The Weaponization of AI: Reducing Palestinian Lives into Datasets

How the use of AI target-identification programs adds a degree of separation that facilitates death and destruction at an unprecedented scale

What is Habsora?

Habsora, or "The Gospel", is an Artificial Intelligence system designed by the Israeli Signal Intelligence groups and military to generate attack targets en masse in conflict zones

The system takes in information from intelligence sources, drone footage, and other means, and then uses statistical inference to determine strike targets that would inflict the most damage or kill the most combatants

Habsora can generate up to 100 targets per day, while the IDF previously was only able to generate 50, and all by hand

The legality of the system is questionable as international law is largely neutral on technological use, but requires that militaries take all necessary steps to reduce civilian harm, and it is unclear to what extent this system accomplishes that goal

A Geographic Overview

1). Data

Data is generated from information found through various sources such as cellular data and interpersonal associations. This is sent to the IDF's AI weapon to be processed and identify targets
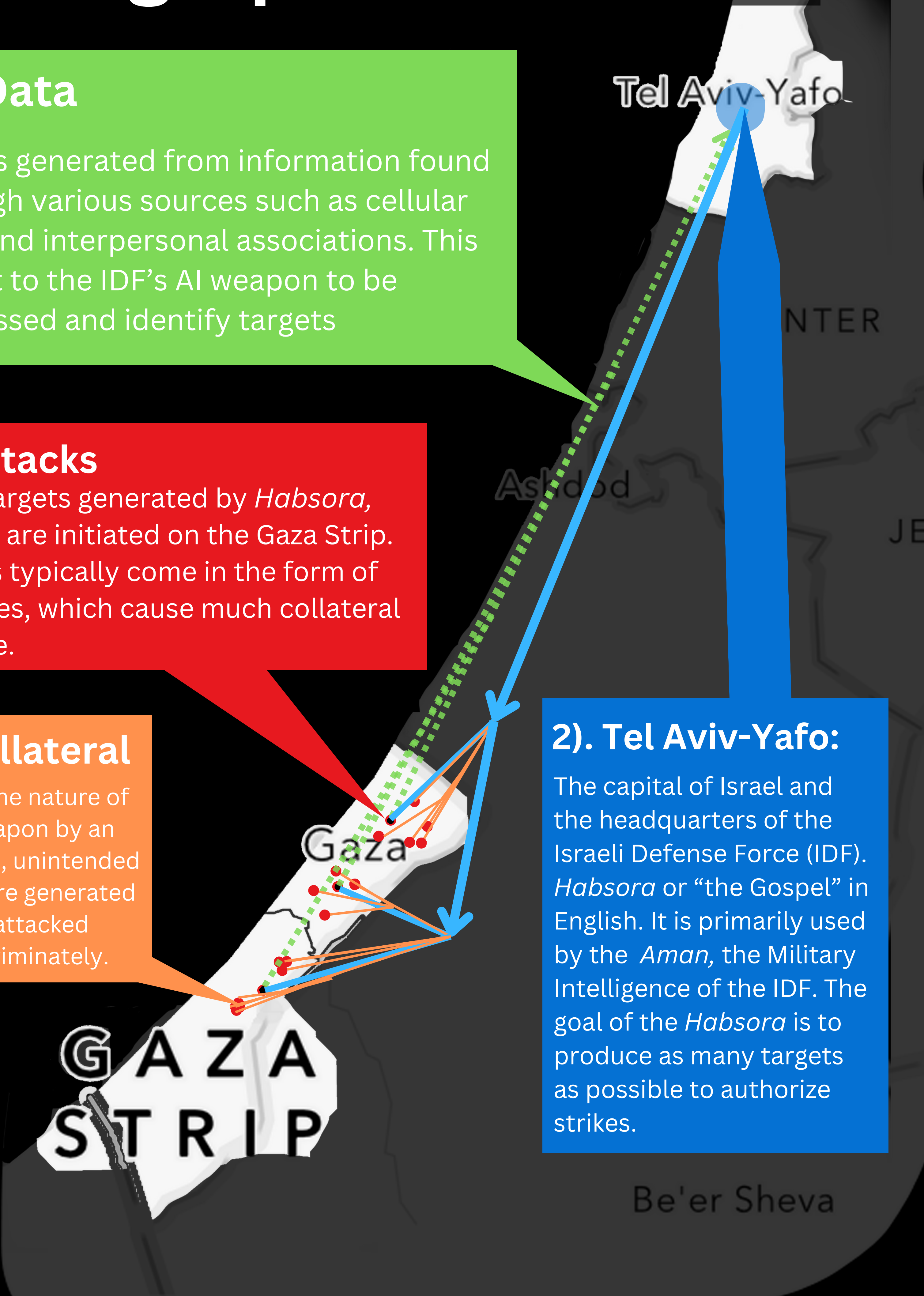
3). Attacks

From targets generated by *Habsora,* attacks are initiated on the Gaza Strip. Attacks typically come in the form of airstrikes, which cause much collateral damage.

4). Collateral

Due to the nature of the weapon by an algorithm, unintended targets are generated and attacked indiscriminately.

2). Tel Aviv-Yafo:

The capital of Israel and the headquarters of the Israeli Defense Force (IDF). *Habsora* or "the Gospel" in English. It is primarily used by the *Aman,* the Military Intelligence of the IDF. The goal of the *Habsora* is to produce as many targets as possible to authorize strikes.

Tel Aviv-Yafo

Ashdod

NTER

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Gaza

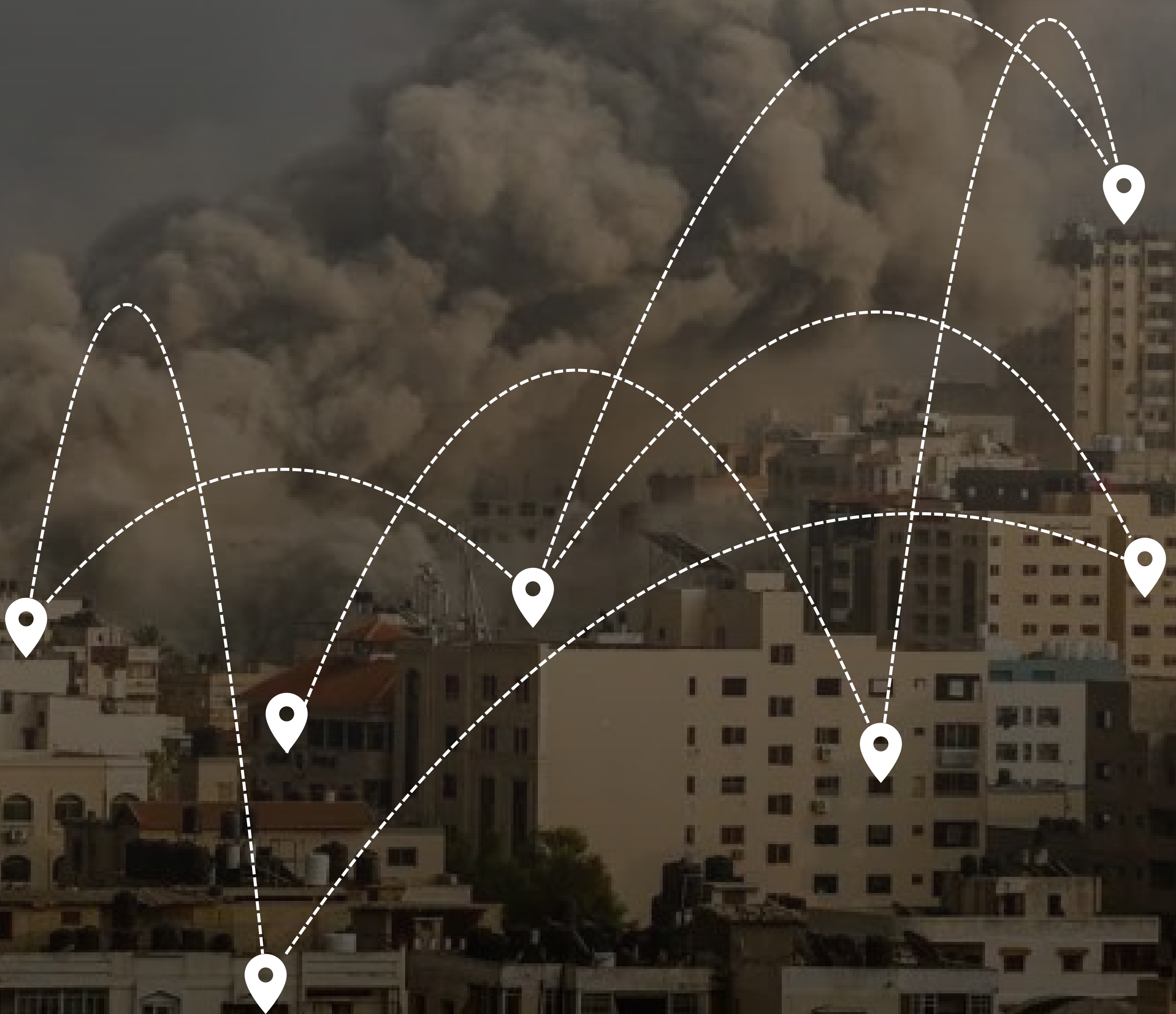GAZA STRIP

Be'er Sheva

Built with Bias

Habsora was created by a branch of the IDF called the "Targets Administrative Division," which was created specifically for the purpose of furthering AI target generation technology in war.

The destructive intentions and biases of the designers are built into the engineering of the system.

This becomes a problem when targets generated by these AI systems are "naturalized, treated as self-evident signs emitted by an objectively existing world 'out there,' rather than as the product of an extensively engineered chain of translation from machine readable signals to ad hoc systems of classification and interpretation."

The targeting here is not objective, but the result of the implicit or explicit biases of the engineers.

Not much is known about exactly what data the Gospel uses to identify potential targets, but experts say AI-based target identification systems would typically use information from sources such as drone footage, intercepted communications, surveillance data, and cell phone tracking.

A source who worked in the new Targets Administrative Division told +972 and Local Call:

"It really is like a factory. We work quickly and there is no time to delve deep into the target. The view is that we are judged according to how many targets we manage to generate."
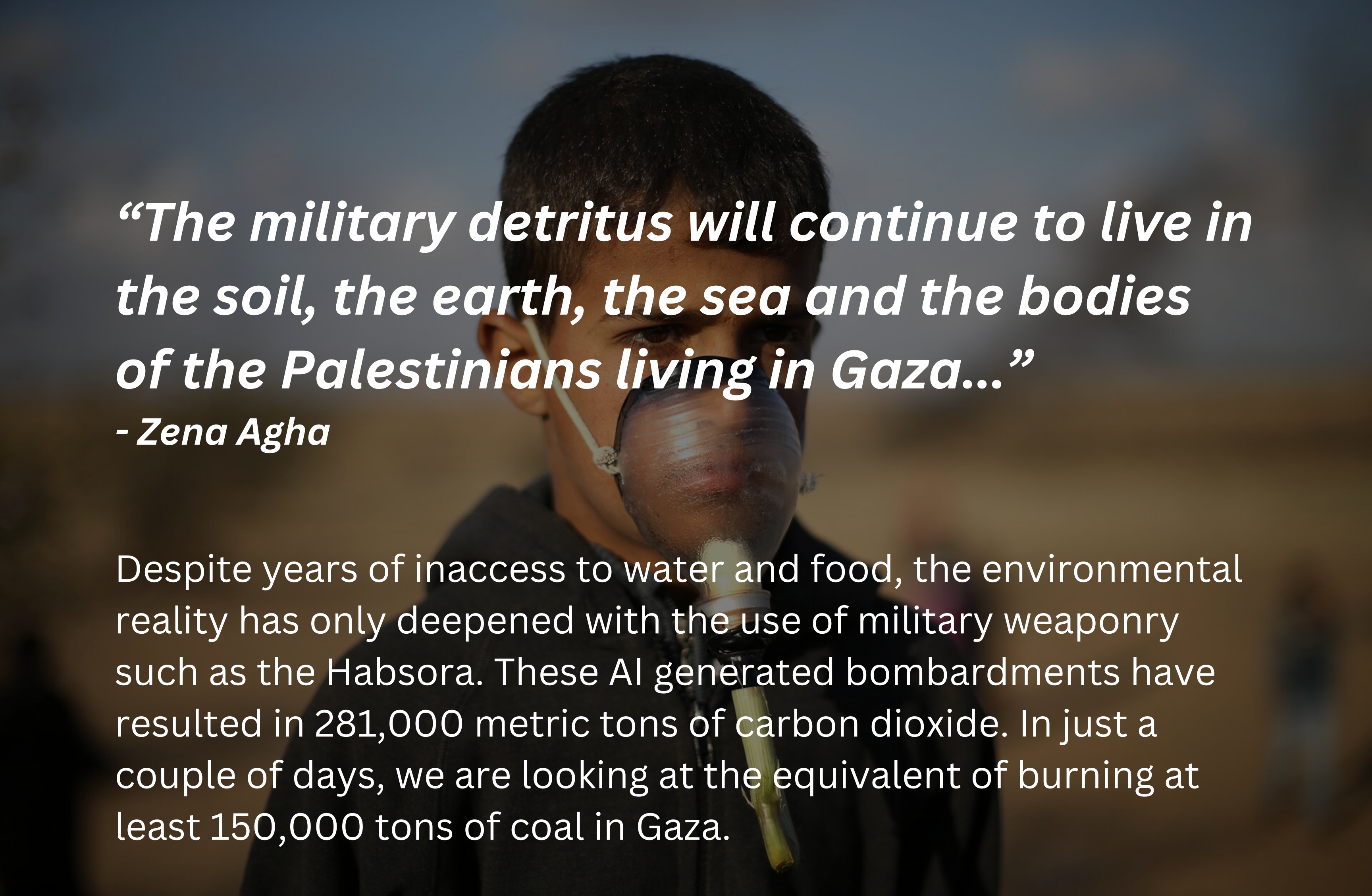
The Effects of Habsora

The use of AI has accelerated the target-identification process significantly, with the machine now generating 100 targets per day, half of which are attacked, compared to 50 targets per year previously.

Despite claims of improved accuracy, experts remain skeptical about AI-based systems' ability to reduce civilian harm.

There are an estimated 3,000 members of Hamas in Gaza allegedly operating from a network of tunnels throughout the city, essentially making the entirety of Gaza a potential target.

"To my understanding, today they can mark all the houses of [any Hamas military operative regardless of rank]," [...] That is a lot of houses. Hamas members who don't really matter for anything live in homes across Gaza. **So they mark the home and bomb the house and kill everyone there.**"
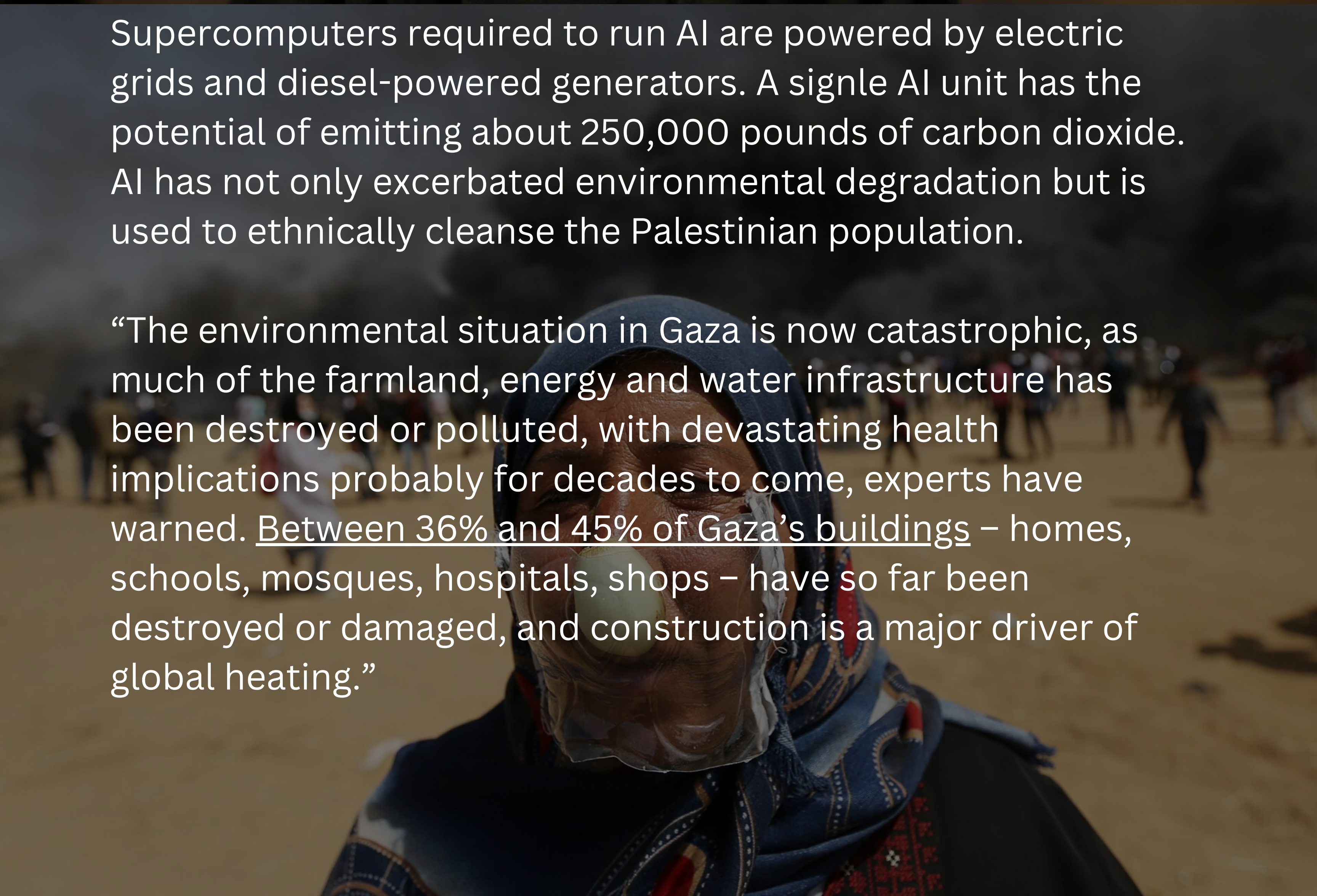
"The military detritus will continue to live in the soil, the earth, the sea and the bodies of the Palestinians living in Gaza…"
- Zena Agha

Despite years of inaccess to water and food, the environmental reality has only deepened with the use of military weaponry such as the Habsora. These AI generated bombardments have resulted in 281,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide. In just a couple of days, we are looking at the equivalent of burning at least 150,000 tons of coal in Gaza.

Supercomputers required to run AI are powered by electric grids and diesel-powered generators. A signle AI unit has the potential of emitting about 250,000 pounds of carbon dioxide. AI has not only excerbated environmental degradation but is used to ethnically cleanse the Palestinian population.

"The environmental situation in Gaza is now catastrophic, as much of the farmland, energy and water infrastructure has been destroyed or polluted, with devastating health implications probably for decades to come, experts have warned. Between 36% and 45% of Gaza's buildings – homes, schools, mosques, hospitals, shops – have so far been destroyed or damaged, and construction is a major driver of global heating."

I Grant You Refuge

Hiba Abu Nada
(trans. Huda Fakhreddine)

1.
I grant you refuge
in invocation and prayer.
I bless the neighborhood and the minaret
to guard them
from the rocket

from the moment
it is a general's command
until it becomes
a raid.

I grant you and the little ones refuge,
the little ones who
change the rocket's course
before it lands
with their smiles.

2.
I grant you and the little ones refuge,
the little ones now asleep like chicks in a nest.

They don't walk in their sleep toward dreams.
They know death lurks outside the house.

Their mothers' tears are now doves
following them, trailing behind
every coffin.

3.
I grant the father refuge,
the little ones' father who holds the house upright
when it tilts after the bombs.
He implores the moment of death:
"Have mercy. Spare me a little while.
For their sake, I've learned to love my life.
Grant them a death
as beautiful as they are."

4.
I grant you refuge
from hurt and death,
refuge in the glory of our siege,
here in the belly of the whale.

Our streets exalt God with every bomb.
They pray for the mosques and the houses.
And every time the bombing begins in the North,
our supplications rise in the South.

5.
I grant you refuge
from hurt and suffering.

With words of sacred scripture
I shield the oranges from the sting of phosphorous
and the shades of cloud from the smog.

I grant you refuge in knowing
that the dust will clear,
and they who fell in love and died together
will one day laugh.

Case Study: how the Gospel may have been used in an attack such as the one on Al-Ahli hospital

On October 17, 2023 an explosion occurred at al-Ahli Arab Hospital. According to the Ministry of Health in Gaza, the incident resulted in 471 fatalities and 342 injuries.

With the AI technology of the Habsora, it would have taken seconds to collect data in agreement with their assumption that Hamas operatives were located nearby. It would not have taken much longer to order an airstrike to the hospital, resulting in mass destruction and death.

Case Study: How Artificial Intelligence can mistake aid workers for combatants.

On April 1, 2024, seven World Central Kitchen aid workers were killed in Gaza after the IDF said was a "result of wrong identification, a mistake in decision-making and an attack contrary to the orders and open-fire regulations"

This target like many other civilians strikes that the IDF has executed in Gaza was likely a result of a statistical inference system that has few safeguards built against incorrect information

Less international aid organizations are willing to send workers into Gaza, exacerbating what already is one of the worst humanitarian crises in recent memory–all a direct result of algorithmic targeting

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