



**CAMPAIGN TO STOP
KILLER ROBOTS**

PRESS RELEASE

Negotiate a Ban Treaty to Retain Human Control Over Force

Calls for a Treaty to Ban Killer Robots Multiply Ahead of UN Meeting

(Geneva, 27 August 2018) Calls are mounting for countries to commence negotiations on a new treaty to prohibit weapons systems that, once activated, would select and attack targets without human intervention. The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots urges states participating in the sixth international meeting on lethal autonomous weapons systems, which opens today at the United Nations (UN) in Geneva, to recommend moving to a negotiating mandate to create such a ban treaty.

“It’s increasingly obvious that the public strongly objects to allowing machines to select targets and use force without any meaningful human control. Doing so would be abhorrent, immoral, and an affront to the concept of human dignity and principles of humanity,” said Jody Williams, 1997 Nobel Peace Laureate and chair of the Nobel Women’s Initiative. “It’s time governments heed the mounting calls for a new international law to prohibit killer robots and start negotiating one.”

More than 70 countries are expected to attend the sixth Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) meeting on lethal autonomous weapons systems at the UN on 27-31 August 2018. The meeting is expected to produce a recommendation for future work on this topic. The CCW operates by consensus so any single state can oppose and potentially block a proposal to start negotiations.

The serious legal, operational, moral, technical, and proliferation challenges raised by fully autonomous weapons have gained widespread attention since the first CCW meeting on the topic in May 2014. However, states still have not agreed on the regulatory response needed to address the humanitarian and international security challenges raised by killer robots. [Austria](#) and [other states](#) have proposed beginning negotiations in 2019 on a new ban treaty to retain meaningful human control over weapons systems.

The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots urges states to recommend that the CCW adopt a new mandate at its annual meeting on 23 November to negotiate a new CCW protocol by the end of 2019.

During the last CCW meeting on killer robots in April, the [list of countries](#) calling for a ban on fully autonomous weapons grew to 26, with the additions of Austria, China, Colombia, and Djibouti. Virtually all states that spoke stressed the need to retain human control over weapons systems and the use of force. Yet France and Germany declined to join the call for a

ban and [instead proposed](#) a weakly-worded political declaration on human control, which the campaign has rejected as inappropriate and unambitious.

During the last meeting, France, Israel, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States explicitly rejected moving to negotiate new international law on fully autonomous weapons. These and other military powers are heavily investing in armed drones and other weapons systems with decreasing levels of human control. The concern is that a variety of available sensors and advances in artificial intelligence are making it increasingly practical to design weapons systems to target and attack without any meaningful human control. If the trend toward autonomy continues, humans may start to fade out of the decision-making loop for certain military actions, perhaps retaining only a limited oversight role, or simply setting broad mission parameters.

“Momentum is starting to build rapidly for states to start negotiating a new ban treaty and determine what is necessary to retain human control over weapons systems and the use of force,” said Peter Asaro, vice-chair of the International Committee for Robots Arms Control (ICRAC). “Requests for more time to further explore this challenge may seem valid, but increasingly sound like excuses aimed at delaying the inevitable regulation that’s coming.”

Since the last CCW meeting, calls to take action on killer robots have multiplied:

- In his [“agenda for disarmament”](#) issued in May, UN Secretary-General António Guterres has offered to support states to elaborate new measures including “legally binding arrangements” to ensure that “humans remain at all times in control over the use of force.”
- Belgium’s national parliament adopted [a resolution endorsing a ban](#) on the use of fully autonomous weapons on 4 July that affirms the Belgian army will never use such weapons in military operations.
- Google issued [a set of ethical principles](#) on 7 June, that commit the company to not design or develop artificial intelligence for use in weapons. The move came after Google agreed to end its participation in a Pentagon effort called Project Maven, that aimed to identify objects contained in video footage collected by military drones.
- At an artificial intelligence (AI) congress in July, the Future of Life Institute issued [a statement](#) endorsed by more than 200 technology companies, societies, and groups and 2,600 AI experts and other individuals committing to “neither participate in nor support the development, manufacture, trade, or use of lethal autonomous weapons.”
- Human Rights Watch and Harvard Law School’s International Human Rights Law Clinic published a [report](#) on 21 August that found a new ban treaty is needed because fully autonomous weapons would violate the Martens Clause, an ethical standard codified in international law for assessing emerging technology.

“Promises of greater transparency and meek political declarations are insufficient to deal with the far-reaching consequences of creating fully autonomous weapons,” said Mary Wareham of Human Rights Watch, coordinator of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots. “Nothing less than a ban treaty will be needed to effectively constrain the development of autonomy in the critical functions of weapons systems and avoid dehumanising the use of force.”

About the meeting

The campaign is [a global coalition of 76 organizations in 32 countries](#) working since April 2013 to preemptively ban lethal autonomous weapons systems, also known as fully autonomous weapons. Approximately [45 representatives from 19 non-governmental organizations](#) from the campaign will participate in the meeting. UN Geneva-accredited correspondents are invited to attend a Campaign to Stop Killer Robots [side event briefing at 1:15pm on Tuesday, 28 August](#) in Room XXIII.

India's Ambassador Amandeep Singh Gill will oversee the CCW meeting in his capacity as chair of the CCW Group of Governmental Experts on lethal autonomous weapons systems. He is also serving as executive director of the secretariat of a [High-level Panel on Digital Co-operation](#) announced by the UN Secretary-General on 12 July.

There is no live feed of the CCW meeting or side events, but highlights will be tweeted by the campaign at [@BanKillerRobots](#) using the hashtag #CCWUN. Please also follow the campaign on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [YouTube](#).

See the [campaign website](#), including the [delegation list](#), [side event flyer](#), and this background [Briefing Note](#), also available in [French](#) and [Spanish](#).

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