



CAMPAIGN TO STOP KILLER ROBOTS

Time for international action on killer robots *Convention on Conventional Weapons experts meet on May 13-16*

(Geneva, 12 May 2014) – Nations should commit to begin drafting new international law to stop the development of fully autonomous weapons or “killer robots,” said the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots today on the eve of the first multilateral talks on the issue. These are weapons that, once activated, would select and engage targets without human intervention.

The four-day Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) meeting of experts to discuss questions concerning “lethal autonomous weapons systems” opens at the United Nations in Geneva tomorrow (Tuesday, 13 May).

“Talking about the problems posed by these future weapons is a good place to start, but a ban needs to be put in place urgently if we are to avoid a future where compassionless robots decide who to kill on the battlefield,” said Nobel Peace Laureate Jody Williams of the Nobel Women’s Initiative, a founding member of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots.

Today, 20 Nobel Peace laureates including Williams issued a [joint statement](#) expressing their support for the objective of a preemptive ban on fully autonomous weapons. The signatories include 14 individual recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize and six organizations. According to the joint statement, “Lethal robots would completely and forever change the face of war and likely spawn a new arms race. Can humanity afford to follow such a path?”

Also today, Human Rights Watch issued a 26-page report, “[Shaking the Foundations: The Human Rights Implications of Killer Robots](#),” the first in-depth report by a non-governmental organization to assess in detail the potential risks posed by these weapons under human rights law, which applies during peacetime as well as armed conflict.

“Fully autonomous weapons would threaten fundamental rights and principles, such as the right to life and the principle of dignity,” said Steve Goose, director of the arms division at Human Rights Watch, a co-founder of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots. “Governments need to say no to these weapons for any purpose and preemptively ban them now, before it is too late.”

Fully autonomous weapons do not yet exist, but several robotic systems with various degrees of autonomy and lethality are currently in use by the US, China, Russia, Israel,

South Korea, and the UK, and these and other nations are moving toward ever-greater autonomy in weapons systems.

Since the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots launched in April 2013, the topic of fully autonomous weapons has gone from an obscure, little known issue to one that is commanding international attention. All of the 44 nations that have made public statements to date have expressed interest and concern at the challenges and dangers posed by these weapons. No government opposed the decision taken on 15 November 2013 to begin discussing questions about the weapons in 2014 in the framework of the Convention on Conventional Weapons.

The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots supports any action to urgently address fully autonomous weapons in any forum and it welcomed the agreement to work in the CCW. The CCW's 1995 protocol banning blinding lasers is a pertinent example of a weapon being preemptively banned before it was ever fielded or used.

“For years we have been urging that governments take action to ensure that machines are never permitted to select targets and use force without meaningful human control,” said Professor Noel Sharkey, Chair of the International Committee for Robot Arms Control (ICRAC), an NGO established by concerned engineers, computing and artificial intelligence experts, roboticists, and professionals from related disciplines in 2009.

A co-founder of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, ICRAC released a statement in October 2013 endorsed by 272 experts in 37 countries that calls for a ban on the development and deployment of weapon systems that make the decision to apply violent force autonomously, without any human control.

The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots is a global coalition of 51 non-governmental organizations active in two dozen countries that calls for a preemptive ban on the development, production, and use of weapons that would be able to select and attack targets without 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.

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 PAX, formerly IKV Pax Christi (The Netherlands). The campaign delegation to the CCW meeting is comprised of 40 experts from member NGOs in 12 countries.

Representatives from the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots will present their concerns about fully autonomous weapons at daily side events at the United Nations in Geneva on 13-16 May 2013.

For questions or to schedule a media interview, please contact:

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For more information, see:

- Nobel Women's Initiative, release and Nobel Peace Laureates' statement - <http://nobelwomensinitiative.org/2014/05/nobel-peace-laureates-call-for-preemptive-ban-on-killer-robots/?ref=204>
- Human Rights Watch, "Shaking the Foundations: The Human Rights Implications of Killer Robots" - <http://www.hrw.org/node/125251>
- ICRAC, Scientists statement and list of signatories - <http://icrac.net/2013/10/computing-experts-from-37-countries-call-for-ban-on-killer-robots/>
- Mines Action Canada, Memo to Convention on Conventional Weapons Delegates on Lessons from Protocol IV on Blinding Laser Weapons - <http://bankillerrobotscanada.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/international-piv-memo-final.pdf>
- PAX, Deadly Decisions: 8 Objections to Killer Robots - <http://www.paxvoorvrede.nl/media/files/deadlydecisionsweb.pdf>

Contact information for the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots:

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