



CAMPAIGN TO STOP KILLER ROBOTS

Time to Move From Talk to Action on Killer Robots

Second United Nations meeting on the subject opens in Geneva

(Geneva, 13 April 2015) – Concerns about the prospect of weapons systems that would select and attack targets without further human intervention are multiplying and show the urgent need for nations to begin drafting new international law to preemptively ban the weapons, said the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots as a second round of multilateral talks on the matter began today at the United Nations in Geneva.

“We have fundamental objections to permitting machines to take human life on the battlefield or in policing,” said Nobel Peace Laureate Ms. Jody Williams of the Nobel Women’s Initiative, a co-founder of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots. “It’s time for nations to move from talking about this challenge to taking action on it.”

Many of the 120 states that are part of the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) are participating in this week’s [meeting of experts](#) on “lethal autonomous weapons systems” chaired by Germany’s Ambassador Michael Biontino. The meeting will consider questions relating to the emerging technology of these weapons, but there is not yet a negotiating mandate. Based in large part on this week’s talks, states will decide at the CCW’s annual meeting on 13 November 2015 on whether and how to continue the work.

Several autonomous weapons systems with various degrees of human control are currently in use by high-tech militaries including the US, China, Israel, South Korea, Russia, and the UK. There is concern the trend towards greater autonomy will result in weapons systems that would give machines the capability to select and attack targets without further human intervention.

A few states delivered vague statements that appeared to seek to leave the door open for future technologies during the first CCW meeting on the subject in May 2014, but none openly said they are pursuing the development of fully autonomous weapons. No country vigorously defended or argued for the weapons although Czech Republic and Israel each spoke on the desirability of such systems.

“It should be obvious that the use of any weapons must remain under human control,” said Mr. Thomas Nash, Director of Article 36, a co-founder of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots. “The task ahead now for all countries is to get down to work and enshrine the principle of meaningful human control in new international law.”

The imperative of maintaining meaningful human control over targeting and attack decisions emerged as the primary point of common ground for many nations participating in the 2014 CCW meeting on killer robots, including Austria, Croatia, France, Germany, Ireland, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, and the UK.

The call for a preemptive ban on fully autonomous weapons was also central to the deliberations at the 2014 CCW meeting, with five states explicitly endorsing the call: Cuba, Ecuador, Egypt, Holy See, and Pakistan. In 1995, nations adopted a Convention on Conventional Weapons protocol banning blinding lasers, which provides a pertinent example of a weapon that was preemptively banned before it was ever fielded or used.

“It is imperative that states look beyond the purported short-term advantages or benefits of autonomous weapons systems,” said Professor Noel Sharkey, chair of the International Committee for Robot Arms Control (ICRAC), a campaign co-founder. “They must consider the likely disastrous longer-term impact that these weapons will have on global security if we do not prohibit them now.”

The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots supports any action to urgently address fully autonomous weapons in any forum. It calls on all nations to establish and articulate their policy on fully autonomous weapons and to start working urgently at both the national and international level to legislate a preemptive ban.

New publications issued by campaign members include:

- A 30-page “[Autonomous Weapons Systems](#)” briefing by Amnesty International examining their implications for international law, particularly international human rights law and standards.
- A briefing paper by Article 36 entitled “[Killing by Machine](#)” argues that meaningful human control over weapon systems is required in every individual attack and calls on states to develop new international law to make this requirement explicit.
- The 38-page report “[Mind the Gap](#)” report by Human Rights Watch details why the lack of meaningful human control would make it difficult to hold anyone criminally or civilly accountable for the unlawful actions that fully autonomous weapons would be prone to commit.
- A leaflet by the International Committee for Robot Arms Control (ICRAC) entitled “[Ten Problems for Global Security](#)” that details fundamental ways in which autonomous weapons systems could perilously impact global security.

The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots delegation to the 2015 CCW meeting includes roboticists, scientists, academics, lawyers, military veterans, and industry representatives from countries including Canada, Colombia, Egypt, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, UK, and US.

Representatives will address the plenary of the CCW meeting and will also present at Campaign to Stop Killer Robots side event briefings during the week during the lunch break at 13:00 on [Monday, 13 April](#) in UN Conference Room XXIV and at 13:00 on [Tuesday, 14 April](#) and [Friday, 17 April](#) in Conference Room XXIII.

Official documents on the 2015 meeting, including the agenda and expert speakers, are available from the CCW [website](#) in addition to the campaign [website](#).

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