

AI, MEMORIALISATION AND THE FUTURE OF VICTIM TESTIMONY: POTENTIAL RISKS, BENEFITS & POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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Design

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Impunity Watch is an international non-profit organisation working with victims of violence to uproot deeply ingrained structures of impunity, deliver redress for grave human rights violations and promote justice and peace. We gather and share knowledge on priority themes, build partnerships and coalitions and conduct international advocacy work to overcome impunity and transform justice. Impunity Watch currently works in Central America, North Africa and the Great Lakes region of Africa, the Middle East and the Western Balkans. The organisation also has a presence in Guatemala and Burundi. Impunity Watch’s headquarters are based in The Hague in The Netherlands. Our work takes place at local as well as national, regional and international levels.

www.impunitywatch.org



The Leverhulme Centre for the Future of Intelligence (CFI) at the University of Cambridge is a highly interdisciplinary research centre exploring the nature, ethics and impact of artificial intelligence (AI). CFI brings together academics from a variety of disciplines to explore the potential benefits of AI, its possible negative impacts and strategies for mitigating risk in both the short and long term.

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Executive summary

Recent advances in generative artificial intelligence (AI) have enabled new forms of memorialisation, testimony preservation and digital representation of the dead. Commercial and institutional actors are increasingly deploying AI systems capable of simulating the voices, likenesses and conversational styles of deceased individuals in contexts ranging from private grief to museums, archives and legal proceedings. For victims and survivors of serious human rights violations, and the communities and institutions responsible for preserving their experiences, these developments raise questions about how testimony and victims are represented, who has control over these representations, how consent can be meaningfully ensured, and how the integrity of the historical record can be protected. These questions are particularly urgent questions for memorialisation in transitional justice (TJ) contexts, where testimony, remembrance and historical representation are closely tied to truth-seeking, accountability, recognition and guarantees of non-recurrence.

This report examines the intersection of AI, memorialisation and transitional justice. While AI offers opportunities to improve access to testimony, strengthen archival work and support memorialisation efforts, it also introduces significant ethical, legal and political risks. Rather than asking whether AI should be used in memorialisation, the report argues that the answer depends on the purpose, the context and the specific AI application. **Its central argument is that AI should support the objectives of memorialisation—truth, dignity, recognition and non-recurrence—rather than reshape them.** It therefore examines where AI may strengthen memorialisation, where it may undermine it and under what conditions its use may be justified.

Drawing on this analysis, it proposes practical recommendations and a decision-making framework to help organisations and institutions determine when, how and under what conditions AI can be used safely and responsibly in ways that support, rather than undermine, truth, accountability, remembrance and non-recurrence.

It draws on recent scholarship on AI, memory, ethics and governance, including previous Impunity Watch research on AI and TJ (Teo, 2025; Mobayed Vega, 2025) as well as discussions from an international Policy Hub jointly organised by Impunity Watch and the University of Cambridge's Leverhulme Centre for the Future of Intelligence in Berlin in March 2026.

Key risks and their consequences for transitional justice

The report identifies six interlocking risk areas that have direct implications for the objectives of memorialisation and TJ. Collectively, they threaten the integrity of the historical record; the dignity, agency and recognition of victims; and public trust in truth-seeking and memorialisation.

01 | Risk to collective memory

AI can reshape how societies remember past violence by generating, amplifying or reinforcing misleading narratives that blur the line between verified evidence and synthetic content.

02 | Risk of persuasive ‘reanimation’ & political weaponisation

As the use of AI-generated speech by deceased individuals becomes more widespread in advocacy and memorialisation, it may become easier to misuse these technologies for propaganda, historical revisionism or fabricated endorsements, threatening the integrity of the historical record on which TJ relies.

03 | Risk of extending testimony beyond consent

AI may transform the testimony collection processes as well as introduce new ways in which testimony is recombined and reused—potentially beyond the purposes for which victims originally anticipated or agreed to. This may compromise the dignity, consent and agency guarantees central to victim-centred TJ practice.

04 | Risk of turning memorialisation into spectacle

AI can help widen access and broaden the circulation of testimony – which for many victims’ groups, depending on context, may support their efforts to preserve memory, resist denial, and reach broader audiences. However, AI-mediated engagement may prioritise immediacy and emotional impact over memorialisation’s broader contribution to remembrance, learning from past violence, and preventing future harm. AI can encourage people to engage with testimony and memorialisation as on-demand content rather than as opportunities for reflection.

05 | Risk of amplifying unequal recognition

As AI relies on large, well-structured archives, its use may exacerbate already existing inequalities between communities whose histories are well documented and those whose experiences are either less documented or more difficult to capture at scale—often those from gendered, minority or marginalized groups. High production costs compound this, making AI-enabled memorialisation structurally inaccessible to many communities, thereby reproducing exactly the inequities TJ processes are meant to redress.

06 | Risk of concentrated control over memorialisation

If a small number of commercial or political actors control the data, platforms and AI systems used for memorialisation, they may also shape how historical events are recorded, accessed and remembered. This creates conditions for long-term reinterpretation, restricted access or politicisation of historical records by both state and corporate actors.

Potential benefits

Alongside these risks, the report also identifies a number of potential and context-dependent benefits where AI may support memorialisation if deployed appropriately:

Benefit 01: Education & engagement

AI can support new ways of engaging audiences with complex historical material, helping memorialisation initiatives reach new and younger generations.

Benefit 02: Democratisation of access

AI can improve access to testimony and historical material through tools such as translation and searchable archives, helping overcome linguistic, educational and geographical barriers.

Benefit 03: Scalable analysis of archival material

AI can assist in analysing large volumes of archival material by identifying patterns, connections and themes that may not be readily visible through manual research.

Benefit 04: Supporting testimony collection at scale

In ongoing memorialisation contexts, AI can support the collection, organisation and preservation of testimony where institutional capacity is limited, without transforming how testimony is represented or replacing humans as responsible for the collection of evidence.

Benefit 05: Contextualisation & navigation rather than generation

AI can help organise and navigate large collections of testimony, making them more accessible while avoiding the generation of new content or the flattening of diverse accounts.

Recommendations for institutions and organisations responsible for memorialisation

The report identifies five key recommendations for institutions and organisations responsible for commissioning, procuring, governing or deploying AI in memorialisation contexts, including memorial institutions, museums, archives, documentation centres, human rights organisations, victim and survivor organisations and relevant public authorities. These recommendations are intended to support decision-making about whether, when and how AI should be used in memorialisation, rather than to provide technical standards for AI developers. The report identifies an urgent need for continued work on principles and guidance for the safe and responsible use of AI across transitional justice, including memorialisation.

01

Centre victims & survivors: Ensure that affected communities are meaningfully involved from the earliest stages of decision-making, supported by clear, accessible information and AI literacy. Decisions should protect the integrity and plurality of memory, be grounded in transitional justice principles and recognise that the appropriateness of AI depends on the specific memorialisation context;

02

Use the right AI for the right reasons: AI should only be introduced where it addresses a genuine need and demonstrably supports the objectives of memorialisation, including preserving the integrity of testimony, improving access to historical records and strengthening public understanding of past atrocities. Institutions should assess whether AI is necessary, proportionate and the most appropriate tool for the task;

03

Protect testimony & those who give it: Testimony should be collected by people, with AI supporting rather than replacing human engagement. Consent should be an ongoing process, underpinned by AI and media literacy as well as by clear, accessible information that enables victims and survivors to understand how their testimony may be processed by AI and the potential implications, so that they can make informed decisions. Victims and survivors should also have a guaranteed right to withdraw consent and request the removal of their testimony;

04

Establish robust governance & long-term stewardship: Organisations using AI in memorialisation should be conscious of any long-term responsibility they may have for the testimony, data, and memorialisation initiatives they create, particularly in an area where responsibility and potential legal liability are not yet clearly established and where there is a heightened risk that AI-generated or AI-modified content may cause harm. This includes maintaining control over how testimony is stored, accessed, and used, avoiding dependence on commercial providers, planning for technological change, and protecting historical records from political interference or misuse over time.

05

Design public-facing AI interactions with care: Curators and designers responsible for visitor-facing exhibits and interfaces should ensure that audiences can always distinguish between archival material and AI-generated content, so there is no ambiguity about what is authentic and what has been generated. They should also design these interactions with care, considering their potential psychological and emotional impact on visitors, particularly in contexts involving trauma, remembrance and loss.

Introduction

AI, transitional justice & memorialisation

The rapid development of **generative AI¹** has made it possible to produce **dynamic, interactive representations of specific individuals—including those who are dead**. Commercial services now offer to construct ‘postmortem avatars’ from a person’s digital footprint, simulate conversation with deceased loved ones through so-called ‘griefbots’ or ‘deadbots’ (Hollanek & Nowaczyk-Basińska, 2024) or reconstruct the voices and likenesses of historical figures for public audiences (Higgins, 2024). **What were once isolated experiments have become a growing industry, with applications extending from private grief into museum settings and courtrooms** (Berger, 2024; Faguy & Jamali, 2025).

This latter area—where **AI intersects with memorialisation, testimony and justice—raises questions that are especially pressing in contexts of mass violence, atrocity and serious human rights violations**. In the aftermath of such events, societies face the task of acknowledging what happened, providing recognition to those who suffered and building conditions that make recurrence less likely. This work—broadly referred to as **transitional justice**—encompasses a range of interlinked pillars: accountability to hold perpetrators responsible for past abuses; truth-seeking to establish an authoritative record of past violations; reparations to acknowledge and redress the harm suffered by victims; and guarantees of non-recurrence through institutional reforms to prevent future violations.

Increasingly, memorialisation is also recognised as an important TJ measure, helping preserve memory, recognise victims and promote public reflection on the past. According to Pablo De Greiff (2006), these pillars are mutually reinforcing because, together, they contribute to **recognition, civic trust and social solidarity**, which are “simultaneously necessary conditions and consequences of justice” (De Greiff, 2006). De Greiff further argues that these objectives cannot be achieved “on the backs of victims, without their meaningful participation” (De Greiff, 2012). Rather than treating participation as a procedural safeguard, he presents it as fundamental to the legitimacy and effectiveness of TJ, requiring victims to play an active role in shaping truth-seeking, prosecutions, reparations and institutional reform. Building on this principle, de Waardt and Weber argue that meaningful participation extends beyond victims’ presence in consultations or formal proceedings. Instead, it should enable victims to exercise political agency by influencing decision-making and shaping the justice processes that affect them, recognising them not as passive beneficiaries but as active political actors (de Waardt & Weber, 2019). Memorialisation initiatives—including memorials, archives and testimony projects—are not peripheral to this process: they are central to how societies restore dignity to victims and survivors and enable them to exercise agency by playing an active role in shaping how their experiences are remembered, establishing shared accounts of the past and preserving the historical record on which accountability depends.

¹ For the purposes of this report, we use the term artificial intelligence (AI) in line with the definition provided by the European Union’s AI Act, denoting a ‘machine-based system that is designed to operate with varying levels of autonomy and that may exhibit adaptiveness after deployment, and that, for explicit or implicit objectives, infers, from the input it receives, how to generate outputs such as predictions, content, recommendations, or decisions that can influence physical or virtual environments’ (Article 3, EU AI Act). The term Generative AI (GenAI) refers to a category of AI systems that automatically generates content in response to prompts written in natural-language conversational interfaces. The content can appear in formats that comprise all symbolic representations of human thinking: texts written in natural language, images (including photographs, digital paintings and cartoons), videos, music and software code. It generates its content by statistically analysing the distributions of words, pixels or other elements in the data that it has ingested and identifying and repeating common patterns (Miao & Holmes, 2023).

For the purposes of this report, memorialisation is considered in relation to transitional justice broadly understood, encompassing both initiatives undertaken as part of ongoing TJ processes and longer-term efforts to preserve, represent, and transmit the memory of mass atrocities and serious human rights violations. Memorialisation may therefore extend well beyond the immediate temporal and institutional context of a TJ process.

With the deployment of AI in memorialisation come new stakeholders, including commercial technology companies—often with their own, profit-oriented goals—and new risks of harm to the people and communities TJ mechanisms are designed to protect (Teo, 2025; Mobayed Vega, 2025). At the same time, it introduces a range of possibilities that deserve attention, including the potential for extending access to testimony, for preserving voices that would otherwise be lost and for enabling forms of remembrance that reach communities and audiences that traditional memorialisation cannot.

How should victims be represented through technologies they could not anticipate or consent to? Who controls the narratives that emerge, and in whose interests? And what happens when the same tools that enable powerful acts of remembrance are also available for propaganda, political instrumentalisation or commercial exploitation? These questions do not have easy answers, but they are becoming increasingly urgent as institutions and communities invested in various aspects of TJ already are, or will soon be, making decisions about AI adoption—often without adequate guidance or shared standards specific to this particularly sensitive domain. This concern has recently also been highlighted by the UN Special Rapporteur on truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, Bernard Duhaime, who points to the particular fragility of transitional settings and the heightened risks faced by victims, and calls for professional guidance for TJ practitioners on the human rights-based use of emerging technologies, including the possible development of principles or codes of conduct (United Nations General Assembly, 2026). The intersection of AI and memorialisation is becoming one of the areas of technological development key to TJ, but one where existing guidance has yet to fully address the specific challenges these technologies raise, despite growing experimentation. Cases are accumulating faster than the conceptual and regulatory frameworks needed to assess them. At the same time, the cost of getting these decisions wrong may fall disproportionately on survivors, families and communities who have the least power to contest how their histories are represented.

This report provides an **initial assessment of developments at the intersection of AI, memorialisation and TJ**. It examines key risks and potential benefits, but also offers **preliminary guidance for practitioners** seeking to assess and responsibly use these technologies. To be clear, the recommendations put forward in this report address a specific set of concerns related to the use of AI in memorialisation contexts and are targeted at organisations responsible for deciding whether and how AI is used in these settings. While wider concerns around AI development and regulation are also central to ensuring the responsible use of AI in TJ contexts, and further work on governance is required, these broader considerations—central to Impunity Watch’s work in this area—fall outside the scope of this report.

Methodology for mapping risks & benefits and developing standards for AI deployment in memorialisation

This report draws on an extensive review of the emerging academic and policy literature on AI, ethics, TJ and memorialisation. Given the still limited body of research examining the intersection of AI and TJ, this review was complemented by Impunity Watch's own research on this topic, including previous studies examining the normative implications of AI and documenting its emerging use across transitional justice processes (Teo, 2025; Mobayed Vega, 2025). The analysis and recommendations were further informed and refined through an international Policy Hub convened by Impunity Watch in partnership with the University of Cambridge's Leverhulme Centre for the Future of Intelligence (LCFI) in Berlin between 24 and 25 March 2026.

The Policy Hub brought together academics, civil society representatives, technologists, policymakers, memorial practitioners and organisations representing victims and survivors of human rights violations (see participant list in Annex I). Through discussions of real-world case studies and forward-looking scenarios, participants examined the opportunities, risks and governance challenges associated with AI in memorialisation across different political, legal and cultural contexts. Rather than seeking consensus, the Policy Hub was designed to test emerging ideas, identify areas of convergence and disagreement and strengthen the report's analysis and recommendations.

The workshop was conducted in English under Chatham House Rules; discussions were not recorded. The findings presented in this report are informed by participants' contributions, collective workshop outputs and thematic analysis undertaken alongside the desk research. The full workshop agenda is provided in Annex II.

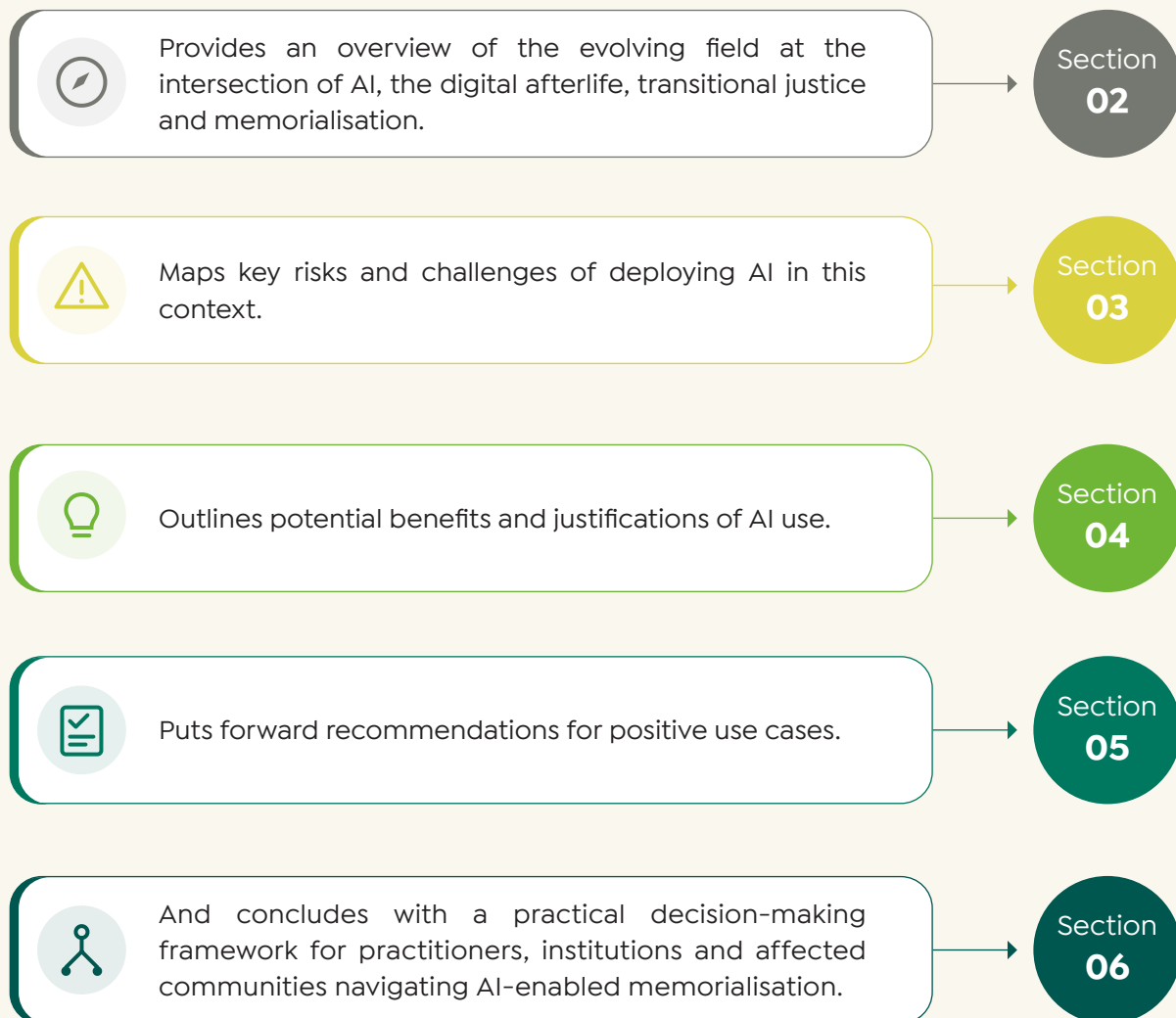
Intended audience

The diversity of expertise represented in the workshop is reflected in the intended audience of this report. It is written for those who work with, advocate for or make decisions on behalf of communities at the centre of this field: survivor groups and their descendants; practitioners and institutions responsible for collecting, preserving and curating testimony; civil society organisations working on memory, accountability and human rights; technology developers operating in memorialisation contexts; and policymakers grappling with the governance of AI in sensitive and high-stakes settings.

The report does not assume technical familiarity with AI systems, nor does it aim to provide guidance on building them. Its primary purpose is to **support non-technical decision-makers—those who must determine whether, when and under what conditions AI tools should be adopted, commissioned or refused—by offering a clearer framework for understanding what is at stake.** In a field where consequential decisions are already being made, often under institutional pressure and without adequate guidance, the goal is to make the considerations visible, the trade-offs legible and the available safeguards actionable.

Report structure

Drawing on both academic research and workshop discussions, this report:



Background

AI & transitional justice

The relationship between AI and TJ has only recently begun to be systematically examined, and the field is still developing the conceptual tools needed to assess it. Two recent reports by Impunity Watch provide the most comprehensive mapping of this terrain to date, and directly inform this report. Teo's report (2025) addresses the normative question: under what conditions, if any, is AI deployment compatible with the goals of transitional justice? The report's core argument is that compatibility is possible but it depends entirely on whether a specific AI system is developed and deployed in ways that are *victim-centred*: therefore, accountable to the people and processes it is meant to serve. AI in TJ contexts cannot be evaluated by generic standards of technical performance or efficiency. The fragility of post-conflict environments, where trust is scarce and the consequences of error are borne disproportionately by survivors, demands a higher and more specific threshold.

Building on this normative foundation, a follow-up report by Mobayed Vega (2025) maps how AI and other data-driven technologies are already being used across more than 40 TJ-related case studies spanning contexts including Argentina, Colombia, Syria and Ukraine. It identifies a concentration of applications across the pillars of TJ: truth-seeking, where AI can be used to analyse testimonies and archives to establish patterns of violation; justice and accountability, where it can support investigations and evidence analysis; reparations, where it can assist in assessing harm and identifying compensation gaps; non-recurrence and institutional reform, where early-warning systems and monitoring tools are emerging; and memorialisation, where digital memory platforms and archival storytelling are beginning to be developed.

Across each of these pillars, however, AI also introduces a corresponding set of risks. These include: re-traumatisation and loss of agency for victims; data security failures that can expose survivors to life-threatening harm; the reinforcement of existing inequalities through algorithmic bias; distortion of truth through misinformation or narrative manipulation; an over-emphasis on efficiency at the expense of justice; and the use of the same tools for surveillance and narrative control (Mobayed Vega, 2025). Taken together, these risks can undermine civic trust in the institutions, evidence and processes on which TJ depends. By weakening confidence in truth-seeking, accountability and memorialisation efforts among others, they risk undermining one of the central aims of TJ: rebuilding the trust between citizens and public institutions that is necessary for a just and democratic society (De Greiff, 2006).

Academic scholarship at this intersection of AI and TJ remains scarce but is beginning to emerge, with some work questioning whether AI applications in TJ contexts are appropriate at all. Ngaihlian (2025) argues, for instance, that AI systems trained on biased datasets—referring to very specific linguistic, social, cultural and political realities of the Global North and, in particular, the Anglophone West—are ill-equipped to handle the non-linear, fragmented character of trauma narratives of groups outside the Global North, often conveyed in languages other than English. As such, AI trained on these non-representative datasets may risk reproducing injustices affecting victims in post-conflict settings rather than remedying them (Ngaihlian, 2025).



It is against this backdrop of initial work dedicated to AI and TJ that the present report turns to memorialisation specifically. While its status as a distinct pillar of TJ remains the subject of ongoing discussion, memorialisation occupies a unique position within the field. It encompasses a wide range of initiatives including memorials, museums, archives, commemorations, educational programmes, artistic and cultural expressions and the preservation of sites where atrocities occurred, that seek to acknowledge victims, restore their dignity and preserve an inclusive historical record. It also provides an important space through which victims and affected communities can exercise agency in determining how past violence is remembered, represented and transmitted to future generations.

As Fabián Salvioli, the former United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparations and guarantees of non-recurrence, explains, memory processes are not simply about remembering the past; they help societies “preserve memory and guarantee the transmission of knowledge” to future generations, challenge denial and historical revisionism and promote “education and awareness-raising” aimed at preventing future violence and building a “culture of peace.” They complement other TJ measures by sustaining historical truth and reinforcing commitments to human rights and non-recurrence (UN Human Rights Council, 2020).

These functions also make memorialisation particularly susceptible to the opportunities and risks introduced by AI in general and generative AI in particular. AI in memorialisation has the potential to reshape how societies remember past atrocities, represent victims, preserve testimony and transmit historical knowledge to future generations. In doing so, it raises fundamental questions about authenticity, consent, historical truth, dignity and trust, the very values that memorialisation seeks to protect and that underpin TJ more broadly.

The following section provides an overview of the recent developments in AI that are already affecting the ways in which individuals and societies relate to the past and collective memory in general—and the ways in which victim and survivor testimonies can be preserved, presented and engaged with.

AI, memorialisation & the 'digital afterlife'

Memory has long been understood as a reconstructive process—not a fixed record of past events but an active remaking of the past in the present, shaped by the contexts and purposes of recall. AI intensifies this dynamic in ways that are qualitatively new. It does not merely assist in preserving or transmitting memory. By generating representations of events and experiences that blend the archival and the synthetic, it can enable the production of pasts that never existed (Hoskins, 2024).

As AI-generated representations become more realistic and interactive, it becomes harder to trace what has been recorded, what has been reconstructed and what has been generated beyond the available record. Hoskins (2026) describes the outcome as “black box memory”: a condition in which individuals and societies lose confidence in their ability to determine how the past has been produced and by whom. This raises a problem of provenance and authenticity that is particularly acute in TJ contexts. Archives and historical records underpin truth-seeking, a process encompassing official investigations into past human rights violations and victim testimony collection, aiming towards both factual accuracy and the recognition of victims' individual experiences. Generative AI thus poses a new challenge to the distinction between data and inference, testimony and interpretation—distinctions that are fundamental to TJ processes.

While the question of provenance is certainly central to the considerations of AI's impact in TJ contexts, another set of relevant risks relate to what Gerner (2024) calls “foreverism”: an approach that often defines technology-driven memorialisation projects. In TJ contexts, preserving testimony and historical records is not simply a technical challenge of storing information. It is also about ensuring that they remain trustworthy, meaningful and embedded within broader processes of recognition, public reflection and non-recurrence. Digitisation and AI may support these objectives, but they do not guarantee them. Tech-enabled experiments with the collection of testimony may create the false impression that, by making memory *digital*, *AI-readable* and *AI-retrievable* (that is, stored in formats that AI systems can analyse, search and reuse), it becomes, on the one hand, *indefinitely preservable* and, on the other, *continuously available*. The false promise of preservability may obscure the fragility of the digital infrastructures on which such projects depend, masking the reality that digital records remain vulnerable to technological obsolescence and institutional change. At the same time, the seemingly neutral affordance of retrievability risks turning memory into a spectacle: when the past can be accessed on demand and reanimated for new purposes, memory may be turned into a commodity—something to be consumed, at times for entertainment, rather than continually negotiated and mobilised in pursuit of non-recurrence.

Alongside these risks, AI also enables significant new possibilities for memory work. It can extend the reach of testimonies, support the preservation of endangered languages and oral traditions, and create more immediate and interactive forms of engagement with the past (DaCosta, 2025; Pataranutaporn et al., 2023). Research on Holocaust education, for example, suggests a pronounced generational shift, with younger audiences increasingly favouring immersive, AI-mediated formats because they feel more personal and emotionally engaging than conventionally recorded and transmitted testimony (Rosenthal, 2025). This creates real pressure towards adoption within memory institutions.

These tensions between potential benefits and risks of using AI in memorialisation crystallise in emerging applications that seek to create interactive or lifelike representations of specific

individuals. Advances in large language models—models behind current general-purpose and generative AI systems—have enabled AI systems to simulate the deceased: generating responses, reconstructing voices and producing interactive representations of individuals. Unlike conventional archives, which preserve fixed records of testimony, these systems allow users to interact with AI-mediated representations that can respond to questions and, in some cases, generate new outputs.

As noted in the Introduction, these technologies are increasingly being used not only in private settings but also by museums, memorial institutions and civil society organisations. Visitors can now ask questions of AI-enabled representations of genocide survivors in museums; families can recreate the voices and likenesses of deceased relatives to advocate for justice or remembrance; and organisations can use AI-generated representations of victims in public campaigns. These applications illustrate both the promise of AI to preserve memory, engage new audiences and support education, but also the risks they pose for authenticity, consent, representation and narrative control.

While these examples remain relatively limited in number, they offer a glimpse of how AI-enabled memorialisation may evolve as these technologies become more widely available. The ability to create convincing representations of victims, testimonies and historical events will no longer be limited to specialised institutions or technology companies. Museums, governments, civil society organisations, advocacy groups and families—as well as potentially malicious actors—may all be able to generate increasingly realistic representations of the past. While this creates new opportunities to preserve testimony and expand public engagement, it also raises profound questions for TJ. In contexts where the historical record remains contested or incomplete, and where denialism, historical revisionism or political manipulation persist, increasingly realistic AI-generated representations could make it more difficult to distinguish documented evidence from reconstruction, challenge confidence in the historical record and undermine public trust in truth-seeking and memorialisation processes. As these technologies become more accessible, one of the central challenges for TJ may no longer be simply preserving testimony, but preserving confidence in what constitutes the historical record itself: whether a system is grounded in fixed archival material or generates new responses; whether it is created with the subject's consent or initiated by families or institutions after death; and whether its purpose is personal, educational or political. Each of these dimensions shapes what the system does to memory, to the representation of the person and to the experience of those who encounter it.

Brubaker and Ringel Morris (2025) offer a useful framework for mapping this complexity, distinguishing what they call “generative ghosts”—AI systems that produce new outputs rather than simply replaying recorded material—along several axes: whether the system is created before or after death; whether it is built by the individual themselves or by a third party; and how realistic and interactive it is designed to be. These distinctions matter because they determine the degree to which a system can be said to represent a person rather than merely invoke them, and because they shape who bears responsibility for what the system does and says. A fixed interactive testimony and a dynamically evolving AI persona raise fundamentally different questions about authenticity, consent and control—differences that become especially consequential in contexts where testimony carries legal or historical weight.

Research on AI-enabled postmortem representations of individuals has also drawn attention to the range of stakeholders affected by these systems. Hollanek and Nowaczyk-Basińska (2024) identify three distinct groups whose interests must be considered: data donors,

whose “digital remains” form the basis for simulation; data recipients, who hold and provide access to that data; and service interactants, the living users who engage with the system. This framework shifts analysis beyond the immediate user experience towards the full chain of relationships involved in creating and deploying a digital representation of a person. Risks arise at each point—threats to the dignity and postmortem privacy of the deceased, psychological harm to users and the potential for data to be misused by those who control access to it.



The following three case studies—representing different types of AI-enabled simulation of individual victims—illustrate these divergent trajectories and the roles that different stakeholder groups play at the intersection of AI and TJ in memorialisation. The first concerns the creation of interactive, consent-based testimony by a Holocaust survivor; the second, the posthumous simulation of a deceased person’s image and voice for political advocacy; and the third, the development of an AI memorial initiated by a victim’s family without the subject’s prior consent. Taken together, they map the expanding scope of AI in memorialisation, but also set the stage for examining the risks, governance gaps and implications of these emerging practices in TJ contexts.

Case Study 1: Creating interactive biographies of survivors

Dimensions in Testimony, developed by the **USC Shoah Foundation**, is an interactive testimony project that combines volumetric-style filming, extensive oral history interviews and AI-driven language matching to enable audiences to ask questions of recorded genocide survivors and receive contextually appropriate responses. In the case of **Holocaust survivor Pinchas Gutter**, the system draws on thousands of pre-recorded answers captured during intensive filming sessions, creating the experience of a responsive dialogue that allows viewers to explore his memories, reflections and lived experience across time while remaining grounded in his own recorded words.

Case Study 2: Using a deceased person's image to plead for political action

As part of advocacy efforts by the **Hostages and Missing Families Forum**—an Israeli group representing the relatives of hostages taken to Gaza during the October 7 attacks—an **AI-generated video** was released, *simulating a direct message from Ran Gvili*, an Israeli soldier whose body was still held in Gaza, that directly addresses US President Donald Trump. According to reports, the Forum published the clip with the approval of Gvili's family; his mother, Talik, is quoted by the group expressing both the emotional impact of seeing and hearing her son “speak in his own voice” and the family's plea for political action to bring his remains home.

Case Study 3: Building victims' digital memorials

In this case, the **parents of Joaquin Oliver**, who was 17 when he was shot and killed in the hallway of his **Parkland, Florida** high school, collaborated with AI developers to *create a digital avatar that simulates his voice, appearance and manner of speaking*. Drawing on Joaquin's writings, videos and public statements, the project is both a personal act of remembrance for his family and a public-facing effort to keep his outspoken opposition to gun violence present in civic and media conversations—including by allowing journalists to interview the AI version of him.

Key risks & challenges

The use of AI in memorialisation raises risks that are distinctive in their stakes: unlike many other AI applications, this is a domain where the dignity, recognition and legacy of victims are directly implicated, truth is contested and the consequences of misrepresentation can affect ongoing processes of justice and accountability. As AI increasingly mediates how victims and past violence are represented and remembered, questions of authenticity, consent, agency and narrative control become central.

Building on the literature reviewed, the case studies examined and the discussions held during the Policy Hub, this section identifies interlocking risk areas that current practice and governance have yet to adequately address:

1. Risk to collective memory:

AI systems used to process and present testimonies may introduce uncertainty into what is verified evidence as opposed to generated content. Over time, this creates a risk of ‘authenticity drift,’ where representations of past events and victims’ accounts of these events evolve while appearing stable. At the same time, as generative AI systems tend to produce coherent, accessible narratives, they can prematurely ‘stabilise’ contested or incomplete accounts of violence, limiting space for disagreement, revision or plurality in public accounts of past human rights violations.

2. Risk of persuasive ‘reanimation’ and political weaponisation:

Recreating victims’ voices or personas enables emotionally powerful but unverifiable forms of speech. A particular concern is not simply manipulation, but the deliberate use of the dead in live political contests, for propaganda or disinformation. The underlying issue was one of precedent: if AI-generated posthumous speech becomes accepted as an appropriate form of advocacy in one context, the same techniques become easier to justify in less benign settings, such as political propaganda, historical revisionism or fabricated public endorsements. The concern is not only that these representations may be false, but that they allow others to appropriate victims’ voices and identities for purposes beyond their control or intended legacy.

3. Risk of extending testimony beyond consent:

While testimony has always been reused beyond its original setting, AI enables forms of transformation that go considerably further. Testimonies can be made interactive, translated into synthetic voices, combined with other materials or embedded in new applications at speed and scale, allowing them to circulate far beyond the purposes for which they were originally shared. These risks are amplified further in cases where elements of the testimony collection process itself are outsourced to AI. These raise concerns about dignity, consent, agency and the long-term ethical boundaries of testimony collection as decisions about how testimony is presented, interpreted and reused may increasingly be shaped by technological systems and third parties rather than by victims and affected communities themselves.

4. Risk of turning testimony into spectacle:

AI memorialisation can create lifelike, interactive representations that simulate presence—potentially transforming testimony into content to be consumed. Greater access, visibility, and engagement are not in themselves problematic and may, in some contexts, support victims’ and affected communities’ efforts to preserve memory, resist denial, and reach wider audiences. What victims and affected communities want memorialisation to achieve will also vary across contexts. The risk arises where AI-mediated interaction prioritises on-demand engagement, affective immediacy, or the intensity of the experience over those aims and the opportunity for sustained reflection. The concern is not only with this relational distortion but also with its psychological effects on audiences, and with the broader risk that increasingly immersive memorial environments may produce detachment from the historical reality they purport to convey – privileging the intensity of the experience over the weight of what is being remembered. In transitional justice contexts, this matters where such forms of engagement weaken memorialisation’s broader contribution to learning from past violence and preventing future harm.

5. Risk of amplifying unequal recognition:

AI systems depend on large, structured, and digitised bodies of material, meaning that victims and communities with richer archives are more likely to be represented than those whose experiences remain poorly documented or difficult to digitise. Rather than creating these inequalities, AI risks reinforcing and scaling them by making already visible histories more searchable, interactive and widely accessible while further marginalising others. This raises questions about the representation of gendered, minority and less well-documented experiences, and about who decides which histories become sufficiently data-rich to merit AI-enabled memorialisation. High production costs compound this, making impactful memorials structurally inaccessible to many communities.

6. Risk of concentrated control over memorialisation:

Control over AI memorialisation systems—data, platforms and narratives—may become concentrated among a limited set of actors. Commercial dynamics, including profit motives, competition among large technology companies and the risk of politically motivated misinformation infrastructure, create incentives that may be misaligned with the purposes of truth-seeking and accountability. This creates conditions for long-term reinterpretation, restricted access or politicisation of historical records by both state and corporate actors. The technical fragility of AI platforms also raises questions about obsolescence and long-term sustainability.

These risks broadly echo the concerns raised in the scholarly literature reviewed above. What the Policy Hub discussions add is confirmation from a different vantage point: not academic analysis but the experience of practitioners working directly on memorialisation efforts across a range of cultural and institutional contexts—and finding the same tensions alive in the field.

Potential benefits & justifications of AI use

Alongside the risks outlined above, the report explores the **potential benefits of AI in memorialisation and the conditions under which its use might be considered appropriate or justifiable**. These findings draw on discussions of two speculative and contrasting scenarios, designed to move beyond abstract debate and examine how decisions about AI might be made in practice: what questions should be asked, what trade-offs considered and what forms of use might be defensible.



Photo Credit: Global Images Ukraine/Getty Images

The two contrasting scenarios reflect different stages and functions of memory work. The first—the Warsaw Ghetto Museum—concerns a **context in which a historical event has been extensively documented, and where memorialisation involves the interpretation, curation and communication of an established archival record**. The second—the Aleppo Victims Memorial—addresses **a setting in which documentation is ongoing, testimony is still being collected and memorialisation is closely tied to lived experience and evolving accounts of violence**. This contrast was deliberate: the two scenarios raise different questions about consent, authenticity and the relationship between AI and communities for whom the past is not yet settled.

These scenarios are speculative and were constructed precisely to enable the kind of frank, critical discussion that real institutional examples might constrain. The cases were chosen to

reflect two regional contexts—Holocaust memory in Europe and the Syrian uprising and civil war—for which there was sufficient expertise in the room to enable informed discussion, not to represent actual projects.

Across both scenarios, **AI was considered in relation to a range of potential applications, including creating interactive experiences, translating or presenting testimonies or supporting large-scale documentation—and under what conditions such uses might be appropriate.** This section presents the key insights that emerged in relation to potential benefits and justifications of AI use in memorialisation contexts.

Benefits & justification of use in established memorialisation contexts

In a well-documented historical context, AI may offer a number of legitimate benefits that justify its use under appropriate conditions. These include:

- 1. Education and engagement:** AI might offer new ways to engage audiences with complex historical material—for instance, by making it more accessible, in particular for younger audiences. The ability to engage new generations should not, on its own, be understood as a sufficient justification for the use of AI. Rather, it constitutes an instrumental benefit, as memorialisation efforts that fail to reach future generations risk failing in one of their core purposes.
- 2. Democratisation of access:** AI tools—including translation systems and searchable archives—can make testimony and historical material available to audiences who would otherwise face linguistic, educational or geographical barriers. This is one of the stronger justifications for AI in well-documented memorial contexts, where the underlying material is established and the primary challenge is one of reach rather than representation.
- 3. Scalable analysis of archival material:** Machine learning applied to large volumes of archival data can identify patterns, connections and themes not readily visible through manual research. This is the least contested applications of AI in memorialisation: extending existing research capabilities rather than transforming the nature of testimony or representation.

Benefits & justification of use in ongoing memorialisation contexts

In discussing AI use where documentation is active, testimony is still being collected and communities are living with the ongoing consequences of violence, the report identifies a more constrained set of benefits and justifications—and a notably higher threshold for appropriate use.

- 1. Supporting testimony collection at scale:** Where access to affected communities is limited or the volume of testimony exceeds institutional capacity, AI can support collection, organisation and preservation without transforming how testimony is represented. This is a genuine justification where the alternative is not better documentation but none at all.
- 2. Contextualisation & navigation rather than generation:** The analysis suggests that AI should operate on the backend of representation in these contexts—organising and clustering material by theme, place and time to make collections navigable and to surface the diversity of testimony, rather than generating new content or flattening accounts into a singular narrative.

Recommendations: Values, standards & risk mitigation strategies

As AI technologies continue to advance and become more widely accessible, their use in memorialisation is likely to increase. Without clear governance frameworks, standards and guidance tailored to TJ contexts, their adoption risks amplifying the ethical, legal and political challenges identified throughout this report, with potentially harmful consequences for victims and survivors and for the objectives that memorialisation seeks to advance.

The recommendations that follow draw on the analysis presented throughout this report, including the literature reviewed, the case studies examined and the discussions held during the Policy Hub. Together, these informed a set of practical recommendations for institutions and organisations responsible for commissioning, procuring, governing or deploying AI in memorialisation contexts. This includes memorial institutions, museums, archives, documentation centres, human rights organisations, victim and survivor organisations as well as relevant public authorities responsible for preserving and presenting the legacy of mass atrocities and conflict. They identify the conditions, safeguards and standards that should guide decisions about whether and how AI is used responsibly in these settings.

The recommendations should be read as the practical bridge between the two preceding sections: they set out the conditions that would need to be in place for the benefits identified in Section 4 (**Potential benefits & justifications of AI use**) to be realised, and the risks identified in Section 3 (**Key risks & challenges**) to be avoided or meaningfully mitigated.

These recommendations are not technical standards for AI developers. Rather, they identify the governance questions institutions and organisations should be able to answer, and the conditions they should be able to satisfy, before deciding to adopt AI in memorialisation initiatives.

1. Ensure that design—from early decision-making to deployment—is victim- and survivor-centred

- ◆ **Meaningfully involve victims & survivors in decisions that affect them:** Victims and survivor communities should be involved from the outset—not consulted after key decisions have already been made. Where possible, affected communities should participate in determining whether AI should be used at all, what kinds of data may be processed and what limits should apply. To enable meaningful participation, institutions should ensure that victims and survivors are provided with clear, accessible information about the AI systems being considered, including their purpose, capabilities, limitations and potential risks. This should be accompanied by appropriate AI literacy and capacity-building efforts, recognising that informed participation depends on people having the knowledge and confidence to engage with these decisions. Where individual consent is impossible because those represented are deceased, institutions should establish representative advisory structures involving survivor groups, descendants and civil society organisations.

- ◆ **Protect the integrity & plurality of memory:** AI should support, rather than shape, how the past is remembered. Institutions and organisations should ensure that AI does not reinforce existing patterns of exclusion or unequal recognition among victim and survivor groups, privilege institutional priorities over survivors' voices or flatten diverse experiences into singular historical narratives. Decisions about how testimony is organised, translated, summarised or presented should preserve the diversity and complexity of victims' experiences. Institutions should also consider the long-term implications of AI for the stewardship, governance and future interpretation of memorial archives, recognising that decisions made today may shape how atrocities are understood and remembered for generations. Responsibility for these decisions should remain with accountable human institutions and should never be delegated to AI systems.
- ◆ **Apply existing TJ standards and do no harm:** Existing TJ frameworks for testimony collection—including human rights standards, trauma-informed practice and archival ethics—should guide all decisions, with or without AI. The introduction of AI does not suspend these duties but rather intensifies them. Particular attention must be paid to the risk of retraumatisation, the contestedness of victimhood, and the potential for AI systems to direct or amplify testimony in ways that serve institutional rather than survivor interests.

2. Ensure the right kinds of AI are used for the right reasons, with adequate assessment of each application.

- ◆ **AI as means, not end:** AI should be introduced where it represents a proportionate and purposeful response to a genuine challenge, not adopted for its own sake.
- ◆ **Assess whether AI is appropriate for the context:** Decisions about whether to use AI should always be context-specific. Institutions should assess the context in which memorialisation is taking place, the stage of the TJ process, the purpose of the memorialisation initiative, the status of documentation, and the potential risks to victims, survivors, and affected communities. Applications that may be appropriate in well-documented, established memorialisation contexts, such as translation, search, or archival navigation, may be inappropriate where testimony is still being collected, historical narratives remain contested, or communities continue to experience violence and displacement. The more sensitive and contested the context, the stronger the justification, safeguards, and human oversight required.
- ◆ **Distinguish between types of AI & types of data:** Not all AI applications raise the same concerns. AI applied to digital archive search raises different questions than AI used to 'animate' deceased victims. Each use case should be assessed on its own terms, with attention to the specific application, its motivation and the degree of interpretive intervention involved.

3. Protect the process of testimony collection & the data it produces

- ◆ **People collect testimonies, not AI:** The practice of testimony collection in TJ settings depends on sensitive attunement, skilled interviewing and the cultivation of trust—capacities that are not replicable by AI systems. Technological intermediaries always involve human mediation and human choices, and should be recognised as such. AI may support the organisation, preservation and navigation of testimony; it should not be the primary interface through which survivors are asked to share their experiences.

- ◆ **Approach consent contextually:** Where individuals whose data is used are deceased, individual consent is neither possible nor sufficient. Institutions should engage with survivor communities, descendants and civil society collectives, recognising that a stakeholder analysis is needed to understand who retains a legitimate interest in how the dead are represented. In contexts where survivors are living and testimony remains active, consent cannot be treated as a one-time event. Institutions should establish mechanisms for periodic reconsenting—including consideration of annual renewal—and must have clear procedures for what happens to testimony when a survivor dies or becomes incapacitated. Survivors must understand, before participating, the full range of potential uses of their testimony, including whether it could be used in legal proceedings, altered in the future or accessed by third parties.
 - ◆ **The right to removal must be guaranteed:** Survivors must retain the right to withdraw their testimony from any archive or platform, including the right to request deletion. Data governance structures should make this right meaningful in practice, not merely formal—with clear accountability for who approves access, who is notified prior to publication and how removal requests are processed.
 - ◆ **AI & media literacy as preconditions:** Neither survivors sharing testimony nor audiences engaging with it should encounter AI systems without adequate understanding of what those systems are and do. AI literacy—including an understanding of how testimony may be stored, used, repurposed or altered—is a precondition for meaningful consent, not an optional addition. This applies equally to those collecting testimony and those curating public-facing memorials. Co-creating the parameters of consent with survivors, including through scenario-based discussions of potential future uses, is preferable to presenting pre-drafted consent forms.
 - ◆ **Establish clear data governance structures:** Before proceeding, institutions should have in place an advisory board with community representation, mechanisms for periodic reassessment and explicit contractual structures with technology providers that prevent reuse of archival data for model training, establish clear retention and deletion policies and also preserve institutional independence.
4. Consider how the introduction of AI will play out over time, including governance, the relationship with technology providers & the challenge of technological change
- ◆ **Establish clear data governance structures:** Before proceeding, institutions should have in place an advisory board with community representation and mechanisms for periodic reassessment. Organisations should be conscious of any long-term responsibility they may have for the testimony, data, and memorialisation initiatives they create, particularly in an area where responsibility and potential legal liability are not yet clearly established and where there is a heightened risk that AI-generated or AI-modified content may cause harm. Explicit contractual structures with technology providers should prevent reuse of archival data for model training, establish clear retention and deletion policies, define responsibilities and potential legal liabilities, and preserve institutional independence.
 - ◆ **Retain institutional control:** Institutions and organisations must retain intellectual property rights over exhibitions and archival materials and should not cede control to external technology providers. Contracts must include explicit limits on ownership, reproduction and the reuse of sensitive data for training purposes.

- ◆ **Plan for technological change:** Given how rapidly AI technologies evolve, institutions must address from the outset how a testimony-based legacy will be maintained as platforms change and systems become obsolete. Contracts with technology providers should include provisions for data portability, long-term stewardship and the prevention of data lock-in.

5. Where AI is public-facing, ensure interaction design is sensitive & transparent, and that testimony is never turned into spectacle

- ◆ **Protect the integrity of testimony & historical record:** Institutions must be transparent with visitors about all production choices, including the distinction between archival material and AI-generated content, where knowledge gaps exist and the temporal distance between any AI representation and the historical events it draws on. Visitors should never be uncertain about whether they are encountering a historical record or a simulation.
- ◆ **Sensitive interaction design:** Design and deployment must be guided by deliberate attentiveness to the ethical dimensions of representing and interacting with the dead. This includes careful consideration of the psychological impact on visitors, the risk of retraumatisation and appropriate safeguards such as age or maturity guidelines in line with local laws and established museum practice.
- ◆ **Preserve dignity in presentation:** Testimony should never be presented in ways that transform suffering into spectacle or consumption. Co-creation with survivor communities, a clear understanding of institutional values and ongoing reflection on the dignity of both subjects and audiences should guide all curatorial decisions.

Beyond these practical recommendations, the analysis presented in this report and the discussions held during the Policy Hub, reinforced by the recent findings of the UN Special Rapporteur on truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, point to the need for continued work to develop principles and guidance for the safe and responsible use of AI across transitional justice, including memorialisation. Such work should take a multidisciplinary approach and involve the practitioners, institutions, victims and survivor groups, and other actors that such guidance is intended to support. While the development of broader TJ-wide guidance falls outside the scope of this report, the findings, recommendations, and decision-making framework presented here in relation to memorialisation can contribute to its future development.

Decision-making framework for the use of AI in memorialisation

The questionnaire below is intended as a practical starting point to support institutions and practitioners in deciding whether and how AI should be used in memorialisation and testimony-related work. Rather than providing definitive answers, it is designed to prompt critical reflection on the ethical, practical and governance questions that should be considered before AI is adopted, recognising that appropriate use will always depend on context. While not exhaustive, it offers an initial decision-making framework that can help organisations assess whether AI is appropriate for a particular memorialisation initiative and, if so, under what conditions. It also forms part of Impunity Watch's broader work to develop principles and guidance on the safe and responsible use of AI in TJ processes.

I. Purpose, justification & limits

1. Purpose

- ◆ What problem is AI intended to address?
- ◆ Is AI a proportionate and necessary solution, or could the same goal be achieved through less complex or less risky means?
- ◆ Is AI being introduced as a **means to a clearly defined purpose**, or as an end in itself?

2. Type of AI & level of intervention

- ◆ What type of AI is being considered (e.g. machine learning for analysis, generative AI for interaction)?
- ◆ Does the system organise existing material, or generate new content?
- ◆ How does this affect the level of interpretive intervention into memory or testimony?

3. Legitimate aims

- ◆ Does the use of AI meaningfully support:
 - ➔ Education and public understanding?
 - ➔ Accessibility (e.g. translation, broader reach)?
 - ➔ Preservation or analysis of complex data?
- ◆ Are these benefits sufficient to justify the potential risks introduced?

4. Boundaries & red lines

- ◆ Are there uses that should be considered **unacceptable regardless of technical quality**? (e.g. fabrication of testimony, simulated certainty, emotionally manipulative systems)
- ◆ What forms of error or uncertainty are **unacceptable** in this context?

II. Victim- & survivor-centred approach

5. Participation & co-design

- ◆ Have victims, survivors or affected communities been involved **from the outset**? Have they been provided with clear, accessible information about the proposed AI system, including its purpose, capabilities, limitations and potential risks, so they can participate meaningfully in decisions about its use?
- ◆ Are their perspectives shaping decisions, or only being consulted after key choices are made?
- ◆ Is there a clear stakeholder analysis identifying who is affected?

6. Consent (living individuals)

- ◆ What does **meaningful, ongoing consent** look like in this context?
- ◆ Do participants understand:
 - How their data will be used now and in the future?
 - Whether AI may transform, extend or reinterpret their testimony?
- ◆ Are mechanisms in place for **re-consent over time**?
- ◆ Can individuals withdraw their testimony or data?
- ◆ Are there clear processes for:
 - Deletion?
 - Restriction of access?
 - Modification over time?

7. Consent (deceased individuals)

- ◆ Who has a legitimate stake in how the deceased are represented?
- ◆ How are survivors, descendants or communities involved in setting limits?
- ◆ Are decisions about representation being made collectively where individual consent is not possible?

8. Role of AI in testimony collection

- ◆ Is AI supporting human-led processes, or replacing them?
- ◆ Are sensitive tasks (e.g. interviewing survivors) being conducted by trained humans?

III. Data governance & infrastructure

9. Data selection & limits

- ◆ What types of data are being used?
- ◆ Are there materials that should remain **outside AI systems entirely**?
- ◆ What criteria determine what is ethically off-limits?

10. Data governance structures

- ◆ Is there an advisory or oversight body with community representation?
- ◆ Are there mechanisms for periodic review and reassessment?

11. Relationship with technology providers

- ◆ Who owns the data and outputs?
- ◆ Are there safeguards against:
 - ➔ Reuse of data for model training?
 - ➔ Loss of institutional control?
 - ➔ Long-term dependency or lock-in?
- ◆ Are retention, deletion and portability clearly defined?

IV. Interaction design & public experience

12. Transparency & clarity

- ◆ Is it always clear to users:
 - ➔ What is archival vs. AI-generated?
 - ➔ Where uncertainty or gaps exist?
- ◆ Are users at risk of confusing simulation with historical record?

13. Dignity & representation

- ◆ Does the system risk turning testimony into **spectacle**?
- ◆ How is dignity preserved in both design and presentation?

14. Context & access

- ◆ Where will the system be available (e.g. controlled setting vs. open online)?
- ◆ What risks arise from decontextualisation, misuse or misinterpretation?

V. Long-term considerations

15. Sustainability and stewardship

- ◆ How will the system and data be maintained over time?
- ◆ What happens if the technology becomes obsolete?

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Resources

Coloniality, Collections and the Responsible Use of AI in Museums and Heritage: A Toolkit and Workbook

A practical toolkit and workbook developed by researchers from the Universities of Cambridge, Sheffield, York, and partner institutions to help museums and heritage organisations critically assess and navigate the ethical, political and decolonial implications of using AI in collections, exhibitions and public engagement.

<https://sites.google.com/sheffield.ac.uk/museums-ai-toolkit/>

The Responsible AI Afterlives Workbook

A practical workbook developed through the Synthetic Pasts project to help museums, heritage organisations and cultural practitioners critically assess the ethical, emotional and governance implications of using AI to ‘revive’ historical materials, collections and representations of the dead.

<https://www.syntheticpasts.com/aiafterlivesworkbook>

Recommendation for Digitising Material Evidence of the Holocaust

A collaboratively developed set of recommendations and practical guidelines from the Digital Holocaust Memory Project on how to ethically digitise Holocaust-related material evidence, with particular attention to transparency, provenance, access, infrastructure and the responsibilities of archives and memory institutions in the digital age.

https://sussex.figshare.com/articles/report/Recommendations_for_digitising_material_evidence_of_the_Holocaust/28846667/1?file=53918036

Annex I: Participants Bio

Aude Le Goff

Aude Le Goff has spent nearly twenty years working to advance recognition and reparation for victims of grave crimes. A former lawyer with a degree from the Institute of International Humanitarian Studies, she brings a multidisciplinary perspective shaped by work in law firms, NGOs, international organizations, and professional networks. At the Trust Fund for Victims of the International Criminal Court, Aude designs and oversees reparation programmes in countries affected by mass atrocities. She is currently responsible for mandates in Mali, Guinea, and Sudan. Aude has also played a leading role in developing both judicial and non-judicial memorialization processes in Côte d'Ivoire and Mali. Her work has contributed to the creation of memorials, exhibitions, and community infrastructures, as well as to the development of practical methodologies and tools—including a memorialization checklist—to guide stakeholders and support victims' meaningful participation. She works closely with national, regional, and traditional authorities, engaging on key issues related to recognition, participation, and the role of memory in justice processes.

Beryl Pong

Beryl Pong is a UKRI Future Leaders Fellow at Centre for the Future of Intelligence, University of Cambridge. She leads the Centre for Drones and Culture, which examines the ethics and aesthetics of drone use in art, war, humanitarianism, and ecology. She holds affiliated positions with the Faculty of English at Cambridge and with the National University of Singapore. Beryl recently directed “Beware Blue Skies,” an immersive film inspired by victim testimonies of drone warfare, in collaboration with the Imperial War Museum.

Daniel Kolb

Daniel Kolb is a postdoctoral researcher at the Leibniz Supercomputing Centre of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences and Humanities. He earned his Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral degrees in Computer Science from Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (LMU Munich). His research lies at the intersection of human-computer interaction, immersive technologies, and thanatosensitive systems, with a particular focus on Interactive Digital Testimonies and Embodied Conversational Agents. Drawing on interdisciplinary, human-centered methods, he designs and empirically evaluates systems that preserve and mediate interactive conversations with contemporary witnesses, such as Holocaust survivors, for education and remembrance.

Denis Džidić

Denis Džidić is the Executive Director and Editor of the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIRN BiH). Denis has worked as a journalist since 2006, starting his career in Oslobođenje, a daily newspaper from Bosnia and Herzegovina. He has also worked for the Institute for War and Peace Reporting in Sarajevo and The Hague, reporting on transitional justice issues and covering war crimes trials related to the 1992–1995 conflict in BiH. He joined BIRN in August 2008 and has worked as a journalist, deputy editor and chief editor for BIRN BiH before being named Executive Director and Editor in October 2019.

Dr Mauricio Figueroa

Dr Mauricio Figueroa works as a Lecturer at Durham Law School. He holds a PhD from Newcastle Law School and is a member of the Society for Computers and Law.

Dr Tomasz Hollanek

Dr Tomasz Hollanek is an Assistant Research Professor at the Cambridge Institute for Technology and Humanity and an Affiliated Lecturer in Computer Science at the University of Cambridge, working at the intersection of AI ethics, critical design, and human-AI interaction. His research on AI companionship and the societal impacts of human-AI interaction has received international attention, including work on ‘griefbots’ covered by The New York Times, The Guardian, BBC, among many others. Tomasz founded and chairs CAPING (the Conversational AI Policy Innovation Group), a cross-sector group developing policy and design guidance for socially beneficial AI companions, and has advised governments, international organisations, NGOs, and private companies on responsible AI design, governance, and public-facing communication. He is also a regular commentator on emerging issues in AI.

Esther Kamau

Esther Kamau is a Programme Officer at Impunity Watch, where she focuses on the intersection of emerging technologies and transitional justice, with an emphasis on victim participation. Previously, she worked in the Victims and Witnesses Section of the International Criminal Court. She has also worked in a number of NGOs advocating for inclusive participation of minorities and marginalized groups, including Kituo cha Sheria in Nairobi, Vluchtelingenwerk in The Hague, and Mental Disability Advocacy Centre in Budapest. She has been involved in research projects on mitigating natural resources related conflicts in Wangari Maathai Institute for Peace and Environmental Studies and at the University of Copenhagen. She holds an LL.M. (Master of Laws in Human Rights) from Central European University in Budapest, a Diploma in Legal Practice from the Kenya School of Law, and an LL.B. in Law from Moi University, Kenya.

Joanna Król-Komła

Joanna Król-Komła graduated from University of Warsaw in Polish literature and Linguistics. She also studied Jewish History at Mordechai Anielewicz Center in Warsaw and at Tel Aviv University. She has worked at the POLIN Museum since 2010, developing Museum’s digital repository, oral history collection, resource center, websites Virtual Shtetl and the Polish Righteous which attract over 2 million users per year. The author of numerous interviews with history witnesses, short documentaries and articles on Jewish history. She is a member of the International Council of Museums.

Leonore Martin

Leonore Martin is a specialist advisor for education in digital learning spaces at the German Foundation Remembrance, Responsibility and Future (EVZ). She has been and continues to be responsible for numerous funding programmes in the field of historical and political education. In 2019, she helped launch digital // memory. This was one of the first programmes to support the development and testing of digital formats as part of a culture of remembrance 4.0 combining digital tools and techniques with historical sites and local history. Last year, Leonore Martin co-curated the online input series Thursday Topic – Artificial Intelligence in Remembrance Work.

Livia Garofalo

Livia Garofalo is a cultural and medical anthropologist and a researcher with Data & Society Research Institute, where she focuses on technologies and infrastructures of healthcare, broadly defined. She is interested in understanding how people experience and make meaning in times of crisis, how technology and AI get employed and mobilized, and how power and subjectivity show up in everyday life. Her recent projects have examined historical and economic trauma and the delivery of critical care; the intersection of labor, technology, and health; AI and mental health, and the community impacts of data centers on communities. She has done research in Europe, Latin America, and the US. Livia holds a PhD in anthropology and a master's in public health from Northwestern University. Her doctoral research on inequality, trauma, and economic crisis in Buenos Aires, Argentina, was funded by the US Fulbright Program, the National Science Foundation, and the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research. She also holds bachelor's and master's degrees in cultural anthropology from the University of Bologna, Italy.

Maha Ghrer

Maha Ghrer is a Senior Program Officer for the MENA region at Impunity Watch, where she has worked since 2019. She primarily focuses on Syria and is also engaged in programs related to Iraq and Yemen. Her work centers on supporting the development of independent victims' movements and advancing meaningful victims' and civil society participation in transitional justice processes.

Michelle Bouchebel

Michelle Bouchebel is a Senior Programme Officer at Impunity Watch, focusing on the intersection of artificial intelligence, emerging technologies and transitional justice, and on victims' participation in TJ processes. Previously, she worked with Search for Common Ground in Lebanon, where she led teams implementing projects in both Lebanon and Syria centred on gender, governance, cultural protection and conflict transformation. Michelle also has experience in human rights and transitional justice from her previous work with ACT for the Disappeared in Lebanon and the International Center for Transitional Justice. She holds a Master's degree in International Affairs from the Lebanese American University (LAU) and both a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in Social Sciences, with a focus on Development, from the Lebanese University.

Mykola Makhortykh

Mykola Makhortykh is an Alfred Landecker lecturer at the Institute of Communication and Media Science, where he studies the impact of algorithmic systems and AI on Holocaust memory transmission. In his research, Mykola focuses on politics- and history-centred information behaviour in online environments and how it is affected by the information retrieval systems, such as search engines and recommender systems. To achieve this goal, he combines traditional social science methods (e.g., content analysis and focus groups) with novel computational approaches (e.g., deep learning and agent-based testing). His other research interests include trauma and memory studies, armed conflict reporting, disinformation and computational propaganda research, cybersecurity and critical security studies, and bias in information retrieval systems.

Omar Al-Asaad

Omar Al-Asaad is a writer, journalist, and policy and advocacy consultant, holding a Master's degree in Political Science from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in Paris. Since 2010, he has worked with leading media and human rights institutions, including as Director of Policy and Communications at the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM) and Director of Research and Editorial at the Prison Museum Foundation (PM). His work focuses on the Syrian conflict and its political actors, with particular attention to the intersections of media, culture, and power. He has authored numerous articles and studies on the history of journalism and intellectuals in Syria, contributing to broader debates on public discourse, authoritarianism, and conflict. He has also led in-depth journalistic and policy-oriented investigations on the period of the so-called Islamic State's control over parts of Syria and Iraq, alongside sustained engagement in human rights advocacy through collaboration with civil society organizations, victims' associations, and United Nations bodies addressing the Syrian context.

Prof. Andrew Hoskins

Andrew Hoskins is Professor of AI, Memory & War at the University of Edinburgh, UK. His research focuses on: digital participation in war, AI, media & memory, and digital anonymity. He leads the ERC advance grant/UKRI funded project WARSHARE: The new war front: digital participation in war (2025–30) focusing on the Russian war against Ukraine. He is founding Co-Editor-in-Chief of the Cambridge Journal of Memory, Mind & Media and founding Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Memory Studies. His articles on AI and memory include: AI and memory, AI and collective memory and the Fall of Living Memory (on atomic bomb survivor memory). He is the author/editor of 11 books including: *The Remaking of Memory in the Age of the Internet and Social Media* (edited with Qi Wang, OUP 2025). His new books on memory and AI are out later in 2026: *Memorybot: AI and the End of Human Memory* (Polity) and *The AI Memory Machine: Why the Past is All Over* (with Kristína Čimová and Danny Pilkington, OUP).

Prof. Hugo Rojas Corral

Prof. Hugo Rojas Corral holds a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Oxford and a second Ph.D. in Law (Rule of Law and Global Governance) from the University of Salamanca. His academic background is interdisciplinary, spanning Law, Anthropology, Social Sciences, and Public Policy. Associate Professor of Sociology of Law at the Catholic University of Uruguay, Associate Researcher at Alberto Hurtado University Law School in Chile. He is also an adjunct professor at the University of California Study Abroad Program in Chile. Rojas Corral has been involved in several important research initiatives, including the Millennium Institute for Democracy and Violence (VioDemos), the Millennium Institute on Data Foundations (IMFD), and Nuestra Memoria. He previously collaborated with the Chilean Commission on Torture and Political Imprisonment, which addressed human rights violations under the Pinochet dictatorship. He is the author of *Human Rights and Transitional Justice in Chile* and *Past Human Rights Violations and the Question of Indifference: The Case of Chile*, both published by Palgrave Macmillan, among other publications.

Prof. Victoria Grace Richardson-Walden

Prof. Victoria Grace Richardson-Walden is Full Professor of Digital Heritage, Memory and Culture, and Director of the Landecker Digital Memory Lab at the University of Sussex. She is author of *Cinematic Intermedialities and Contemporary Holocaust Memory* (2019), editor of *The Memorial Museum in the Digital Age* (2022), and *Digital Holocaust Memory, Education and Research* (2021), and Editor-in-Chief of *Digital Memory Dialogues*, an open access publishing space designed to produce dialogue between disciplines, sectors and industries focused on producing digital Holocaust memory (www.digitalmemorydialogues.com). She has also produced policy briefings and working papers for the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance and the United Nations. She is currently Co-Chair of the UK's Media Education Association and President Elect of the British and Irish Association of Holocaust Studies. Find out more about her work at www.digitalmemorylab.com

Thomas Unger

Thomas Unger is currently the Director of Policy and Research at Impunity Watch. He is also an independent expert on transitional justice (TJ). He is regularly advising various other international organisations on TJ matters, including the UN, EU, Council of Europe and the Swiss Foreign Ministry. He has been the Co-Director of the Master of Advanced Studies in Transitional Justice, Human Rights and the Rule of Law. He is the former Senior Adviser to the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence. He worked for many years as a human rights officer within the Austrian Foreign Ministry, as well as a legal system monitor with the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, and as a legal clerk with the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Since 2022 he is an associated expert to the Dealing with the Past Program at swisspeace. Thomas is a regular expert lecturer on TJ at the Austrian Centre for Peace. Thomas has published widely on TJ and holds an LLM degree on international legal studies from NYU School of Law, as well as a European Master's Degree in Human Rights and Democratisation from the Global Campus on Human Rights in Venice. He has a law degree from the University of Vienna, School of Law.

Annex II: Agenda

Main Goals of the Meeting:

- ◆ **To assess the potential risks, benefits, and ethical challenges of using AI and emerging technologies in memorialisation and victim testimony**, particularly in relation to digital afterlives, interactive survivor representations, and digital memorials.
- ◆ **To develop policy-relevant insights and future-oriented recommendations** on how AI and emerging technologies can be responsibly used in memorialisation and transitional justice contexts.

Day 1 – Tuesday 24 March 2026 | Exploring AI, Emerging Tech, Memory, and Victim Testimony

Time	Session & Details	Speakers / Presenters
09:30 – 10:00	Welcome Coffee	
10:00 – 10:30	Session I: Welcome and Introduction to AI, Emerging Tech and Transitional Justice Main discussion points: ◆ Opening remarks and overview of the Policy Hub ◆ Objectives and expected outcomes of the meeting ◆ Introduction to the relationship between AI, emerging tech and transitional justice processes	Thomas Unger, Director of Policy and Research, Impunity Watch (IW)
10:30 – 11:00	Session II: Introduction to AI, the Digital Afterlife, and Memorialisation Main discussion points: ◆ Key developments in AI relevant to memory and testimony ◆ The concept of the digital afterlife and its implications for testimony and remembrance ◆ Opportunities and risks for transitional justice and memorialisation initiatives	Tomasz Hollanek, Assistant Research Professor, University of Cambridge
11:00 – 11:15	Coffee Break	
11:15 – 12:00	Session III: Participant Introductions and Position Statements Main discussion points: ◆ Participants introduce their professional background and perspectives on AI, emerging tech and memorialisation ◆ Initial reflections on the role of AI and emerging tech in shaping memory and testimony ◆ Early reactions to the case studies presented (see Exercise 1)	Moderator: Tomasz Hollanek Format: Panel Discussion

Time	Session & Details	Speakers / Presenters
12:00 – 13:00	Session IV: Identifying Key Concerns and Risks Main discussion points: 30-mins small-group discussion (see Exercise 2) to identify key ethical tensions, risks, and governance concerns - Groups present their key concerns	Moderator: Tomasz Hollanek Format: Breakout group discussions followed by plenary discussion
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch Break	
14:00 – 16:30	Session V: Small-group Speculative Session Main discussion points: - Participants work in small groups for 90 minutes, acting as advisors to an organisation considering the use of AI in memorialisation (see Exercise 3) - Identify key questions, risks, and safeguards that should guide such initiatives - Discuss principles and recommendations for responsible uses of AI and emerging tech in memorialisation contexts - Groups present their scenario analyses and reflections	Moderator: IW and Tomasz Hollanek Format: Breakout group discussions followed by plenary discussion
19:00	Meet in the lobby at 18:30 to walk to dinner venue (Ristorante & Bar Cinque GmbH, Reinhardtstraße 27 d, 10117 Berlin)	All participants

Day 2 – Wednesday 25 March 2026 | Imagining Responsible Futures for AI, Emerging Tech and Memorialisation

Time	Session & Details	Speakers / Presenters
09:00 – 09:30	Welcome Coffee	
09:30 – 10:30	Session VI: Memorialisation Projects in Practice Main discussion points: - Presentation of two initiatives using digital technologies in memorialisation contexts - Reflections on technological approaches, safeguards, and ethical considerations - Lessons learned for the responsible use of AI and emerging tech in memorialisation	Moderator: IW Format: Panel Discussion Input by: Hugo Rojas Corral (Nuestramemoria) Omar Alassad (The Syria Prisons Museum)
10:30 – 10:45	Coffee Break	
10:45 – 12:00	Session VII: Alternative Futures for AI, Emerging Tech and Memorialisation Main discussion points: - Small-group speculative design exercise for 45 minutes exploring alternative approaches to AI and memory practices (see Exercise 4) - Reflection on what responsible, ethical, and survivor-centred uses of AI and emerging tech could look like - Groups share the alternative visions and ideas developed during the exercise	Moderator: IW & Tomasz Hollanek Format: Breakout group discussions followed by plenary discussion
12:00 – 13:00	Session VIII: Closing Reflections and Future Directions Main discussion points: - Open discussion on policy implications emerging from the workshop - Identifying key takeaways and areas for further research, guidance, or collaboration	Moderator: IW & Tomasz Hollanek Format: Panel Discussion
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch Break	
15:00	Optional Activity: Museum Visit (DIE MAUER, Yadegar Asisi Panorama)	

Workshop Exercises and Case Studies

Exercise 1: Introductions and Initial Positions

Please introduce yourself, your area of expertise or practice, and how you approach the question of AI and memorialisation. You may wish to note the perspectives, experiences, or concerns that shape your viewpoint (ethical, technical, cultural, legal, curatorial, personal, or political).

If you wish, also share initial reactions, questions, or provisional positions in relation to the three case studies described below:

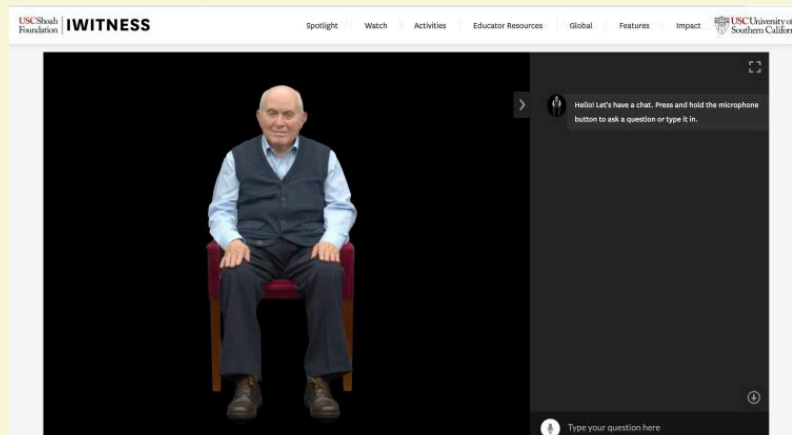
- ◆ **Case study 1:** Creating interactive AI-mediated biographies of survivors with their informed consent;
- ◆ **Case study 2:** Using AI to simulate a deceased person's image or voice for political appeal without their consent but with family approval;
- ◆ **Case study 3:** Building AI-based digital memorials to victims without their consent, initiated by families.

Prepare to speak for 5–10 min. Slides are optional. The aim is to situate your perspective and surface early reflections rather than present fully developed arguments.

Case Study 1: Creating interactive biographies of survivors (USC Shoah Foundation)

Dimensions in Testimony, developed by the **USC Shoah Foundation**, is an interactive testimony project that combines volumetric-style filming, extensive oral history interviews, and AI-driven language matching to enable audiences to ask questions of recorded genocide survivors and receive contextually appropriate responses. In the case of **Holocaust**

survivor Pinchas Gutter, the system draws on thousands of pre-recorded answers captured during intensive filming sessions, creating the experience of a responsive dialogue that allows viewers to explore his memories, reflections, and lived experience across time while remaining grounded in his own recorded words.



Case Study 2: Using a deceased person's image to plead for political action (Hostages and Missing Families Forum)

As part of advocacy efforts by the **Hostages and Missing Families Forum**—an Israeli group representing the relatives of hostages taken to Gaza during the October 7 attacks—an **AI-generated video** was released, **simulating a direct message from Ran Gvili**, an Israeli soldier whose body was still held in Gaza, that directly addresses US President Donald Trump. According to reports, the Forum published the clip with the approval of Gvili's family, and his mother, Talik, is quoted by the group expressing both the emotional impact of seeing and hearing her son “speak in his own voice” and the family's plea for political action to bring his remains home.



Case Study 3: Building victims' digital memorials (Joaquin Oliver / Parkland)

In this case, the **parents of Joaquin Oliver**, who was 17 when he was shot and killed in the hallway of his **Parkland, Florida**, high school, collaborated with AI developers to **create a digital avatar that simulates his voice, appearance, and manner of speaking**. Drawing on Joaquin's writings, videos, and public statements, the project is both a personal act of remembrance for his family and a public-facing effort to keep his outspoken opposition to gun violence present in civic and media conversations, including by allowing journalists to interview the AI version of him.



Exercise 2: Key Concerns and Risks (Small-Group Discussion)

In your **small group**, and drawing on the **three case studies discussed**, please prepare a short list of the **most significant concerns, risks, or ethical tensions** you identify in these different uses of AI in memorialisation. You may wish to consider issues such as consent, agency, authenticity, political instrumentalisation, emotional impact, governance, power, or long-term cultural effects.

These points should be written on **post-it notes** and will be shared with the wider group to map key areas of concern and help structure the broader discussion.

Exercise 3: Speculative Advisory Scenarios

In this exercise, you will work in **one of two small groups**, each responding to a distinct speculative scenario. In both cases, **you are asked to imagine that you have been invited to act as an advisor to an organization considering the use of AI in memorialisation efforts**.

As a group, discuss how you would respond: what questions you would ask, what guidance or cautions you would offer, and what principles you would prioritize, drawing on and working through the questionnaires / worksheets provided. **Please record your collective responses in the shared collaborative document provided**. These notes will be used to share insights with the larger group and will also inform the final report, which will outline recommendations for organizations considering similar AI-based memorialisation practices.

Group 1: Warsaw Ghetto Museum

You are acting as an advisory body to a museum in Warsaw dedicated to commemorating the lives, suffering, survival, and resistance of people who lived in the Warsaw Ghetto.

The museum is considering partnering with a technology provider offering:

- ◆ AI-based “animation” of historical persons (including where data is scarce)
- ◆ Translation of recorded testimonies into other languages, using a synthetic voice modelled on the speaker’s voice
- ◆ Interactive visualisations
- ◆ Holographic or conversational installations

Your role is to help articulate principles, limits, and ideals for the use of AI for memorialisation in this context. The goal is not to reach consensus, but to surface values, tensions, and best practices.

I. Principles

1. What guiding principles should shape decision-making? What existing norms or practices should guide judgment? What frameworks (museum ethics, archival practice, survivor-centred approaches, human rights) are most relevant?
2. How is public-facing, conversational/generative AI different from other digital engagement museum tools (if at all)?
3. What are legitimate reasons to introduce AI at all? Under what aims does technology feel appropriate or valuable?
4. When does the potential for engagement or access justify risk (provided mitigation strategies are in place)?
5. Where should the absolute limits lie? Are there uses of AI that should never be acceptable in this context – regardless of technical quality? What technical or epistemic failures are unacceptable? (e.g. factual errors, simulated certainty, narrative invention, or blurred lines between record and inference).

II. Data and Archives

1. What types of source materials feel appropriate for AI-supported use – and why? Are there materials that should remain outside AI systems entirely? What makes certain data ethically off-limits?
2. How should consent be understood when the individuals whose personal data is considered in this context are deceased? What role should survivors and descendants play?
3. What boundaries should exist when supplying external technology providers with archival or sensitive data? (Consider training, reuse, control, retention, and accountability).
4. What data governance structures would you expect before proceeding? (e.g. review bodies, survivor consultation, periodic reassessment).

III. Interaction and Public Experience

1. What forms of AI-enabled interaction are appropriate in a memorial space? Should visitors 'interact' with AI interfaces at all and if so, how?
2. How does the form of interface matter? What ethical differences exist between visualisation, conversation, avatars, or holograms?
3. Should interactive, conversational AI interfaces exist only inside the museum, or also online? Are there risks that arise from online access? (e.g. misuse, denialism, loss of context, circulation without framing).
4. What framing and safeguards should always accompany the experience? What must be clear to visitors at all times?

IV. Recommendation

1. Based on this discussion, what would you advise the museum and why?

Group 2: Aleppo Victims Memorial

You are acting as an advisory body to an NGO supporting victims of war crimes in Syria.

The NGO works with civilians affected by the war in Aleppo and aims to collect first-hand testimonies and everyday memories of life during and after the fall of the Assad regime.

It is considering:

- ◆ An AI-based interview system to collect testimonies at a scale,
- ◆ Automated prompts to support storytelling, and
- ◆ An online platform where people can listen to and explore stories suggested by the system.

The initiative is intended to function both as documentation and as a living memorial.

I. Principles

1. What ethical duties arise when collecting testimony from living survivors? What existing frameworks would you defer to in this process with or without the use of AI?
2. Does the use of AI in testimony collection make fulfilling these duties more difficult? Or are there specific affordances that could support them?
3. What core principles should guide decisions to introduce technological intermediaries between victims and those working toward testimony collection or memorialisation (assuming these may be different actors or institutions)?

II. Affordances, Risks, and Limits

1. What meaningful benefits could AI offer in this context?
2. What risks are most serious? (e.g. retraumatisation, surveillance, coercion, misuse, permanence of data)
3. Are there AI uses that should be off-limits here? (e.g. emotionally responsive AI, automated trauma questioning, algorithmic story selection)
4. How should benefits be weighed against risks?

III. Testimony and Consent

1. What does meaningful, ongoing consent look like in this setting?
2. What should individuals sharing their stories through the AI platform understand about potential uses of their testimony and about AI itself before agreeing to participate?
3. What kinds of testimony or personal data should never be collected through AI systems?
4. Who should retain control over testimonies over time, including the ability to edit, restrict, or withdraw them?

IV. Memorialisation and Interaction Design

1. What are the ethical implications of making testimonies publicly accessible online as part of a memorial practice?
2. Who is the memorial intended for and who might encounter or misuse the material outside its intended context?
3. How can stories be shared in ways that preserve dignity and meaning, rather than turning suffering into consumption or spectacle?
4. Should an AI system ever guide, suggest, or shape how visitors encounter individual stories? If so, under what curatorial principles?
5. What forms of interaction should a memorial space enable and which might undermine its purpose (e.g. translation, guided exploration, contextual search)?

V. Recommendation

1. Would you advise proceeding – and if so, under what conditions?

Exercise 4: Alternative Visions for AI and Memorialisation (Speculative Design)

Imagine you have resources, funding, and a local team to develop an AI-enabled memorialisation project for a specific community or context (for example, a particular place, cultural group, post-conflict setting, or site of violence). Ground your thinking in one concrete setting and focus on what desirable, responsible uses of AI might look like, informed by the risks and recommendations discussed earlier.

The project may or may not involve simulating the deceased. You may be imaginative or pragmatic – both approaches are welcome.

- ◆ Would you take up this opportunity? Why or why not?
- ◆ What community, location, or conflict are you designing for, and why does that context matter?
- ◆ What would a desirable AI-based memorialisation effort look like there? What values would it advance?
- ◆ Who are the intended users or stakeholders, and who should not be?
- ◆ Beyond recreating individuals, how else might AI support memorialisation (e.g. care, education, archives, storytelling, accountability, or cultural continuity)?
- ◆ Are there potential positives that are currently underexplored in AI, memorialisation, or heritage debates?

Please capture your proposed vision – context, idea, intended users, and ethical aims – in the shared document.



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