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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

By David Siegmund-Schultze  
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## Israel oppresses via chatbot

Spy unit has been working for years on an AI program designed to "optimize" surveillance



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Xtend/Handout via REUTERS

AI is also at play here: soldiers in a command center from which drones operate (January 29, 2025)

Comprehensive surveillance of Palestinians in the illegally occupied territories: After the British *Guardian* and the Israeli magazines *+972* and *Local Call* had already revealed in [December 2023](#) and [April 2024](#) the extent to which the Israeli army is using artificial intelligence for targeting in the war against Gaza, the next research was published on Thursday. According to this, the Israeli army's "Unit 8,200", which serves as espionage and reconnaissance, is developing a so-called Large Language Model (LLM) based on Chat-GPT, which should be able to analyze large amounts of surveillance data and answer questions about individual people being monitored. The project had already started before October 7,

2023, but only gained momentum after AI experts from Silicon Valley's big tech companies were drafted as reservists.

Huge amounts of everyday phone calls and text messages were used to train the chatbot. A source cited in the research speaks of 100 billion words being fed in. The violation of the privacy of Palestinians in the occupied territories - the most intimate conversations as well as seemingly insignificant everyday communication - is thus being abused to intensify their surveillance.

As with the previously revealed AI programs "Lavender" and "The Gospel," the use of the chatbot would result in important decisions being automated and largely decoupled from human responsibility. The *Guardian*'s research had shown that the detection of human and infrastructure targets in Gaza was largely carried out by AI. This enabled many more targets to be identified and bombed than would have been possible with target analysis carried out by humans.

Brutality in warfare was programmed into the system: for bombing low-ranking fighters, 15 to 20 civilians were defined as "legitimate collateral damage" - for higher-ranking military personnel, even more than 100. The algorithm is responsible for assessing whether an air strike should be carried out or not - according to an anonymous army source quoted in the report, the soldiers in charge simply nod along to its suggestions. The cynicism reaches its lowest point in the program "Where's Daddy?" It is trained to recognize when a Hamas soldier enters his home. The logic behind this is that it is "more efficient" to use cheaper, less precise bombs for less relevant targets - to ensure that the suspected soldier is killed, his home is attacked as soon as he enters it. In this way, thousands of Palestinian families were wiped out, especially in the first months of the revenge campaign.

An internal investigation uncovered during the investigation found that targeting had an error rate of 10 percent - even individuals with only loose ties to Hamas and completely innocent people were targeted. Whether this figure is correct or not, what is certain is that AI is based on probability models and makes mistakes. Moreover, it is not possible to understand retrospectively how the algorithm arrived at its results. Ori Goshen, who worked in "Unit 8,200", says of chatbots: "You give them a request or a question and they produce something that looks like magic. But often the answer doesn't make sense." Such confused answers are internally called "hallucinations", Goshen told *the Guardian*.

The LLM was still being trained last year. It is unclear whether it has already been fully developed and is being used. However, it will monitor and analyze all aspects of the lives of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank even more extensively than before. Any expression

of discontent about the illegal occupation in a private telephone conversation will have potentially fatal consequences - as will "hallucinating" interpretations by the chatbot.