



## **CAMPAIGN TO STOP KILLER ROBOTS**

### **UN: Start Pursuing a Permanent Ban on Killer Robots** *All states should implement UN report recommendations as first step towards ban*

(Geneva, May 28, 2013) – All nations should heed the call by a UN Special Rapporteur to halt robotics weapons systems that, once activated, can select and engage targets without further intervention by a human, said the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots today. For the first time ever states will debate the challenges posed by these fully autonomous weapons or ‘killer robots’ at the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva tomorrow [29 May].

“To avoid future harm states must take action now to stop the creation of weapons that would choose and fire on targets on their own without meaningful human supervision or control,” said Dr. Peter Asaro of the International Committee for Robot Arms Control, a founding member of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots. “As the UN report warns, ‘If left too long to its own devices, the matter will, quite literally, be taken out of human hands.’”

Professor Christof Heyns, the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, has prepared a 22-page report on ‘lethal autonomous robotic weapons’ that will be delivered to the second session of the Human Rights Council on May 29. The Council will then consider how to action the report’s recommendations, including its call on nations to institute an immediate moratorium on these weapons and work for an international agreement that addresses the many concerns identified in the report.

The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots is an international coalition of civil society groups launched in London on 23 April 2013. The campaign is calling on states to put in place a comprehensive ban on fully autonomous weapons that would be able to select and attack targets without any human intervention. This prohibition should be achieved through an international treaty, as well as through national laws and other measures, to enshrine the principle that decisions to use violent force against a human being must always be made by a human being.

“There are increasing moves towards autonomy on the battlefield and we need to draw a line now by prohibiting autonomous systems that would identify and attack targets without any human involvement,” said Mr. [Steve Goose](#), Arms Division director at Human Rights Watch, a founding member of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots. “An international ban on fully autonomous weapons systems is urgently needed, as are strong national measures to permanently outlaw these weapons.”

Over the past decade, the expanded use of unmanned armed vehicles or drones has dramatically changed warfare, bringing new humanitarian and legal challenges. The UN report considers that “robots with full lethal autonomy have not yet been deployed” despite the lack of transparency on their research and development.

The UN report lists several robotic systems with various degrees of autonomy and lethality that are currently in use by the US, Israel, South Korea, and the UK. Other nations with high-tech militaries, such as China, and Russia, are also believed to be moving toward systems that would give full combat autonomy to machines.

In November 2012, the US Department of Defense issued a policy directive on autonomy in weapons systems, which reaffirms that there should always be a human being “in the loop” when decisions to use lethal force are made, but leaves a number of ambiguities and loopholes that underline the need for a clear international ban. The Directive only limits full autonomy over the use of lethal force, may expire after 5 years and can be waived by high-level Department of Defense officials.

The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots urges all countries to consider and elaborate their policy on fully autonomous weapons, particularly with respect to the ethical, legal, policy, technical, and other concerns that have been raised in the UN report. It urges all countries to welcome the UN report and endorse its recommendations, including the call for a moratorium on lethal autonomous robotics. Implementing these recommendations should be seen as a first step towards a comprehensive international ban on fully autonomous weapons.

The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots believes that humans should not delegate the responsibility of making decisions about violent force to machines. It concurs with the multiple moral, legal, technical, and policy concerns with fully autonomous weapons that are expressed by the report. (See campaign’s Synopsis of the UN report)

The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots is led by a Steering Committee of five international non-governmental organizations (NGOs)—Human Rights Watch, International Committee for Robot Arms Control, Nobel Women’s Initiative, Pugwash Conferences on Science & World Affairs, and Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom—and four national NGOs that work internationally: Article 36 (UK), Association for Aid and Relief Japan, Mines Action Canada, and IKV Pax Christi (The Netherlands).

The UN Press Association in Geneva is hosting a press briefing for the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots on May 28 at 12:00 in its library. See: <http://www.stopkillerrobots.org/media/>

To schedule a media interview (see list of spokespersons), please contact:

- Mary Wareham, Human Rights Watch, Tel. +1 (646) 203-8292 (mobile), [wareham@hrw.org](mailto:wareham@hrw.org)
- Beatrice Fihn, Reaching Critical Will/Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Tel. +41 (78) 613 0472 [beatrice@reachingcriticalwill.org](mailto:beatrice@reachingcriticalwill.org)

For more information, see:

- UN report: <http://bit.ly/15SIX8W>
- Synopsis of the UN report prepared by the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots: <http://bit.ly/184xO4D>
- Human Rights Watch, “Losing Humanity” report: <http://bit.ly/UQscFA>
- Human Rights Watch, “Review of the New US Policy on Autonomy in Weapons Systems” briefing paper: <http://bit.ly/17FDTTj>
- Article 36, UK policy paper: <http://bit.ly/13KrON8>

Contact information for the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots:

- Website - [www.stopkillerrobots.org](http://www.stopkillerrobots.org)
- Facebook - <http://www.facebook.com/#!/stopkillerrobots>
- Twitter - [@BanKillerRobots](https://twitter.com/BanKillerRobots)
- Flickr - <http://www.flickr.com/people/stopkillerrobots>
- YouTube - <http://www.youtube.com/user/StopKillerRobots>



# CAMPAIGN TO STOP KILLER ROBOTS

**Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Christof Heyns, 9 April 2013, A/HRC/23/47**

Synopsis by the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots  
21 May 2013

The UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Professor Christof Heyns, is due to deliver his report on lethal autonomous robotics to the second session of the Human Rights Council on May 29. The report is available at: <http://bit.ly/15S1X8W>

The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots welcomes this report and urges all countries to consider and elaborate their policy on fully autonomous weapons, particularly with respect to ethical, legal, policy, technical, and other concerns that have been raised in the report. It urges all countries to welcome the report and endorse and implement its recommendations, including the call for a moratorium on lethal autonomous robotics.

This document summarizes and supports the report's major findings and recommendations.

## **State of Technology**

While noting a lack of transparency on research and development, the report acknowledges that “robots with full lethal autonomy have not yet been deployed.” It cautions that “military documents of a number of States describe air, ground and marine robotic weapons development programmes at various stages of autonomy” with “[I]arge amounts of money” allocated. The report lists a number of robotic systems with various degrees of autonomy and lethality that are currently in use by the US, Israel, South Korea, and the UK.

The report acknowledges the “importance of the free pursuit of scientific study is a powerful disincentive to regulate research and development in this area” but warns of “technology creep” over time. It describes the trend towards lethal autonomous robotics as “part of the broader automatization of warfare and of the world in general.”

The report notes there may be military and other advantages of lethal autonomous robotics over humans, including their swift reaction time, preserving soldiers' lives, and potentially allowing fewer military personnel to do more. It cites human limitations that these weapon could overcome as “they would not act put of revenge, panic, anger, spite,

prejudice, or fear” and “would not cause intentional suffering on civilian populations ... through torture” and rape.

### **Chief Concerns**

The UN report describes numerous limitations of lethal autonomous robotics compared to humans, not least their “limited abilities to make qualitative assessments that are often called for when dealing with human life.”

Chief among the concerns identified in the UN report are that:

- Robots would likely not possess qualities necessary for compliance with international humanitarian law, including “human judgment, common sense, appreciation of the larger picture, understanding of the intentions behind people’s actions, and understanding of values and anticipation of the direction in which events are unfolding.”
- Because “[r]obots have no moral agency” the UN report states they “cannot be held responsible in any recognizable way” for their actions, which raises the question of “who bears the responsibility?” The UN report lists software programmers and manufacturers, military commanders and subordinates, as well as political leaders among those who could be accountable. It does not conclusively identify who should be legally responsible for the actions of a lethal autonomous robotic weapon and states “[i]f the nature of a weapon renders responsibility for its consequences impossible, its use should be considered unethical and unlawful as an abhorrent weapon.”
- Lethal autonomous robotics may “lower the threshold for States for going to war or otherwise using lethal force.” The UN report notes that the use of lethal autonomous robotics raises the question of “whether one can still talk about ‘war’ – as opposed to one-sided killing – where one party carries no existential risk, and bears no cost beyond the economic.”
- If permitted, there would likely be a proliferation of lethal autonomous robotic systems as states transfer and sell them. An “arms race ... could ensue when only certain actors have weapons technology.”
- Lethal autonomous robotics could possibly be used in “a domestic law enforcement situation” and/or “used by States to suppress domestic enemies and to terrorize the population at large.” Lethal autonomous robotics could be “intercepted and used by non-State actors, such as criminal cartels or private individual.”
- Lethal autonomous robotics are vulnerable to “appropriation, as well as hacking and spoofing” and “[m]alfunctions could occur” with unlikely technical errors that could still be “catastrophic.”

Fundamentally, the UN report describes a potential “vacuum of moral responsibility” as it raises the central question of “whether it is not inherently wrong to let autonomous machines decide who and when to kill.” It asks if the deployment of lethal autonomous robotics “against anyone, including enemy fighters, is in principle acceptable, because it entails non-human entities making the determination to use lethal force.” The UN report describes this as an “overriding consideration” and states that “if the answer is negative, no other consideration can justify the deployment of [lethal autonomous robotics], no matter the level of technical competence at which they operate.” According to the UN report, “[m]achines lack morality and mortality, and should as a result not have life and death powers over humans.”

## **Recommendations**

The UN report finds that new international law on lethal autonomous robotic weapons is urgently needed to reinforce the international legal framework “against the pressure of the future ... while it is still possible.” The UN report notes “[T]here is wide acceptance that caution and some form of control of States’s use of this technology are needed, over and above the general standards already posed by international law.”

The 2012 Department of Defense directive by the United States is described in the report as “an important process of self-regulation” by “imposing a form of moratorium” on development and fielding of lethal autonomous robotics unless certain procedures are followed. The UN report commends this “important initiative” and note that it “may open up opportunities for mobilizing international support for national moratoria.”

The UN report contains specific recommendations for the United Nations, states, regional and other intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and the ICRC, and developers of robotic systems.

For states, the top-line recommendation calls on states to place a “national moratorium” on at least the testing, production, assembly, transfer, acquisition, deployment, and use of lethal autonomous robotics. It also recommends that states declare their commitment to abide by international law in all activities surrounding robotic weapons, including all stages of development. The UN report recommends that states commit to being “as transparent as possible about internal weapons review processes.” Finally, it urges states to participate in international debate on the issue of lethal autonomous robotics.

For the United Nations, the top-line recommendation is that the Human Rights Council “call on all States to declare and implement national moratoria on at least the testing, production, assembly, transfer, acquisition, deployment, and use” of lethal autonomous robotics. The UN report invites the High Commissioner for Human Rights to convene “as a matter of priority” a high-level panel of experts to look at lethal autonomous robotics and report within a year to “propose a framework to enable the international community to address effectively the legal and policy issues.” Finally, it urges all relevant UN

agencies and bodies to “[e]mphasize the need for full transparency” in the development of robotic weapons systems.

For regional and other intergovernmental organizations the recommendation is to support the proposals outlined for the UN and for states, in particular the call for a moratorium.

For NGOs and the ICRC, the UN report recommends that these actors “raise awareness” about lethal autonomous robotics and “[a]ssist and engage with States” on this issue, including by urging transparency and supporting the hi-level panel of experts.

Finally, the UN report recommends that developers of robotic systems “establish a code or codes of conduct, ethics, and/or practice defining responsible behavior” with respect to lethal autonomous robotics.

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# CAMPAIGN TO STOP KILLER ROBOTS

## List of Spokespersons

Geneva

28-29 May 2013

The following campaign spokespersons will be in Geneva for the release of the UN report on 28-29 May and are available for interview on request.

**Dr. Peter Asaro - International Committee for Robot Arms Control, @peterasaro**

Peter Asaro is co-founder and vice-chair of the International Committee for Robot Arms Control. He is a philosopher of technology who has worked in Artificial Intelligence, neural networks, natural language processing and robot vision research. Asaro is director of Graduate Programs for the School of Media Studies at The New School for Public Engagement in New York City. See also: <http://bit.ly/73JqBw>

**Mr. Steve Goose - Human Rights Watch, @hrw**

Steve Goose is executive director of the Arms Division of Human Rights Watch and chair of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and Cluster Munition Coalition (ICBL-CMC). Goose and Human Rights Watch were instrumental in bringing about the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions, the 1997 international treaty banning antipersonnel mines, the 1995 protocol banning blinding lasers, and the 2003 protocol on explosive remnants of war. Goose can speak on why a ban on fully autonomous weapons is necessary and achievable, and explain current US policy and practice. See also: <http://bit.ly/USEBZo>

**Mr. Thomas Nash - Article 36, @nashthomas @article36**

Thomas Nash is director of Article 36 and joint coordinator of the International Network on Explosive Weapons. As Coordinator of the Cluster Munition Coalition from 2004 to 2011, Nash led the global civil society efforts to secure the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Nash can speak about civil society expectations of UK policy, practice, and diplomacy on fully autonomous weapons. Nash speaks French and Spanish as well as English.

**Ms. Mary Wareham – Human Rights Watch, @marywareham, @hrw**

Mary Wareham is advocacy director of the Arms Division of Human Rights Watch and initial coordinator of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots. She worked on the processes that created the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Mine Ban Treaty, and has worked to ensure their universalization and implementation. Wareham can speak about the new Campaign to Stop Killer Robots and its initial plans.



# CAMPAIGN TO STOP KILLER ROBOTS

## Steering Committee members

### **Article 36 (UK), [www.article36.org](http://www.article36.org)**

Article 36 is a UK-based not-for-profit organization working to prevent the unintended, unnecessary or unacceptable harm caused by certain weapons. It undertakes research, policy and advocacy and promotes civil society partnerships to respond to harm caused by existing weapons and to build a stronger framework to prevent harm as weapons are used or developed in the future. In March 2012, Article 36 called for a ban on military systems that are able to select and attack targets autonomously.

### **Association for Aid and Relief Japan, [www.aarjapan.gr.jp](http://www.aarjapan.gr.jp)**

Association for Aid and Relief, Japan is an international non-governmental organization founded in Japan in 1979. As a committed member of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, Association for Aid and Relief, Japan played a central role in convincing Japan to ban antipersonnel landmines and join the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty.

### **Human Rights Watch, [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org)**

Human Rights Watch is serving as initial coordinator of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots. Over the past two decades, the Arms Division of Human Rights Watch has been instrumental in enhancing protections for civilians affected by conflict, leading the International Campaign to Ban Landmines that resulted in the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty and the Cluster Munition Coalition, which spurred the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions. It also led the effort that resulted in the pre-emptive prohibition on blinding laser weapons in 1995. In November 2012, Human Rights Watch and Harvard Law School's International Human Rights Clinic launched the report *Losing Humanity: The Case against Killer Robots*, the first in-depth report by a non-governmental organization on the challenges posed by fully autonomous weapons.

### **IKV Pax Christi (The Netherlands)- [www.ikvpaxchristi.nl](http://www.ikvpaxchristi.nl)**

IKV Pax Christi is a peace organization based in the Netherlands. It works with local partners in conflict areas and seeks political solutions to crises and armed conflicts. It has an active disarmament department which co-founded the Cluster Munitions Coalition, works on nuclear disarmament and is active (board) member on many other disarmament issues. In May 2011, IKV Pax Christi published a report entitled *Does Unmanned Make Unacceptable? Exploring the Debate on using Drones and Robots in Warfare*.

### **International Committee for Robot Arms Control, <http://icrac.net>**

The International Committee for Robot Arms Control (ICRAC) is a not-for-profit organization comprised of scientists, ethicists, lawyers, roboticists, and other experts. It works to address the potential dangers involved with the development of armed military

robots and autonomous weapons. Given the rapid pace of development of military robots and the pressing dangers their use poses to peace, international security, the rule of law, and to civilians, ICRAC supports a ban on armed robots with autonomous targeting capability.

**Mines Action Canada, [www.minesactioncanada.org](http://www.minesactioncanada.org)**

Mines Action Canada is a coalition of over 35 Canadian non-governmental organizations working in mine action, peace, development, labour, health and human rights that came together in 1994. It is the Canadian partner of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and a founding member of the Cluster Munition Coalition.

**Nobel Women's Initiative, [nobelwomensinitiative.org](http://nobelwomensinitiative.org)**

The Nobel Women's Initiative was established in January 2006 by 1997 Nobel Peace Laureate and five of her sister Nobel Peace laureates. The Nobel Women's Initiative uses the prestige of the Nobel Peace Prize and of courageous women peace laureates to magnify the power and visibility of women working in countries around the world for peace, justice and equality. In an April 2011 article for the *International Journal of Intelligence Ethics*, Nobel Peace Laureate Jody Williams calls for a ban on "fully autonomous attack and kill robotic weapons."

**Pugwash Conferences on Science & World Affairs, [www.pugwash.org](http://www.pugwash.org)**

A central main objective of Pugwash is the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction (nuclear, chemical and biological) and of war as a social institution to settle international disputes. To that extent, peaceful resolution of conflicts through dialogue and mutual understanding is an essential part of Pugwash activities, that is particularly relevant when and where nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction are deployed or could be used.

**Women's International League for Peace and Freedom [www.wilpf.org](http://www.wilpf.org)**

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) is the oldest women's peace organization in the world. Its aims and principles include working toward world peace; total and universal disarmament; the abolition of violence and coercion in the settlement of conflict and their substitution in every case of negotiation and conciliation; the strengthening of the United Nations system; the continuous development and implementation of international law; political and social equality and economic equity; co-operation among all people; and an environmentally sustainable development.

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