



RIGHTS AND CITIZENSHIP IN THE ERA OF HUMANITY, ROBOTS, AND THE CLIMATE CRISIS

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MEET SOPHIA

In 2016, Hanson Robotics activated Sophia, a human-like robot that is capable of showing human-like expressions and interacting with the rest of the world. According to Hanson Robotics and the robot herself, Sophia is capable of showing and expressing emotions, making jokes and, in many ways, displays human characteristics. In fact, this robot currently holds a title in the UN: A Robot Innovation Ambassador for the United Nations Development Programme.

While Sophia's existence is a groundbreaking breakthrough in robotics and artificial intelligence, there is one fact about her that is more interesting: In 2017, after being recognized as a citizen of Saudi Arabia, Sophia became the first robot to be granted personhood anywhere in the world.

MEANWHILE IN SAUDI ARABIA...

Applying for Saudi Arabian citizenship

This page highlights the ways to grant "Saudi citizenship" to children born inside or outside the Kingdom to a Saudi father or a Saudi mother, as well as to foreigners, the application mechanism for the relevant departmen...

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AND HAITI...

During the first half of 2024, more than 3,600 Haitians were killed, including hundreds of women and children. More than 700,000 people have been forced to flee their homes, over half of whom are women and girls.

AND PALESTINE...

As of 22 October 2024, according to the Ministry of Health (MoH) in Gaza as reported by OCHA, at least 42,718 Palestinians have reportedly been killed in Gaza and 100,282 have been reported injured (between 7 October 2023 and 22 October 2024).



AHMED SALAH'S STORY

01

"Ahmed Salah, had presented himself at a port of entry in South Texas to seek asylum. His problem's roots were gnarled: He'd fled conflict in Somalia, where drought has fueled food scarcity, which, in turn, has worsened armed conflict. He'd sought safety elsewhere in Africa, but, finding little of it, he'd journeyed thousands of miles across Latin America, trekking to the United States as his best hope of freedom. He was apprehended and detained. Eventually, he went before a judge in Louisiana, who had a 100 percent asylum denial rate: All day in court she rejected each case before her. Salah proved no different; the judge rejected his asylum claim and sent him back to Somalia. There, last March, he died in a car bombing." (Steelman, 2021)

02

If AI systems are granted rights or citizenship more quickly and easily than humans, like asylum seekers, what does this say about how society values human lives compared to technology? Is the speed with which AI is granted rights a reflection of our priorities?

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UNESCO GOALS



Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.

How can we design policies that address inequalities in the recognition of rights and citizenship for both humans and AI, while ensuring marginalized groups are not further excluded in the context of climate change impacts?



Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

What frameworks or mechanisms are needed to ensure that both humans and AI systems are integrated into inclusive, accountable institutions while addressing ethical concerns about justice in a climate-challenged world?

CONCLUSION

Should AI systems be granted rights or citizenship before humans, especially those seeking safety like Ahmed Salah? What does this say about how we value human life versus technology?

We must ensure that human life and human rights are prioritized over technological advancements. The decisions regarding who is granted rights, citizenship, or asylum should be driven by compassion, empathy, and a deep understanding of the human experience, not just the efficiency or capabilities of machines. AI should be a tool to support human judgment, not replace it.

THANK YOU

