Dear Satya Nadella and Brad Smith,

We are a global coalition of Microsoft workers, and we refuse to create technology for warfare and oppression. We are alarmed that Microsoft is working to provide weapons technology to the U.S. Military, helping one country's government "increase lethality" using tools we built. We did not sign up to develop weapons, and we demand a say in how our work is used.

In November, Microsoft was awarded the $479 million Integrated Visual Augmentation System (IVAS) contract with the United States Department of the Army. The contract's stated objective is to "rapidly develop, test, and manufacture a single platform that Soldiers can use to Fight, Rehearse, and Train that provides increased lethality, mobility, and situational awareness necessary to achieve overmatch against our current and future adversaries.". Microsoft intends to apply its HoloLens augmented reality technology to this purpose. While the company has previously licensed tech to the U.S. Military, it has never crossed the line into weapons development. With this contract, it does. The application of HoloLens within the IVAS system is designed to help people kill. It will be deployed on the battlefield, and works by turning warfare into a simulated "video game," further distancing soldiers from the grim stakes of war and the reality of bloodshed.

Intent to harm is not an acceptable use of our technology.

We demand that Microsoft:

   1) Cancel the IVAS contract;

   2) Cease developing any and all weapons technologies, and draft a public-facing acceptable   use policy clarifying this commitment;

   3) Appoint an independent, external ethics review board with the power to enforce and publicly validate compliance with its acceptable use policy.

Although a review process exists for ethics in AI, AETHER, it is opaque to Microsoft workers, and clearly not robust enough to prevent weapons development, as the IVAS contract demonstrates. Without such a policy, Microsoft fails to inform its engineers on the intent of the software they are building. Such a policy would also enable workers and the public to hold Microsoft accountable.

Brad Smithís suggestion that employees concerned about working on unethical projects "would be allowed to move to other work within the company" ignores the problem that workers are not properly informed of the use of their work. There are many engineers who contributed to HoloLens before this contract even existed, believing it would be used to help architects and engineers build buildings and cars, to help teach people how to perform surgery or play the piano, to push the boundaries of gaming, and to connect with the Mars Rover (RIP). These engineers have now lost their ability to make decisions about what they work on, instead finding themselves implicated as war profiteers.

Microsoft's guidelines on accessibility and security go above and beyond because we care about our customers. We ask for the same approach to a policy on ethics and acceptable use of our technology. Making our products accessible to all audiences has required us to be proactive and unwavering about inclusion. If we don't make the same commitment to be ethical, we won't be. We must design against abuse and the potential to cause violence and harm.

Microsoft's mission is to empower every person and organization on the planet to do more. But implicit in that statement, we believe it is also Microsoft's mission to empower every person and organization on the planet to do good. We also need to be mindful of who we're empowering and what we're empowering them to do. Extending this core mission to encompass warfare and disempower Microsoft employees, is disingenuous, as "every person" also means empowering us. As employees and shareholders we do not want to become war profiteers. To that end, we believe that Microsoft must stop in its activities to empower the U.S. Army's ability to cause harm and violence.

Microsoft Workers