Harnessing AI for our human rights work!

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In an era where artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping how we live, work, and communicate, we recently organised and hosted an insightful AI training session. The event was aimed at empowering our team — and the wider civil society community — with critical knowledge and perspectives on this transformative technology.

Together with the University of Malta, we wanted to explore how we can harness AI for our human rights initiatives.

We were pleased to welcome participants from a diverse group of NGOs working on human rights, rule of law, migration, and social justice issues.

Understanding AI: Opportunities and Risks

The training delved into the fundamentals of AI — what it is, how it works, and why it matters — with a focus on presenting a balanced view of its potential benefits and challenges.

AI presents tremendous opportunities for social impact organisations like ours. From automating routine tasks to analysing large datasets, AI can help us amplify outreach, streamline case management, and better understand patterns of human rights abuses.
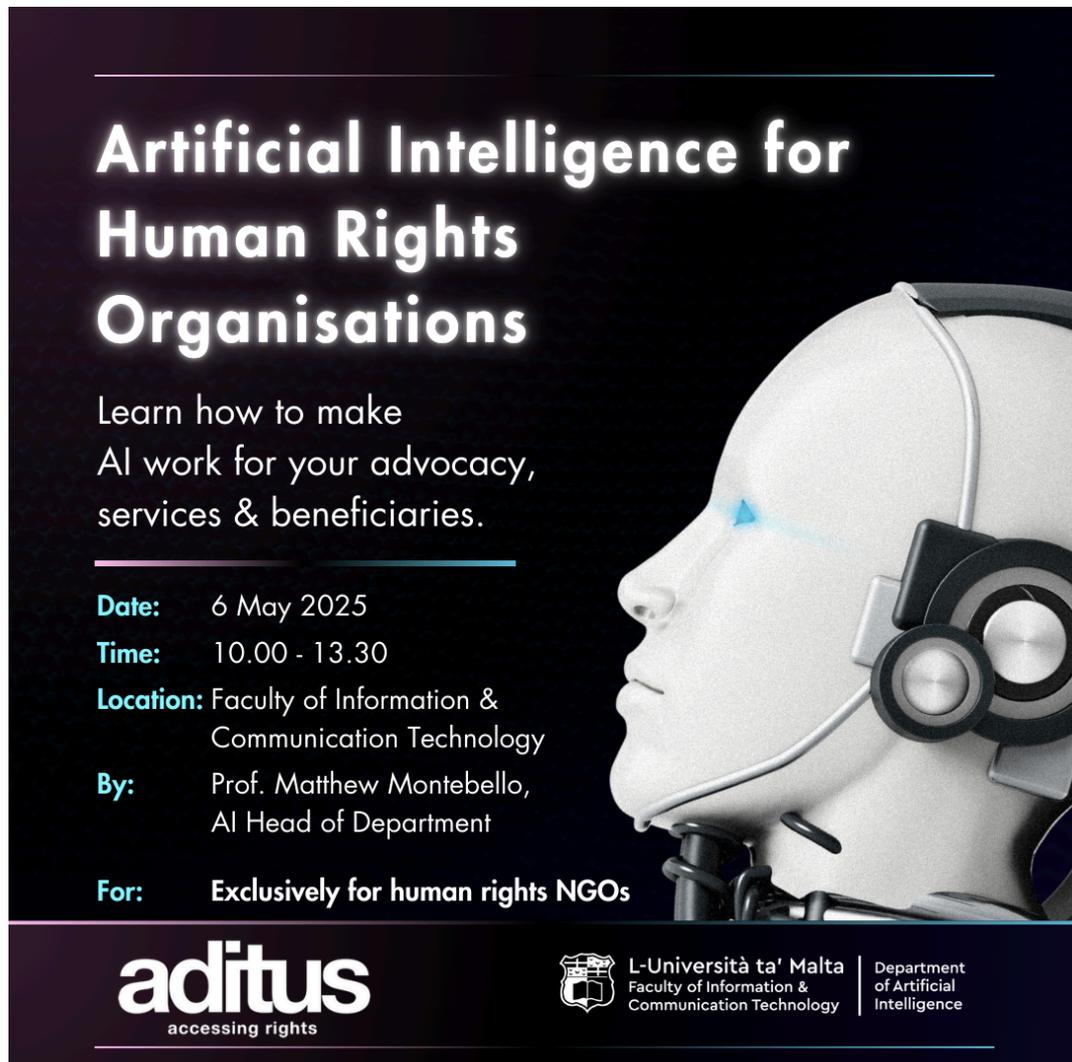
> Imagine harnessing AI to quickly identify emerging trends in migrant protection issues or to personalise outreach to diverse communities.
>
> *Murad, aditus Outreach Officer*

However, the session didn't shy away from discussing the significant risks of AI. We explored concerns about bias embedded in algorithms, the risk of inequality, and the importance of transparency and accountability.

Ethical considerations are paramount—especially in the sensitive areas where aditus operates, including with vulnerable populations and complex legal frameworks.

NGO Participation

We were proud to be joined by representatives from several partner organisations. Their contributions enriched the dialogue and brought real-world perspectives into the discussion. Attending NGOs included Repubblika, JRS Malta, The Daphne Caruana Galizia Foundation, SOS Malta, Migrants Commission, African Media Association Malta and OASI Foundation.

Their input underscored the importance of a cross-sector approach in understanding and shaping ethical uses of AI in human rights work.

Practical Insights and Ethical Approaches

The presentations included case studies demonstrating how AI can both help and hinder human rights work.

For example, predictive analytics can flag potential human trafficking hotspots but may also misidentify communities if not carefully designed. Similarly, translation tools can bridge language gaps but risk losing legal nuance essential for access to justice.

Key strategies discussed to mitigate such risks included:

- Human-in-the-loop systems: Ensuring AI is always guided by human oversight.
- Bias auditing: Regularly reviewing outputs to ensure fairness.
- Data privacy: Rigorously protecting sensitive and personal information.
- Inclusive design: Involving affected communities and stakeholders in AI development.

Personal Reflections

For me personally, the training was both thought-provoking and grounding.

It sharpened my awareness of how powerful AI tools can be — but also how easily they can replicate or amplify existing inequalities if we're not careful.

I walked away with a deeper commitment to using technology responsibly and to keeping people — especially vulnerable communities — at the centre of all AI-driven solutions we consider.

A big thanks to Prof. Matthew Montebello (https://www.um.edu.mt/profile/matthewmontebello), Head of the Artificial Intelligence Department at the Faculty of Information and Communication Technology at the University of Malta.

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