ways. Because while many have already begun to discuss ways to prevent the unethical use of AI from a national security standpoint, these conversations have rarely addressed international human rights.

Recent news items about the misuse of social media and other internet tools to gather massive amounts of information – and make surprisingly accurate predictions based on that information – have raised privacy concerns. Some of that misuse involved AI tools. These same tools could be used by abusive regimes to single out political opponents. Or to track and harass human rights defenders. And once the AI "genie" is out of the bottle, it could give non-state actors an unprecedented ability to commit human rights violations normally associated with national governments.

That raises some of the fundamental questions of this hearing:

- What are the ways that AI could be abused to violate internationally recognized human rights?
- Are there ways to prevent AI being utilized for such abuses?
- What is the role of the U.S. government – or any government – to either prevent or mitigate the use of AI for repressing human rights?
- What are the responsibilities and role of the tech industry to prevent the misuse of their technologies for human rights abuses?

Even if governments and the tech industry try to prevent, or counteract, human rights abuses enabled by artificial intelligence, does the borderless nature of the modern internet doom such efforts to only a limited scope?

I would like to thank our distinguished witnesses for coming today to address these concerns. We appreciate your presence here as we discuss this important topic.

Amnesty International could not send a panelist today, but I thank them for submitting a statement for the record that, among other things, describes the "Toronto Declaration," which addresses the risk of human rights harms associated with AI. I would like to thank the Future of Humanity Institute at Oxford University in England, which has also submitted a statement for the record. These statements will be available on the Commission's website.

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