

CAMPAIGN TO **STOP** KILLER ROBOTS

CAMPAIGNER'S KIT



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This kit was prepared by Erin Hunt of Mines Action Canada in March 2019 for the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots.

LET'S STOP KILLER ROBOTS BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE

Mary Wareham

Campaign to Stop Killer Robots

More than a decade ago, roboticists and artificial intelligence experts became the first to raise the alarm at the prospect of weapons systems that would select and attack targets without human intervention. Then, in October 2012, Human Rights Watch, the International Committee for Robot Arms Control (ICRAC) and five other non-governmental organizations co-founded the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots to provide a coordinated civil society response.

The goal of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots has not changed since its inception. We are working to preemptively ban the development, production and use of fully autonomous weapons, also known as lethal autonomous weapons systems, autonomous weapons systems or killer robots. The positive way of framing this goal is that we seek to retain meaningful human control over weapons systems and the use of force.

A ban treaty is achievable, but time is running out. States first discussed the challenges raised by killer robots at the Human Rights Council in Geneva in May 2013. The matter was then taken up by the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW), also at the United Nations (UN) in Geneva, for further consideration. Representatives from more than 80 states have participated in six CCW meetings on lethal autonomous weapons systems since 2014.

"A ban treaty is achievable, but time is running out."

The CCW meetings have explored some of the fundamental legal, operational, moral, technical, proliferation and other concerns raised by allowing machines to select and attack targets without further human intervention. There is now widespread agreement about the need to retain some form of human control over future weapons systems and the use of force.

Yet states have made little progress towards achieving an outcome. Most of the participating states have proposed moving to negotiate a new international treaty to prohibit or regulate lethal autonomous weapons systems yet these proposals have been explicitly rejected by military powers such as Israel, Russia, South Korea, UK, and United States.

These states and China are heavily investing in armed drones and other autonomous weapons systems with decreasing levels of human control in their critical functions, prompting fears of widespread proliferation and arms races. A new treaty to stop killer robots is urgently needed, before defense sector investments in artificial intelligence and related technologies make these weapons a reality.

The CCW may include all the "major players" but its consensus-based mode of decision-making means that a single state can successfully oppose proposals supported by the rest.

We've been there before. Past CCW failures to stem human suffering caused by antipersonnel landmines and cluster munitions resulted in external diplomatic processes that delivered life-saving treaties to ban the weapons. The lack of agreement among nuclear weapons states to disarm led other countries to create the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons via the UN General Assembly.

Those humanitarian disarmament treaties were all the result of genuine partnerships between like-minded countries, UN agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and dedicated coalitions of nongovernmental organizations. These treaties are successfully reducing and helping to prevent human suffering, even without the signatures of all the major military powers.

Embarking on such a process can succeed, but requires bold political leadership. Working out the diplomatic pathway requires starting from

the bottom up, which is why the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots has intensified its support over the past year to NGOs conducting outreach in capitals around the world. We're looking for political leaders willing to help launch negotiations on a new treaty to ban killer robots.

To succeed, we must find parliamentary champions willing to press the government to act and propose national laws and other measures

to ban fully autonomous weapons. Currently 28 states have called for a ban on fully autonomous weapons, but we need more states on board.

We must demonstrate that the public is onside with the call to ban killer robots to demonstrate the political saliency of this cause. A recent Ipsos

poll of 26 countries has been helpful in this regard, as it shows that opposition to fully autonomous weapons is growing and not diminishing.

Creating pressure on political leaders requires leveraging media interest, promoting our cause on social media, and utilizing tools that can help spread the word about this serious challenge and the need for a ban treaty.

"Our arguments against killer robots are clear and the case for a new ban treaty is strong."

We know from past experience that governments never take action without pressure from civil society. Our arguments against killer robots are clear and the case for a new ban treaty is strong. We must build upon our efforts to date and secure the necessary political leadership to achieve our goal of a treaty banning killer robots.

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES TO CONSIDER?

LEGAL ARGUMENTS AGAINST AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS SYSTEMS

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The legal case against fully autonomous weapons, or “killer robots,” reinforces the moral, technological, and security arguments for banning this emerging technology.¹ Fully autonomous weapons threaten to violate international humanitarian law and international human rights law and would create a gap in accountability for unlawful acts.

INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

International humanitarian law (IHL), also known as the laws of war, would govern the use of fully autonomous weapons on the battlefield. Because the weapons would operate without meaningful human control, they would face particular difficulties in complying with two fundamental rules of IHL.

First, customary international law and Article 48 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions obliges warring parties to distinguish between civilians and soldiers and between civilian objects (such as homes or schools) and military objectives. Weapons that cannot make such distinctions are considered “indiscriminate” and unlawful.

Killer robots would encounter significant obstacles to complying with the rule of distinction. Differentiating between civilians and soldiers, particularly in an era in which combatants often blend in with the local population, depends on more than recognizing a uniform. It also depends on understanding a person’s intentions through such clues as tone of voice, facial expressions, or body language. Humans are better equipped to understand such nuances than machines are.

Second, customary international law and Article 51(5)(b) of Additional Protocol I requires warring parties to weigh the proportionality of an attack. This rule prohibits attacks in which the expected harm to civilians and civilian objects is excessive in relation to the anticipated military advantage. Proportionality is not a mathematical equation. It depends on context, and the test is whether a “reasonable military commander” would have found it lawful to launch the attack.

Fully autonomous weapons could not replicate the human judgment necessary to assess the proportionality of a specific attack. Because programmers cannot account in advance for the infinite number of scenarios that might arise on the battlefield, fully autonomous weapons would encounter unforeseen and changing circumstances. Unlike humans, however, these machines could not apply human reason and experience when balancing the relevant factors of this subjective test.

THE MARTENS CLAUSE

States developing or using new technology must consider the so-called Martens Clause, a provision of international humanitarian law that links law and ethics. The Martens Clause, articulated in many places, including Article 1(2) of Additional Protocol I, is a gap-filling provision. It declares that in the absence of specific treaty law on a topic, people are still protected by “custom,” “the principles of humanity,” and “the dictates of public conscience.” The clause creates a moral standard against which to judge fully autonomous weapons.

Fully autonomous weapons raise serious concerns under principles of humanity. Humans are motivated to treat each other humanely because they can feel compassion and empathy for the experiences of other people. Fully autonomous weapons, by contrast, would lack the emotional capacity that underlies humane treatment. The principles of humanity also require respect for the dignity of human life. As inanimate machines, fully autonomous weapons cannot truly understand the value of a life and the significance of its loss. They would determine whom to kill based on algorithms and would not consider the inherent worth of an individual victim.

The dictates of public conscience, which refer to shared moral guidelines, similarly argue against fully autonomous weapons. In a December 2018 survey of public opinion in 26 countries, more than 60 percent of people responded that they opposed killer robots.² In addition, leaders in disarmament and human rights, peace and religion, science and technology, and industry have all condemned this technology, particularly on moral grounds. Finally, states have frequently appealed to conscience when calling for a ban on fully autonomous weapons or a requirement of human control over the use of force.

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

Given that fully autonomous weapons would likely be used in law enforcement situations beyond the battlefield, they should also be assessed under international human rights law, which applies during times of peace as well as armed conflict. Fully autonomous weapons have the potential to violate three foundational human rights.

First, under Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, all people have the fundamental right to life, meaning they cannot be “arbitrarily deprived” of their lives. Killing is only lawful when it is necessary to protect human life, constitutes a last resort, and is applied in a manner proportionate to the threat. The test is context specific, and killer robots would not have the human qualities,

notably empathy and judgment, necessary to make such determinations in unforeseen situations.

Second, victims of human rights abuses have a right to a remedy. As discussed more below, however, it is not clear who could be held accountable if fully autonomous weapons violated international human rights law by, for example, arbitrarily killing a civilian.

Third, the principle of human dignity underpins human rights law. All human

life has worth and deserves respect. As discussed above, delegating life-and-death decisions to machines that cannot fully appreciate the value of human life would undermine human dignity.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Both international humanitarian law and international human rights law require individual accountability for unlawful acts. Such personal accountability helps deter future violations while providing retribution for victims of past harm. Holding a person liable for the unlawful acts of a fully autonomous weapon, however, would be challenging and in most cases, nearly impossible.

A robot itself could not be held responsible under the law. Crimes involve both an act (such as causing death) and a mental state (such as intent). While a fully autonomous weapon could commit the act, as a machine, it would lack the mental state. Furthermore, fully autonomous weapons could not be punished because, unlike

humans, they cannot experience suffering.

In most cases, humans also would escape criminal liability for the robot’s actions. The relationship between an operator and a fully autonomous weapon can be likened to that of a commander and a subordinate because the robot and the subordinate both act autonomously. Commanders are legally responsible for the actions of a subordinate only when they knew or should have known of the subordinate’s criminal act and failed to prevent or punish it. While a commander who deployed a fully autonomous weapon with the clear intent to commit a crime might be found guilty, it would be legally difficult—and unfair—to hold him or her accountable for the unforeseeable actions of an autonomous machine.

Programmers and manufacturers would likely elude liability under a civil suit. In some countries, such as the United States, weapons manufacturers are immune from suit as long as they follow government specifications and do not deliberately mislead the military. In addition, proving a product is defective

requires overcoming significant evidentiary hurdles. Finally, civil suits are time-consuming and expensive, especially for victims living far from the country that deployed the weapon at issue.

Thus, fully autonomous weapons would not only face potentially insurmountable barriers to complying with international law, but would also allow commanders, operators, programmers and manufacturers to escape responsibility for violations that did occur.

“Holding a person liable for the unlawful acts of a fully autonomous weapon, however, would be challenging and in most cases, nearly impossible.”

ENDNOTES

- 1 For an overview of the problems of fully autonomous weapons and detailed responses to the views of critics, see Human Rights Watch and Harvard Law School’s International Human Rights Clinic, Making the Case: The Dangers of Killer Robots and the Need for a Preemptive Ban (December 2016), https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/arms1216_web.pdf. These organizations have also co-published stand-alone reports examining such issues as the Martens Clause, the human rights implications of killer robots and the accountability gap. For a comprehensive list of these publications, see Human Rights Watch, “Reviewing the Record” (2018), http://hrp.law.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Killer_Robots_Handout.pdf.
- 2 Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, “Global Poll Results Shows 61% Oppose Killer Robots,” January 2019, <https://www.stop-killerrobots.org/2019/01/global-poll-61-oppose-killer-robots/>.

GLOBAL SECURITY

Noel Sharkey

International Committee for Robot Arms Control

Autonomous weapons systems also known as fully autonomous weapons pose great dangers for international stability and global security. We are already seeing the beginning of an international arms race among the superpowers. One of the most worrying developments is the development of swarm technologies. The idea is that a small number of military personnel could initiate a large scale attack of swarms of tanks, ships or fighter planes.



There are many reasons to be concerned about the safety of civilians across the globe should autonomous weapons ever be developed. Let's look at 10 of the strongest of these concerns that you can use when advocating for a pre-emptive ban on autonomous weapons.

1. PROLIFERATION

Without an international muzzle on the development, testing, and production of autonomous weapons systems, we are likely to see mass proliferation of these weapons and counter weapons and on and on. Not all nations will have the ability to carry out weapons reviews of autonomous weapons systems required under international law. So it is likely that the standards required by international humanitarian law (IHL) could slip.

2. LOWERED THRESHOLD FOR ARMED CONFLICTS

Autonomous weapons systems could lead to more action short of warfare by minimising human military forces in conflict zones. This could enable states to initiate the use of violent force without the consultation procedures required to deploy troops on the ground. Autonomous weapons systems could seduce states into more armed conflicts – at the expense of civilian populations.

"Autonomous weapons systems could seduce states into more armed conflicts – at the expense of civilian populations."

3. CONTINUOUS GLOBAL BATTLEFIELD

Autonomous weapons systems could run on much less energy than existing military vehicles and could easily be recharged with solar panels. Weapons could be left behind – like landmines – to patrol post-conflict zones and thus create a continuous global battlefield. The result could have devastating psycho-social consequences.

4. WARRING AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS SYSTEMS WOULD INTERACT

As more countries employ swarms of autonomous weapons systems and autonomous counter defences, these weapons as well as command and control systems would inevitably interact. When any mobile device controlled by software programs interacts with a competing hostile device controlled by unknown software, the result of the interaction is scientifically impossible to predict. Thus, it would be impossible to calculate the impact on civilian populations.

5. ACCELERATING THE PACE OF BATTLE

It is often said that the pace of battle is accelerating to the point where human decision-making is not fast enough. It is often said that the pace of battle is accelerating to the point where human decision-making is not fast enough. New prototypes of aerial autonomous weapons systems are increasingly being tested at supersonic and hypersonic speeds. This means even faster autonomous response devices that in turn will

require ever-faster weapons. It is not hard to see that such a 'pace race' will eventually equate to humans having little control over the battle-space.

"Humans need to be in control of weapon systems to counter many of the potential dangers with entirely computerised and autonomous weapons."

6. ACCIDENTAL CONFLICT

If the development and proliferation of autonomous weapons systems, particularly swarms, is allowed to continue, supersonic or hypersonic (defence) systems of one state could interact with equally fast autonomous weapons systems from another state. The speed of their unpredictable interaction could trigger unintended armed conflicts before humans had the opportunity to react.

7. MILITARIZATION OF THE CIVILIAN WORLD

We are already seeing the use of new unmanned war technologies in civilian settings. Law enforcement and border control agencies are using unmanned systems for surveillance. Some companies are even arming them with Tasers, pepper sprays and other so-called 'less than lethal' ammunition. With autonomous targeting technology this could lead to violations of human and civil rights by police and private security forces with little possibility of accountability.

8. AUTOMATED OPPRESSION

Autonomous weapons systems would be an attractive tool for the oppression of populations and the suppression of peaceful protest and political change. While soldiers can in principle refuse to turn their weapons on their own people, autonomous weapons systems would be programmed by persons far away from confrontations and then could kill mercilessly on the basis of their coded instructions.

9. NON-STATE ACTORS

We are currently witnessing an unprecedented diffusion of technology. The cost of robotics development is falling, with the required off-the-shelf hardware now widely available. If autonomous weapons development is allowed to continue it will not be long before we see crude copies or grey market exports in the hands of non-state armed actors.

10. CYBER VULNERABILITY

Humans need to be in control of weapon systems to counter many of the potential dangers with entirely computerised and autonomous weapons. The risks of software coding errors, malfunctions, degradation of communications, and especially enemy cyber-attacks, infiltrations into the industrial supply chain, jamming, and spoofing make autonomous weapons systems inherently insecure.

HUMAN CONTROL OF WEAPONS SYSTEMS

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International Committee for Robot Arms Control

Since 2014, high contracting parties to the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) have expressed interest and concern about the meaningful human control of weapons systems. Different states use different terms from ‘appropriate levels of human control’ and ‘person in the loop’ to the ‘wider loop’. There is also the notion of force multiplication with one or two people operating a swarm of weapons systems. Yes, these are all forms of human control, but the important question is, what kind of human control is necessary to guarantee that precautionary measures are taken to assess the significance of potential targets, their necessity and appropriateness, as well as the likely incidental and possible accidental effects of the attack?

This chapter shares guidelines that have been designed to provide campaigners with tools to assess whether proposed methods of control are meaningful or not. It delivers a plain English guide to lessons learned from 30 years of scientific research on the human supervisory control of machinery.

Part 1 is a primer on the study of human reasoning. It briefly explains the types of biases that result in operators making bad decisions and it explains the kind of reasoning needed for meaningful human control?

“Automatic reasoning jumps to conclusions.”

Part 2 puts the primer on human reasoning to work to show the types of human control that are unacceptable for making targeting decisions.

1. SHORT PRIMER ON HUMAN REASONING FOR THE CONTROL OF WEAPONS

A well-established distinction in human psychology divides human reasoning into two types:

- i. fast *automatic* processes that are needed to carry out routine everyday tasks like riding a bicycle, avoiding traffic or playing a sport. This is vital when we need to react quickly or carry out a task without engaging our conscious thought.
- ii. slower *deliberative* processes that are needed for thoughtful reasoning. This is important for making important judgements such as diplomatic, medical or judicial decisions and, hopefully, even decisions about getting married or divorced.

One drawback of deliberative reasoning is that it

can be fragile. It requires attention and memory resources and so it can easily be disrupted by stress or being pressured into making very quick decisions.

Automatic reasoning is essential to our normal daily functioning, but it has a number of liabilities when it comes to making important decisions such as those required to determine the legitimacy of a target.

Four of the known properties of automatic reasoning illustrate why it creates problems for the control of weapons. Automatic reasoning:

- **neglects ambiguity and suppresses doubt.** Automatic reasoning jumps to conclusions. An unambiguous answer pops up instantly without question. There is no search for alternative interpretations or uncertainty. If something looks like it might be a legitimate target, in ambiguous circumstances, automatic reasoning will be certain that it is legitimate.
- **infers and invents causes and intentions.** Automatic reasoning rapidly invents coherent causal stories by linking fragments of available information. Events that include people are automatically attributed with intentions that fit a causal story. For example, in the context of an armed conflict people loading rakes onto a truck could initiate a causal story that they were loading rifles. This is called *assimilation bias* in the human supervisory control literature.
- **is biased to believe and confirm.** Automatic reasoning favours uncritical acceptance of suggestions and maintains a strong bias. If a computer suggests a target to an operator, automatic reasoning alone would

make it highly likely to be accepted. This is *automation bias*. *Confirmation bias* selects information that confirms a prior belief.

- **focuses on existing evidence and ignores absent evidence.**

Automatic reasoning builds coherent explanatory stories without consideration of evidence or contextual information that might be missing. What You See Is All There Is (WYSIATI). It facilitates the feeling of coherence that makes us confident to accept information as true. For example, a man firing a rifle may be deemed to be a hostile target with WYSIATI when a quick look around might reveal that he is shooting a wolf hunting his goats.

It should be clear that each of these features of automatic reasoning would lead to serious humanitarian errors. When people talk about various types of human in the loop control systems or controlling a swarm, we need to look carefully to find out if they trap the operator in the error-prone properties of automatic reasoning.

2. LEVELS OF HUMAN CONTROL AND HOW THEY IMPACT ON HUMAN DECISION-MAKING

Now that we have looked at some of the relevant properties of human reasoning, we can see what that tells us about the control of weapons. In the science world, different way to control machinery are discussed in term of levels. Level 1 would be the best and level 5 would be unacceptable.

In Table 1, the machinery levels have been adapted to describe levels of controlling weapons. These should not be considered to be definitive

or absolute. The levels are intended as thought tools to help you to work out whether some new human control method stacks up.

A classification for levels of human control of weapons:

1. a human deliberates about a target before initiating any attack
2. program provides a list of targets and a human chooses which to attack
3. program selects target and a human must approve before attack
4. program selects target and a human has restricted time to veto
5. program selects target and initiates attack without human involvement

Level 1 control is the ideal. A human commander (or operator) has full contextual and situational awareness of the target area at the time of a specific attack and is able to perceive and react to any change or unanticipated situations that may have arisen since planning the attack. There is active cognitive participation in the attack and sufficient time for deliberation on the nature of the target, its significance in terms of the necessity and appropriateness, and likely incidental and possible accidental effects. There must also be a means for the rapid suspension or abortion of the attack.

Level 2 control could be acceptable if it is shown to meet the requirement of deliberating on potential targets. The human operator or

commander should deliberately assess necessity and appropriateness and whether any of the suggested alternatives are permissible objects of attack. Without sufficient time or in a distracting environment, the illegitimacy of a target could be overlooked and confirmation bias could take hold.

A rank ordered list of targets is particularly problematic as automation bias could create a tendency to accept the top ranked target unless sufficient time and attentional space is given for deliberative reasoning.

Level 3 is unacceptable. This type of control has been shown to create as automation bias in which human operators come to trust computer generated solutions as correct and disregard or don't search for contradictory information. Studies on automation bias in the supervision of Tomahawk missiles found that when the computer recommendations were wrong, operators using Level 3 control had tended to treat them as correct. Level 1 operators were a little slower when things went well but performed well when computer recommendations went wrong.

Level 4 is unacceptable because it does not promote target validation and a short time to veto and attack would reinforce automation bias and leave no room for doubt or deliberation.

As the attack will take place unless a human intervenes, this undermines well-established presumptions under international humanitarian law that promote civilian protection.

The time pressure will result in operators neglecting ambiguity and suppressing doubt, inferring and inventing causes and intentions, being biased to believe and confirm, focusing on existing evidence and ignoring absent but needed evidence.

Level 5 control is unacceptable as it describes weapons that are autonomous in the critical functions of target selection and the application of violent force.

IN SUMMARY

It should be clear from the above that there are many types of control that would not fulfil the conditions of **Level 1** control. You should be in a position now to ask questions about any method of control and find out how it fits in the Levels shown in Table 1. The biases and problems with automatic reasoning described in Part 1 will help you to assign the correct level. It might be between two different levels or it might need an entirely different level. Working in this way should assist in determining risks to International Humanitarian Law.

GENDER AND BIAS

Ray Acheson

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

What does gender have to do with killer robots?

First of all, a note about gender. Gender doesn't mean biological sex. It means the socially constructed norms of how we are supposed to act as women and men or trans, non-binary, or queer identities.

These norms can and do affect how we think about weapons, war, and violence. Throughout history, we have seen that weapons symbolize power. The association of weapons with power comes from a very particular—and very dominant—understanding of masculinity. This is not to say that all men agree with or perpetuate this idea, but that this is widely considered the norm or standard for masculinity.

This is a masculinity in which ideas like strength, courage, and protection are equated with violence. It is a masculinity in which the capacity and willingness to use weapons, engage in combat, and kill other human beings is seen as essential to being “a real man”.

This type of violent masculinity harms everyone. It requires oppression of those deemed “weaker” on the basis of gender norms. It results in domestic violence. It results in violence against women. It results in violence against gay and trans people. It also results in violence against men.

Men mostly kill each other, inside and outside of conflict. A big part of this is about preserving or protecting their masculinity—a masculinity that makes male bodies more expendable. Women and children, obnoxiously lumped together as if they are the same thing, are more likely to be deemed “innocent civilians,” while men are more likely to be considered militants or combatants.

We are all suffering from the equation of violence and power with masculinity. It prevents those

who identify as men from being something else—from acting outside the normative behaviour for men. It prevents gender equality or justice, reinforcing the binary between men and women and negating the existence of other experiences and identities. It prevents all of us as human beings to explore strength, courage, and protection from a nonviolent perspective. It makes disarmament seem weak. It makes peace seem utopian. It makes protection without weapons seem absurd.

Looking at weapons through a gender lens is not just an academic exercise. It can help inform disarmament and armament policy. To bring us back to the question at hand—what does gender have to do with killer robots—we can see that understanding the gendered context and implications of certain weapons helps us understand the best way to prevent humanitarian harm. Autonomous weapons, also known as fully autonomous weapons, may perpetuate negative gender norms, or be used to commit acts of gender-based violence. These possibilities are useful for demonstrating the need for meaningful human control over weapon systems and prohibiting weapons that operate without such control.

A GENDER ANALYSIS OF TECHNOLOGY AND AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS

Autonomous weapons are being developed in the context of the aforementioned norms of gender and power. Scholars of gender and technology have long argued that gender relations are “materialized in technology”. That is, the meaning and character (the norms) of masculinity and femininity are “embedded” in machines. These scholars argue that technological products bear their creators mark. If technology is developed

and utilized primarily by men operating within a framework of violent masculinity, their creations will be instilled with that framework of thought, knowledge, language, and interpretation.

Erin Hunt of Mines Action Canada has noted that “human biases are baked into the algorithms and the data we use to train a machine learning program often reflects our own patriarchal society with its class and race issues.” She argues, “One thing to keep in mind is that only around 0.0004% of global population has the skills and education needed to create [artificial intelligence] programing and most of those people were born into pretty privileged circumstances. Similarly, a recent estimate done by WIRED with Element AI found that only 12% of leading machine learning researchers were women.”

In this context, autonomous weapons, as tools of violence and of war, will likely have specific characteristics that may simultaneously reinforce and undermine hegemonic gender norms. This in turn may have implications for the notion of men as expendable and vulnerable, as predators and protectors, and pose serious challenges for breaking down gender essentialisms or achieving gender equality or gender justice in a broader context.

PROJECTING “POWER WITHOUT VULNERABILITY”

If we look at how armed drones are used and thought about now, we can see that the development of fully autonomous weapons present similar risks. The argument for these weapons is similar: drones and autonomous weapons are described as weapons that can limit casualties for the deploying force, and that can limit civilian casualties in areas where they are used because

they will be more precise. It is a typical argument from the perspective of violent masculinity: those using the weapon can deploy violence without fear of facing physical danger themselves; and in turn argue that it will actually result in less violence.

Yet as we have seen with drones, this—at least, the later argument—is far from the case. The tools and procedures used for determining targets for “signature strikes”—attacks based on “producing packages of information that become icons for killable bodies on the basis of behavior analysis and a logic of preemption”¹—have resulted in hundreds of civilian casualties in drone strikes. The same risks apply to fully autonomous weapons. If weapons without meaningful human control are deployed on the battlefield or a policing situation, programmed to target and engage people on the basis of software and sensors, the risks of mistaken identity or unlawful engagement run high. It is not at all clear to tech workers, scientists, academics, or other experts that weaponized robots will be able to comply with international humanitarian law or other rules of engagement.²

“Bias in terms of gender, race, socioeconomic status, ability, and sexual orientation can be programmed into machines, including autonomous weapons.”

In addition to these concerns, there is also the risk of bias in those software and sensors. If we look at bias in programming algorithms, it’s easy to be concerned. Bias in terms of gender, race, socioeconomic status, ability, and sexual orientation can be programmed into machines, including

autonomous weapons. Facial recognition software struggles to recognize people of colour; voice recognition struggles to respond to women’s voices or non-North American accents; photos of anyone standing in a kitchen are labeled as women; people’s bail is denied because a program decided that a woman of colour was more likely to reoffend than a white woman.³ Imagine this kind of bias being programmed into a weapon system designed to target and fire upon targets without any meaningful human control, without any human judgment to counteract that bias. It’s not a pretty picture.

RAPE AND ROBOTS

Then there is the argument, raised by government officials and others who try to argue in favour of autonomous weapons, that one of their advantages is that they won’t rape. This is myth.⁴ Of course autonomous weapons can be programmed to rape. If we’re thinking of them as machines to be used to kill people or destroy infrastructure, we might not perceive this, but an autonomous weapon could be programmed to inflict terror on a population through rape. Sexual violence in conflict is ordered by states and by armed groups alike using human soldiers. An autonomous weapon, if programmed to rape, would not hesitate to do so.

It’s also important to consider the broader culture of rape in relation to weapons and war. Rape and sexual violence are used as weapons in conflict. The risk of this kind of violence is also heightened during and after conflict. War destabilizes communities and exacerbates already existing gender inequalities and oppression of women, queer folks, and others who do not conform to societies’ standards of gender norms.

Then there is the culture of rape embedded in weapons themselves. One nickname given to a drone by its operator, for example, is SkyRaper.⁵ This reflects the culture of domination that is a key component of violent masculinities. It also reinforces the institutionalization of rape as a tool of war. It helps the operators and developers of the weapon own the use of rape for domination and to defeat a target, while simultaneously participating in the normalization of rape as a larger systemic issue.⁶ It also is an overt sexualization of the nature of imperial violence: those operating weapons from far away deploy them unlawfully in other countries, penetrating their borders without their governments’ consent.⁷ Other weapons can be used the same way, of course. But with the use of drones and the possibility of autonomous weapons, such practices seem to have reached the level of official policy.

The imagery of rape and nonconsensual activities in this context is not an aberration. A culture of sexual violence—and subsequent immunity—is part of the culture of dominance and invulnerability that is part of the military’s purposeful development of violent masculinities and a “warrior ethos”.⁸ However, the idea that drones are invulnerable does not necessarily imply that those who operate them are. In contrast, the supposed invulnerability of drones is based on the dislocation of their operators from danger. The user is protected by distance from the subjects it is targeting with the drone. This separates the “warrior” from war, the body from the battlefield. This has important implications for violent masculinities.

AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS AND THE WARRIOR ETHOS

Mechanizing warfare and protecting the soldier from risk of bodily harm seems to be in contradiction to the ethos of violent masculinity. Engaging an “enemy” from a distance to which they cannot respond is like shooting someone in the back. It is the antithesis of methods of warfare that celebrate bravery, courage, and sacrifice. “The attempt to eradicate all direct reciprocity in any exposure to hostile violence transforms not only the material conduct of armed violence technically, tactically, and psychically, but also the traditional principles of a military ethos officially based on bravery and a sense of sacrifice,” argues Grégoire Chamayou in his text *A Theory of the Drone*. “Judged by the yardstick of such classical categories, a drone looks like the weapon of cowards.”⁹

WHAT DO AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS LOOK LIKE, IN THIS CONTEXT?

Arguably, they would complete the separation of body from battlefield. “One of the troubles with unmanned aerial vehicles is literally the peril of becoming ‘unmanned’ in every sense of the term,” argues Chamayou. Mary Manjikian suggests that “media portrayals of the new ‘technogeek warrior’ have noted that the men who command systems like Israel’s Iron Dome mobile anti-rocket interception system are not stereotypically male leaders.”¹⁰ But rather than accept this “emasculatation” of warriors, the military and its supporters are simply changing the goal posts.

Some media reports, based on the language of military officials, have come to laud technical

proficiency as a warrior skill. In terms of cyber security, soldiers are described as “cyberwarriors” by their commander; technical prowess is elevated to a militaristic skill. Meanwhile, “Profiles in sources like *Wired* reinforce the connection between technical prowess and masculinity through featuring pictures of the new ‘geek warriors’ in military gear, posing next to the weapons which they pilot remotely, along with statistics about their kill ratios.”¹¹

With autonomous weapons, perhaps the tech workers and software developers will soon be posing for photographs with the robots deployed into battle or to police the streets. Regardless, the power displayed through detached, mechanized violence inherent in autonomous weapons, coupled with the arguments that these weapons will not seek revenge, will not rape, and will reduce civilian casualties, do not undermine violent masculinities, but reinforce it. The warrior ethos of violent masculinity—unemotional, detached, serious, and rational—is protected.

Furthermore, while some may say that it is cowardly to send a machine in to kill rather than men, drones and autonomous weapons alike “project a predatory masculinity, a powerful and abusive machine that emasculates targeted men” (emphasis added).¹² As with the rape culture already reinforced and perpetuated by drones, autonomous weapons would arguably exacerbate the process of dehumanization in warfare that is essential to combat. An autonomous weapon, using algorithms and software to determine and engage targets, also goes even further in “emasculating” or dehumanizing the “enemy” than any previous weapon technology. A weapon operating without meaningful human control will rely on characteristics of objects to sense a target, including the objects’ infrared emissions,

shape, or biometric information. This reduces people to objects, undermining human dignity.¹³

It also, as scholar Lorraine Bayard de Volo points out, “invites and legitimates a masculine response.”¹⁴ Affected populations, viewing the perpetrators of drone strikes as a predatory male, are incentivized to adopt the masculine protector role in their communities, to fight back against the aggressor.

AUTONOMOUS GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND REINFORCING VIOLENT MASCULINITIES

This in turn reinforces conceptions and practices of violent masculinities, and can lead to gender-based violence against men. In conflict, civilian men are often targeted—or counted in casualty recordings—as militants only because they are men of a certain age. While men are not necessarily targeted solely because they are men, taking sex as a key signifier as identity and exacting harm on that basis constitutes gender-based violence. That is to say, if someone uses sex as a basis for assessing whether or not a person is targeted, or if an attack is allowed (are only men present?), or in determining the impact of an attack later (i.e. during casualty recording), then they are using the sex of that person not as the motivation for the attack but as a proxy for identifying militants, or “acceptable targets”. This is gender-based violence. This erodes the protection that civilians should be afforded in conflict and violates many human rights, including the right to life and due process.¹⁵

It also has broader implications in the reinforcement of gender norms, including violent masculinity. Assuming all military-age men to be potential or actual militants or combatants entrenches the idea that men are violent and thus targetable. This

devalues male life—it suggests men are relatively more expendable than women. It increases the vulnerability of men, exacerbating other risks adult civilian men face such as forced recruitment, arbitrary detention, and summary execution.¹⁶

More broadly, the reinforcement of gender norms through targeting men as militants works against the establishment and sustainment of a more equitable society. Framing men as the militants, as the protectors of their communities willing to take up arms, in turn reinforces notions of women as weak, as being in need of this protection. This continues to enable women’s exclusion from authoritative social and political roles. It also reinforces the binary between women and men as weak and strong, as passive and violent, and refuses to engage with other identities and experiences that do not conform to this binary. Reinforcing violent masculinities also reproduces the power asymmetries and gendered hierarchies that underpin many acts of gender-based violence against women, queer-identified people, or non-conforming men.

The damage doesn’t end there. Marking certain populations as threats simply because they are men of a certain age in a certain location or exhibiting behaviour deemed by algorithms to be suspicious has implications for the normalization and abstraction of violence. As Thomas Gregory explores, it ignores the people that are affected—their bodies and their embodied experiences. He asks what happens to the bodies of those who are targeted by remote warfare technologies. “What do their experiences tell us about the limitations of language for thinking about the pain and suffering caused in war? What does it mean when violence overshoots the more elementary goal of taking a life, dedicating itself to destroying the body as body?”¹⁷

While this may be the result of any use of force, with any weapon or technology, autonomous weapons, in unique ways, risk undermining human dignity; committing gender-based violence; reinforcing violent masculinities; further exacerbating cycles of violence and conflict and oppression of women and queer folks. The way that sensors and software will be used to disembody targets before physically disembodimenting the person with worse is significant. It points to an increasing remoteness and abstraction of violence, an execution of human beings by machines that, as autonomy and the use of algorithms are increased in the development and operation of weapons, is likely to lead to increasing civilian casualties and also to further erosion of the sense of value of human life when it pertains to “the other”.

The gendered culture of violent masculinities that surrounds the development of autonomous weapons, likely to be embedded within the technology and its use, will create new challenges for preventing violence, protecting civilians, and breaking down gender essentialisms or discrimination. Understanding how autonomous weapons are likely to be perceived in a gendered way by their developers, operators, and their victims is crucial to developing policies that can help break the cycle of violence. This could include

“In a context where weapons are treated as tools of power, violence, and subordination of others, increasing the remoteness and abstraction of violence is not the answer.”

an understanding that the operation of weapons without meaningful human control, weapons programmed to target and kill based on pre-programmed algorithms of who is considered to pose a threat, used without consent in foreign lands or in the streets of local cities, will result in civilian casualties, psychological harm, and destruction of civilian infrastructure. That this in turn will result in a violent masculine response from affected communities, reinforcing gender inequalities and oppressions.

Such understandings should have significant implications for our thinking about and approach to the development of autonomous weapons. Campaigners can think about how this kind of analysis and argumentation could help tech workers and policy experts see the need for meaningful human control over weapon systems. In a context where weapons are treated as tools of power, violence, and subordination of others, increasing the remoteness and abstraction of violence is not the answer. Dealing with violence and conflict as a social institution, rather than a technical challenge to be “solved” with new weapons technology, is imperative. Understanding the gender dimensions of both violence and technology could help campaigners engage with new audiences and contextualize our work against weapons in a broader context of gender justice.

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ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING

Erin Hunt
Mines Action Canada

To reach the goal of a ban on autonomous weapons systems, campaigners need to use strategic advocacy and lobbying.

ADVOCACY STRATEGY

Advocacy is a way to persuade others to change their minds or policies. It is a means to an end, a way to achieve the better future we are working towards; which in this case is a future where autonomous weapon systems, also known as fully autonomous weapons, are prohibited before they are used.

An advocacy strategy is a plan of how we are going to use advocacy to reach those ends. It will help keep you on track and focused on your goals.

Have you seen good advocacy?
Any bad advocacy? The difference is in the plan.

A good advocacy strategy has a few key components. These components allow you to have most of the information you need to carry out your advocacy in one document. An advocacy strategy does not have to be long, just a paragraph or two to cover each of the following topics:

Context	what is the current situation
Strategy	a brief of what's the plan
Goals/ Objectives	a couple concrete goals of the strategy
Activities	specific steps (actions and their results) that will lead to the goals
Key messages/ Asks	what we want others to learn or do and our targets
Partners	key people or organizations you can work with
Timeline	key dates and activities
Key resources	news, articles to provide more info and how to take action

The format can look a little daunting to actually create an advocacy strategy yourself but it is totally do-able. Often the best way to come up with your advocacy strategy is through a group conversation. I like to use a series of questions when I am planning advocacy work:

1. What is the issue we want to work on?

To start with think about the causes and consequences of problem you want to work on – here the problem is the development of autonomous weapons. Ask yourself, how does the problem relate to what my organization does already and what we are good at?

2. What do we want to achieve?

It is good to think about both goals (the solution to the problem that you want to see – aka a pre-emptive ban on autonomous weapons) and objectives (the steps towards reaching those goals – national policies and laws, the start of negotiations etc). Make sure your goals and objectives are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound)!

3. How is our issue linked to policies, people or institutions in government/politics?

At this stage you need to consider: what policies impact the issue of autonomous weapons, who are the key people or institutions on your issue, how are decisions about this policy made and what is the social and political situation right now?

4. Who has power and influence?

Here is where you look for who has influence over the issue and who makes decisions. Make sure you consider who can be helpful and who can be a hindrance. It's just as dangerous to overlook possible champions as it is to overlook possible naysayers. You also can look at how to influence these power brokers.

5. What do we have?

Take an honest look at the situation for your organization and your capacity. It is good to think about your strengths, your weaknesses, opportunities and threats you face (a SWOT analysis). The greatest advocacy strategy in the world won't help if you don't have enough time, people or resources to implement it so tailor the strategy for what you have. You will be amazed how much can be accomplished with few resources.

6. Who is our target audience?

Examine who you need to educate or motivate to take action on your issue. Make sure to consider both the decision makers and the people who influence decision makers (this could be different depending on your country or your community – the media, social media, religious leaders, celebrities, NGOs and business leaders, etc). Don't forget who could be opposed.

7. What do we want our target audience to do?

Be clear and concise about what you want your target audience to do and why. Make sure to show the positive results that could occur if they do what you are asking.

8. So what are we going to do and how will we do it?

Here's where you start looking at specific actions and activities you will undertake to achieve the goals and outcomes. Remember these activities do not have to be set in stone, you can change them later.

9. Ok so who is going to write this down?

The thankless job – write up an advocacy strategy using the guidance above or your own organization's format. Once it's written circulate the draft to your team and make sure everyone is in agreement. Then start doing the plan!!!!

Having a conversation with your team or even better with your national campaign partners can help ensure that everyone is on the same page and build a stronger partnership. Once you have a strategy make sure to review it occasionally to make sure that it is still working for you. Go forth and advocate!

LOBBYING

A big way we are going to make change is by lobbying states directly at the UN, at other international forums or at home.

The humanitarian disarmament community has learned a lot through lobbying states at the UN and other international forums since the Ottawa Treaty was signed twenty years ago.

First off, it is important to **coordinate**. Working together as a team is one of the strengths of humanitarian disarmament campaigns. Campaign briefing documents, lobbying kits or other documents can help make sure everyone is on the same page and the campaign is focused on key messages tailored to the context.

The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, like many other campaigns, has found that designating regional leads to organize all the lobbying on states in a specific region has been very useful. A regional lead is usually from that region. They can track who is meeting with which states and help you tailor your messaging to each state. Making sure we work together in an organized manner is crucially important to ensure that every state gets spoken to and we do not waste time repeating ourselves.

That point gets to the second key to good international lobbying, we need to **take notes and report back** to the Campaign on our

lobbying activities. Note-taking and reporting is important for a number of reasons including:

- It helps with coordination so the Campaign knows who met with who and when
- Notes can remind you of any follow up you need to do
- Reports build the Campaign's institutional memory and help us all remember what was done last time
- Reports from meetings indicate where states are in their policy process
- It helps track changes in government positions over time

Notes and the report back don't have to be anything fancy. Your notes and the report should include the date and location of the meeting, who was there, what the key points discussed were, any follow-up necessary and the contact information of the person(s) you met with.

Third, to be successful in lobbying at the international level, you need to **know your stuff**. Keep in mind that the government officials you will be meeting with usually cover a large number of files so they need you to be up-to-date on the issue. To help you with this, the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots has resources like the campaigner's kit, campaign briefing papers and publications. Make sure you read these!

Going into the meeting, **be clear about what you want**. Set out your goals and your key messages. Are you just introducing yourself? Are you responding to a specific statement? Providing an update? Trying to get them to change their policy? Knowing what you want out of the meeting will help you stay on track.

If you are nervous about the meeting or if you are

worried that you don't have the expertise to deal with a specific issue, ask another campaigner to join us. The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots has a wide range of expertise so bring in a teammate.

In the lobby meeting, make sure to introduce yourself and the Campaign. Don't be afraid to say I don't know in response to a question. You can say that you will ask someone from the Campaign and get back to them. Just make sure you do the follow up. It's good to leave the meeting with a few action items, maybe you want to share a campaign publication with more information about what you were talking about or you want to write a follow-up email that summarizes your key point or maybe you want to include some suggested language for a statement. Just don't forget to thank them for meeting with you!

Not only will successful lobbying help get more states calling for a ban on autonomous weapons but lobbying can also help to build a "core group" of like-minded states who will take on a leadership role on the issue. A core group is going to be very important moving towards negotiations so it's important to **start building relationships** with the diplomats from supportive states. Even if a state is not very supportive of a ban on autonomous weapons right now, building relationships with their diplomats will be helpful. Make sure they know that you are resource and can provide information; also feel free to share some of the campaign materials like bumper stickers, pens or other giveaways to help people feel excited about this work. Diplomats do rotate out of their positions so try to build relationships with more than one member of any country delegation.

With good advocacy strategies and strong lobbying, the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots can reach our goal of banning autonomous weapons.

WORKING WITH PARLIAMENTARIANS

Willem Staes
Pax Christi Flanders

Parliaments can be a key forum for action towards national and international bans on autonomous weapons. Recent success in Belgium provides some key lessons that all campaigners can apply to their work at home.

1. CONTEXT

In July 2018 the Belgian parliament adopted a (non-binding) motion on killer robots. As such the current right-wing majority in parliament asked four things from the Belgian government:

- To take a leading role in starting international negotiations for a legally binding prohibition on the use of killer robots.
- To ensure that the Belgian army will never use killer robots in military operations.
- To work towards an internationally recognized definition of killer robots.
- To support the development and use of robot technology for civilian purposes.

Interestingly, during the parliamentary debate several members of parliament of the governing coalition showcased a very broad interpretation of their own motion. When pushed by opposition Members of Parliament (MPs), they clarified that the motion includes a prohibition on the production and possession and that any research and development for military purposes is also excluded under the motion.

2. HOW DID WE GET THERE?

The adoption of this ground-breaking motion came after more than one and a half years of parliamentary work. At the end of 2016 Pax Christi Flanders drafted a motion, which was submitted by the opposition Green Party, and asked the government to support an international and national prohibition on killer robots. This motion was first discussed by parliament in March 2017, after which

it was decided to organize a hearing with external experts. This hearing took place in December 2017. In January and May 2018 the motion was further discussed. In late June 2018 the coalition MPs submitted their own alternative resolution, on which a final vote took place in July 2018.

For us, the key challenge was thus to increase pressure on coalition MPs, in order not to allow them to continue to stall the process and just vote down the opposition motion. We undertook several initiatives in this regard:

- An open letter by over 90 Belgian AI experts, calling upon the parliament and government to support an international and national ban.
- A YouGov survey that showed that 60 % of the Belgian population want the government to support a ban on the development, production and use of killer robots.
- Participation of Daan Kayser (PAX) and allied experts in the December 2017 parliamentary hearing.
- An oped by Mary Wareham in main Belgian media outlet.
- Short video messages by Toby Walsh and Noel Sharkey, directly addressing MPs on their concerns.

3. KEY LESSONS LEARNT

Looking back, a couple of key lessons can be learnt from our advocacy work in the past 1.5 years:

- **Know your place:** having external stakeholders (Human Rights Watch, national AI experts and

so on) doing the public advocacy for you (with your support) is often more impactful than do all the public advocacy yourself. After all, citizens and politicians are not that surprised if a peace NGO they know well asks for a prohibition on a particular weapon system but an outside voice might trigger more action.

- **It's all about the voters:** having a survey that showed that a strong majority of the voters of each political party wanted the Belgian government to support a prohibition, was a real game-changer. Try to find ways to show that voters want a ban on autonomous weapons. In the end, MPs are more interested in specific data on how their voters think than content.
- **Create media moments yourselves:** do not assume that an average journalist thinks that a UN meeting is a reason in itself to write about killer robots. Consequently, proactively create reasons for a journalist to write about the issue: national AI experts that speak out, a hearing in parliament, a public

"Attend parliamentary discussions yourselves. Let MPs know that you will attend, and do live coverage on social media."

survey, etc. Once you have their interest, encourage journalists to call MPs and suggest specific questions they should ask the MPs. Getting a phone call from a journalist is much more pressure for an average MP than getting mail or a phone call from an NGO.

- **Name and shame during parliamentary discussions:** attend parliamentary discussions yourselves. Let MPs know that you will attend, and do live coverage on social media. This proved to be an effective pressure tool on MPs. Do coordinate your social media coverage in advance with organizations/persons with a large audience on Twitter, such as the social media people of HRW.
- **Get into the details:** apart from pressuring MPs, it's important to be seen as a constructive actor that is open for compromise. Consequently, suggest specific compromise language to MPs, in close coordination with the campaign's experts. Send MPs short video messages of AI experts like Toby Walsh and Noel Sharkey, in which they counter arguments against a prohibition.

Hopefully this example helps you plan your work at home. We need to work nationally and internationally to get a ban on autonomous weapons!

HOW TO DO A SCIENTIST LETTER

Daan Kayser
PAX

The scientific community is an important voice in the killer robots debate. These are the people that understand the technology and the implications of using it for targeting in autonomous weapons.

Over the years it has become clear that there is a lot of concern in the scientific community regarding autonomous weapons, also known as fully autonomous weapons. We have seen this in the recent successful protests by tech-workers at Google for the company's involvement in the Pentagon's Project Maven, but also in various open-letters by scientists.¹ In 2015 more than 3,000 robotics and Artificial Intelligence experts, including prominent scientists such as Stephen Hawking, Barbara Grosz (Harvard) and Demis Hassabis (Google), called for a ban.² In 2017, 116 AI and robotics companies urged United Nations to ban lethal autonomous weapons (including Google Deepmind).³ In 2018 more than 160 AI-related companies and 2,400 individuals pledged to not develop lethal autonomous weapons.⁴ Besides these international letters there have been national letters in [Australia](#) and [Canada](#) and [Belgium](#).

We have found national scientist letters a useful way:

- to demonstrate concern about autonomous weapons and support for a ban from the scientific community.
- to influence decision makers to take steps towards banning autonomous weapons.
- to create media attention and engage the general public on the issue.

Here are the steps to develop a scientist letter in your country.

1. Find a good moment for the letter
2. Develop the text of the letter
3. Make a google form for people to sign the letter
4. Identify and contact gatekeepers in the scientific community
5. Open the letter for signatures, listing as many of the "first wave" signers as possible
6. Launching the letter

1. FIND A GOOD MOMENT FOR YOUR LETTER

A scientist letter works best if you can link it to the local context. Is there something happening in parliament (debate, resolution) or is the government developing or procuring new weapon systems with autonomy? It can be good to then launch the letter a few days before this event to demonstrate to policy makers that there are concerns from the AI community and they support the call for a ban, or other intermediate goal(s). For example in Belgium we launched the letter a few days before a hearing in the Belgian Federal parliament. This created a lot of media attention and made politicians realize it was an issue they needed to take action on. Also check if there are no other big events happening that might compete for media or political attention.

"A scientist letter works best if you can link it to the local context."

2. DEVELOP THE TEXT OF THE LETTER

Below we have added the text of the Belgian scientist letter. You can use this template or develop your own text. There are a few things to keep in mind:

- It is important that the letter includes a basic definition of what a killer robot (fully autonomous weapon) is. In this way the call links to the international debate and the language used by the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots. Killer robots are “*fully autonomous weapon systems which lack meaningful human control over the critical functions of targeting and engagement in every attack.*”
- The letter should specify exactly what your ask is. For example: “*We therefore call upon the <Country> government and parliament to join international efforts to preventively prohibit such weapon systems, and to resolve as a nation never to develop, acquire or deploy such weapon systems.*”

“The letter should specify exactly what your ask is.”

- Decide what language to use. English may be a good choice as there may be foreign scientists working in your country. However, using English in certain parliaments might not be received as well. This should be kept in mind. A version in English and a version in your national language could be a good compromise.
- It is good to refer to the other scientist letters. If scientists see it is part of an international movement of scientists they are more likely to support the letter.
- It is good to also mention the positive applications of AI. As these people are working on AI they will not like a letter that is only negative about their field of work.
- It can be good to identify 2-5 key scientists to invite to discuss/edit the draft letter.

Here is an example of the text of the Belgian scientist letter:

Autonomous weapons: an open letter from Belgian scientists

As members of the Belgian artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics research community, we wish to thank the Belgian government and parliament for its interest in the broad field of AI and robotics.

As you know, AI and robotics research have made spectacular advances during the last decade. Soon we will see self-driving cars, autonomous aircraft and many useful applications of these technologies. These technologies can greatly contribute to our society as a whole. As with all technological developments, AI and robotics can have positive and negative applications. Therefore these transformations actual and potential demand our understanding and, increasingly, our heightened moral attention.

As Belgian scientists and researchers in robotics and artificial intelligence, we express our deep concern about the development of fully autonomous weapon systems which lack meaningful human control over the critical functions of targeting and engagement in every attack.

We join similar efforts by international colleagues and CEOs in August 2017 and July 2015, and by researchers in Australia and Canada in November 2017. Fully autonomous weapon systems threaten to become a third revolution in warfare. The development and use of such systems pose serious threats to international law, as well as to human rights and human dignity. Once developed, these weapon systems will lower the threshold to become involved in armed conflict, while allowing armed conflict to be fought at a scale greater than ever.

The development of these systems will likely cause expensive arms races and lead to regional and global insecurity. Autonomous weapons are likely to proliferate rapidly, and could initiate or escalate conflicts without human deliberation. Moreover, the development of such weapon systems raises significant accountability questions, as it is unclear who could be held accountable for any misbehaviour of such weapon systems.

Urgent action to address these concerns and prevent proliferation is needed. Once this Pandora’s box is opened, it will be very hard to close. We therefore call upon the Belgian government and parliament to join international efforts to preventively prohibit such weapon systems, and to resolve as a nation never to develop, acquire or deploy such weapon systems.

3. MAKE A FORM FOR PEOPLE TO SIGN THE LETTER

There are various online forms you can use. Google has a template that you can develop your own form in that people can sign. You can find a tutorial here: <http://bit.ly/formhelpcskr>

The webform can consist of three parts:

- The text of the letter (see above).
- The top ten of most prominent signees to demonstrate support of the letter. If people see that other prominent scientists have signed they will be more likely to also support it.
- The form signees can fill in their personal information.

Text for form:

“I affirm the above, and would like to add my signature to this open letter.”

You can use the following fields:

- Title
- Name (first and surname)
- University
- It is good to add an option to choose between which areas of science people come from, so you can see who are involved in different fields. For example, 1) computer science, 2) artificial intelligence, 3) robotics, 4) other disciplines.
- Email address

It is important to do title first and then the name as this makes it easier when exporting the information (we learned that the hard way).

4. IDENTIFY AND CONTACT GATEKEEPERS IN THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY

It is good to generate and identify a list of gatekeepers meaning people who are well connected and well known in the scientific community. Such gatekeepers can be your inroad into the scientific community. These can be people you know, but it can also be good to approach a number of prominent AI and Robotics researchers for the “first wave” of invitations to sign. Once you have these on board other scientists are more likely to sign the letter if they know their (prominent) colleagues have signed.

5. OPEN THE LETTER FOR SIGNATURES, LISTING AS MANY OF THE “FIRST WAVE” SIGNERS AS POSSIBLE

Once you have the online form to sign and a number of first signers you can start spreading the letter within the wider scientific community. It can be good if the letter is spread and promoted by scientists. One reason is that scientist value their academic independence and don’t always want to be associated with activists or advocacy groups. This can be done by working together with scientists in your country. Another option is to contact the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots or ICRAC who have a network of international scientists that probably have contact with scientists in your country.

It is good to keep in mind to:

- Set a date until when the letter is open for signatures.
- Make a template email to send to scientists. We have included an example below:

Dear ... ,

As you might have heard our colleagues in [Australia](#) and [Canada](#) have signed letters calling for preventing the development and use of fully autonomous weapons (weapon systems using computational techniques to select and attack targets without any meaningful human control). These two letters follow an [international letter](#) calling for a ban in 2015 signed by over 2,000 AI and robotics researchers, and a [more recent international letter](#) signed by 116 AI and robotics company CEOs and CTOs calling on the UN to protect us from the dangers of fully autonomous weapons.

Meanwhile, a [resolution](#) was put forward in the Belgian parliament which will consider Belgium’s policy on this issue, which will be discussed at a parliamentary hearing on the 6th of December, 2017.

With this in mind we felt the need to start a similar open-letter initiative in Belgium. In the link below you can find the text of the open-letter we want to publish, in which we call upon the Belgian government and parliament to join international efforts to preventively prohibit such weapon systems, and to resolve as a nation never to develop, acquire or deploy such weapon systems.

As an eminent Belgian researcher, we would very much appreciate your support and signature on this open letter.

We aim to publish the letter on Monday the 4th December, ahead of the parliamentary discussion. Therefore we ask you to sign on to the letter before the 1st of December if you support the call. We also ask that you please forward this to your Belgian colleagues in AI and robotics, and encourage their support.

If you are willing to sign the open letter, you can add your name on this form: <https://bit.ly/2CEPmbd>

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

6. FINALISING THE LETTER FOR PUBLICATION

Contact the signees to thank them for their support and check if they have really signed it, and ask them to share it with their colleagues.

- Make any adjustment to names, titles etc. based on the feedback from signees.
- Make a page with the text of the letter and the list of signees. This is the link you can share with the media and others. For example: <http://bit.ly/BelgianCSKRletter>
- If you did decide to write the letter in English only, perhaps think to translate it into the national language in order to share the information nationally.

Dear Supporter,

Thank you for signing the open letter to the Belgian Parliament on autonomous weapons. The letter will be launched this week to coincide with the hearing in parliament on Wednesday the 6th of December. We now have 88 scientists from the artificial intelligence, robotics and computer science community. You can find your name in the list of signees in the attached MS Word doc. Please check if we have added your name and title correctly.

If you have any corrections in your name/title please let us know before Wednesday 6 December 8.00 a.m. Thank you once again for supporting this initiative.

We would greatly appreciate if you could share this letter with of your colleagues who might be willing to sign it. The form to sign can be found here: <https://bit.ly/2CEPmbd>

Sincerely,

7. LAUNCHING THE LETTER

As mentioned it is good to connect the launch of the letter to a political moment, like a debate in parliament. Launching the letter beforehand creates attention to the issue and makes politicians aware of the public interest on the issue and pressures them to take action.

Press release: Write a press release that mentions the political moment you are trying to influence, and describes what killer robots are and what the concerns are. Has there been an [IPSOS poll](#) done in your country? It can be good to add these figure to demonstrate public support for a ban.

Under embargo: It is good to share the press release with the media before the launch date, but ensure it is clear that when the letter will be launched and that it is under embargo until then.

Spokesperson(s): Decide who is/are going to be the spokesperson(s). As mentioned earlier it can be good if this is one of the scientists who signed the letter. Make sure this person is

properly briefed; that she/he knows the details of the issue and shares the same position as you. If necessary share a factsheet with some basic information or talking points on it.

Op-eds: It can be useful to place an op-ed in national paper(s) with the scientist letter or at least the call by scientists for the government to take action on the issue. If possible it can be good if this letter is published under the names of a number of prominent signees. It can also be a letter by one of the most prominent signees, a group of signees, but also by prominent international scientists.

Public event: It can be good to organise a public event surrounding the launch of the letter where a number of scientists and/or civil society speakers discuss the issue.

Policy makers: Also send a copy of the letter to the policy makers you are trying to influence.

If you have any questions regarding setting up a scientist letter in your country don't hesitate to contact: kayser@paxforpeace.nl

ENDNOTES

- 1 Google Plans Not to Renew Its Contract for Project Maven, a Controversial Pentagon Drone AI Imaging Program (June 2018) <https://gizmodo.com/google-plans-not-to-renew-its-contract-for-project-mave-1826488620>
- 2 Autonomous weapons: an open letter from AI & robotics researchers, (July 2015), <http://futureoflife.org/open-letter-autonomous-weapons>
- 3 Killer robots: World's top AI and robotics companies urge United Nations to ban lethal autonomous weapons (August 2018), <https://futureoflife.org/2017/08/20/killer-robots-worlds-top-ai-robotics-companies-urge-united-nations-ban-lethal-autonomous-weapons>
- 4 AI Companies, Researchers, Engineers, Scientists, Entrepreneurs, and Others Sign Pledge Promising Not to Develop Lethal Autonomous Weapons (July 2018), <https://futureoflife.org/2018/07/18/ai-companies-researchers-engineers-scientists-entrepreneurs-and-others-sign-pledge-promising-not-to-develop-lethal-autonomous-weapons>

Under embargo until DATE 01.00h a.m.

Press release - <country> scientists call to ban “killer robots”

Date

On the eve of a parliamentary hearing, XX <country> scientists, including XX scientists in robotics and artificial intelligence (AI), call on the Belgian government to impose a national ban on “killer robots”. The scientists want <country> to join the growing international movement that want to ban killer robots.

Machines that kill people

Killer robots are weapon systems that can select and attack targets without meaningful human control. In an open letter, XX scientists in robotics and artificial intelligence express great concern about these weapon systems. They argue that the development of such weapons systems poses a serious threat to international law, human rights and human dignity. Killer robots can also lower the threshold for warfare, while armed conflict can take place on a larger scale than ever before.

The <country> scientists also warn against an arms race and escalation of conflicts. Killer robots also raise questions about who is responsible if something goes wrong. For these reasons, the scientists argue that the federal government and parliament should impose a national ban and join the growing international movement that wants to ban killer robots.

International initiatives

The appeal from scientists follows similar recent initiatives in Belgium, Canada and Australia where scientists also called for a ban on fully autonomous weapons. In July 2015, more than 3,000 scientists also called for a ban, while in August 2017, 116 CEOs from robotics and AI companies opposed killer robots.

International ban

The subject is also high on the agenda at the United Nations. At least XX countries want to start negotiations on a preventive ban on killer robots. <Country> must join this group of countries and play a leading role in the international debate.

We are on the edge of a new era: the complete automation of warfare and the outsourcing of decisions about life and death to computer programs. It is therefore essential not to create facts that we cannot reverse afterwards. Killer robots must be banned before it is too late.

The entire text of the open letter:

.....

For more information you can contact: XX

The full list of signatories can be found here. Well-known signatories include:

Ten biggest names

BUILDING A NATIONAL CAMPAIGN

Erin Hunt
Mines Action Canada

For the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots to be successful internationally, we'll need to create strong national campaigns working to change national policies and campaigning in support of the international efforts. It can be daunting to try to change national policy but with a strong and smart national campaign, it is possible. Based on my experience campaigning nationally on landmines, cluster munitions and nuclear weapons, this chapter outlines a few of the key points to building and maintaining a national campaign.

SET GOALS AND PLAN YOUR CAMPAIGN

First things first, you and your team should determine what the goals of the national campaign are. It is going to be much easier to build a national campaign if you can tell people what you are working towards. Since this is the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots campaign kit, I'm going to assume that the overarching goal is to get your country to support the negotiation of a new treaty banning autonomous weapons systems, also known as fully autonomous weapons. That's great but you should have some smaller goals along the way as well that tell people how you are going to achieve our collective goal.

I always aim for SMART goals, you know specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound.

So instead of our country supports a ban on autonomous weapons, a better goal would be 'in 2018 our country states their current policy regarding autonomous weapons in an international forum.' When you are starting out small realistic and achievable goals will help build momentum.

Once you set some goals, it's time to come up with a plan. Different organizations have different ways of planning their campaigns; for some it is a formal strategic development process, for others it is an informal discussion. More resources on how to plan your advocacy strategy are available in another chapter. Just make sure your team is onboard with the plan and that everyone knows the plan.

A campaign plan will help you stay on track to meet your goals and will keep us all focused on banning autonomous weapons. The plan should

be flexible to accommodate new developments but clear enough that you won't get distracted. Once you know what you want to do, it's time to find the people to help you do it.

ENLIST ALLIES

You can create a successful national campaign with a small number of people, but you will need to enlist some partners in your country. You do not all need to do the same things the same way but allies or partners will be very helpful. There may

be people already working towards a ban on autonomous weapons systems in your country, but you will also need to bring some more people into the campaign. If you

haven't seen the Dancing Guy Leadership video, have a watch <http://youtu.be/fW8amMCVAJQ> because it is the best demonstration of why it is important to bring others into your campaign.

As part of Campaign to Stop Killer Robots you will likely already have some ready-made allies. Other partner organizations of the Campaign should be willing and eager to join forces. Don't forget to check and see if you have local branches of any of the large international organizations in the Campaign like Human Rights Watch, WILPF, ICRAC or Amnesty International. You can see the list of Campaign to Stop Killer Robots members here: www.stopkillerrobots.org/members.

The Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement (RC/RC) is starting to work on this issue, but they aren't quite ready to call for a pre-emptive ban on autonomous

"It can be daunting to try to change national policy but with a strong and smart national campaign, it is possible."

weapons. That policy doesn't mean that you should ignore your national Red Cross or Red Crescent society; in fact it's the opposite. The RC/RC carries a lot of moral weight; their traditional neutrality and commitment to humanitarian principles mean that most likely your national RC/RC will be taken quite seriously. The RC/RC movement may not be fully on board with a ban on autonomous weapons yet, but they have a wealth of expertise about international humanitarian law which is useful to building the argument for a ban. One thing to keep in mind when working with national RC/RC societies is that the movement's neutrality may require them to take a more behind the scenes role in the national campaign, but they are good people to stay in contact with. To reach out to the national RC/RC society in your country check out the contact list <http://bit.ly/19cEOd8> and send them an email asking to speak to the person working on autonomous weapons systems, disarmament or international humanitarian law.

Beyond the RC/RC national society and any Campaign to Stop Killer Robots members present in your country, other non-governmental organizations will be excellent allies for your national campaign. Humanitarian and human rights organizations will be natural partners for you. The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots is unique among disarmament campaigns in that our other natural partners include private companies working on AI and robotics, STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) experts and academics, think tanks, research institutes and engineering firms. The threats posed by autonomous weapons systems affect

everyone so think creatively about who might be interested in working with you, student societies and youth organizations, trade unions, professional organizations, faith communities.

In my campaigning, I view journalists, bloggers and media outlets as allies as well. They can help you get your message out and will help shape the national conversation about your campaign and our work towards a ban on autonomous weapons systems. The chapter on Social Media will give you more information on how to reach more allies.

Once you have identified potential allies, how to enlist them will be up to you. Some national campaigns have held roundtables to introduce a large number of organizations to the issue and the campaign all at once; others have met with

individual organizations to tailor their partnership proposal to each organization but you might have a different idea entirely. Maybe you have allies sign a letter of support

for the issue to demonstrate the breadth of support for a ban on autonomous weapons systems in your country. You are the expert on what will work best in your national context. The key is to get people on your team and then you've got to make sure to keep them informed and coordinated.

COORDINATE, COMMUNICATE, AND COORDINATE SOME MORE

With a plan and allies, you are pretty much unstoppable as long as you coordinate with your allies and keep the lines of communication open. Share the plan with your allies so they

know what the goals are and how everyone can contribute to reaching those goals. Keep your allies informed about the campaign, what's going on and what's next. Some tools you can use for keeping people informed is the Campaign's listserv and website. Communication and coordination will be the difference between a campaign that works and a campaign that flails.

How you communicate and how often you are in touch will depend on your style but regular communication will allow you to keep energy up and keep everyone engaged.

WORK WITH DECISION MAKERS AND PARLIAMENTARIANS

When you are lobbying internationally, you will often meet with diplomats and government officials. National campaigning is not much different. Meeting regularly with government officials to discuss the national policy and the campaign more broadly is an important yet often overlooked aspect of national campaigning. You can also meet with government officials at other levels of government like at the state or city level to gather support for a ban on autonomous weapons systems. Government officials write briefings and often pass information on to the top decision makers in your government so staying in touch with them will help you get your messages up to higher levels in the government. In the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots context, we are not just working with the foreign ministry, try to reach out to the ministry of defense as well as the ministry responsible for science and technology. These other ministries might not be used to working with disarmament organizations so make sure you start from the beginning and be ready to explain how disarmament treaties work. Government officials can be your allies in

advancing policy change in your government. Keep in mind, these government officials are the people you will be seeing again and again at international events and at national events, so it will be very beneficial to cultivate a good relationship with them even if you disagree on the issue.

In most countries, politicians will have the final word on your country's policy about autonomous weapons systems so it is crucially important to include working with politicians in your national campaign plan. In Canada, we've had the most success working in a multi-partisan manner when dealing with our federal government. We meet with all parties (not just the governing party) to discuss our issues and ask for their support of our campaign goals. Keeping friendly parliamentarians updated through letters, emails and phone calls can help build a sense of partnership and encourage them to stay focused on our issue amidst the many issues calling for their support. In addition, we encourage supporters to write to their MPs and the relevant minister to share their views about disarmament.

Meeting with politicians sounds a lot more intimidating than it really is. We often forget that politicians are just normal people. Parliamentarians and politicians are your representatives so your views should matter to them. As long as you review the resources available about autonomous weapons systems and the ban, plan your asks and practice your arguments, you most likely will know more about autonomous weapons systems than the parliamentarian or the politician.

I've spent quite a bit of time trying to get policy changes through Canada's parliament with some success but it has been a learning experience. I'm going to share some of the little tips and tricks I've figured out through all this work in parliament.

- **Dress the part** – it sounds superficial but it is easier to be taken seriously by parliamentarians when you dress appropriately. You'll know what is appropriate in your country but in all countries if you look like someone who knows their stuff people are more likely to listen.
- **Tailor your message** – know who you are meeting and research their interests, their issues and their biography so you can shape your message to them. A ban on autonomous weapons systems will be relevant to everyone you just need to figure out how the issue is relevant to the person you are meeting. For example, if you are meeting someone who represents an area with a university you might want to mention how the development of autonomous weapons could affect public perception of robotics more generally and harm researchers at universities.
- **Staff members are important** – having good relationships with political staff is as important as maintaining a good relationship with the parliamentarian. The staff are more likely to have time to talk to you, they will be the ones who help write speeches, they can influence the priorities of the parliamentarian and they may be the ones who decide if you get a meeting or not.

ADAPT TO YOUR NATIONAL SITUATION AND HAVE FUN

In addition to your campaign plans, Campaign to Stop Killer Robots will send out action alerts when a collective effort is needed. The action alert is a great opportunity to get your national campaign mobilized. Make sure to adapt your actions to the national context to help the action gain traction in your country. Maybe you might need to make changes for cultural, environmental or political reasons. For example, the International

Campaign to Ban Landmines held a “lend your leg” campaign that involved rolling up a pant leg for a day to draw attention to the landmine issue. To allow the action to adapt to cultural contexts they provided suggestions that did not involve exposing skin; to adapt to a tense political situation one national campaign changed their plan and two mascots led the campaign with an awareness message rather than issuing political call for their country to join the Ottawa Mine Ban Treaty and to adapt to the remarkable cold in Ottawa, Canadian campaigners asked people to only roll up their pant leg only long enough for a photo.

National campaigning is hard work so make sure you have fun while doing it. Public events often get better reception if they are fun and unusual. One very fun campaign action that comes to mind is when colleagues in South Korea rode the subway dressed as cluster bombs to bring attention to their country's continued presence outside of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Not only was the action fun for the campaigners, it was fun for spectators and newsworthy. The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons campaigners have used art actions to convert images of nuclear weapons into other things through the Bombs No More activity or allowed to people to Eat the Bomb using nuclear bomb shaped cookies or cake (delicious and fun). Even if it is just celebrating your team members' birthdays or bringing a treat to a meeting, having fun in your campaign will keep everyone motivated and engaged.

CELEBRATE AND KEEP MOMENTUM GOING

I won't lie to you there will be setbacks, some governments aren't going to be supportive of a ban on autonomous weapons systems right away and

you might not achieve all your goals on the timeline you want. With national campaigning, you risk getting tunnel vision and feeling very discouraged by national setbacks. There are a number of ways to deal with setbacks. The first is to find a win in every loss. For example, in our lobbying of Canada's Parliament about cluster munitions, we were not able to get the changes we want in the legislation but we have forced a small concession from the government and had our campaign actions cited in parliamentary debate. We may not have gotten everything we want but we have got the government to admit the legislation was flawed and fix one of those flaws so that's worth celebrating.

Another way to deal with setbacks is to use them as campaigning opportunities. If your country does not announce its policy or makes statements about how autonomous weapons could be helpful, despite your best efforts, take it as an opportunity to reach out to the media and friendly parliamentarians to ask your government to explain themselves. Disappointment can open a window for further discussion and a better result in the future. I keep this I.F Stone quote near my desk for just these disappointing setbacks:

“The only kinds of fights worth fighting are those you are going to lose, because someone has to fight them and lose and lose and lose until someday, somebody who believes as you do wins. In order for somebody to win an important, major fight 100 years hence, a lot

of other people have got to be willing – for the sheer fun and joy of it – to go right ahead and fight, knowing you're going to lose. You mustn't feel like a martyr. You've got to enjoy it.”

If you are just not reaching your goals, always keep an eye on the global progress towards a ban on autonomous weapons systems. Global success can be very motivating even if you aren't seeing much progress at the national level.

Regardless of whether or not you are meeting all your goals, make sure you celebrate your successes and the small victories that will come your way.

Good news keeps your partners excited about the campaign, show progress and keeps your momentum going. Did your government attend an international meeting on autonomous weapons systems? Great, let people know! Did you get a response to a letter?

Wonderful, celebrate that the government is paying attention! Did AI experts release a public letter calling for a ban? Amazing, share the text! You get the idea – if you are excited, the energy will be infectious and spread through your campaign.

A strong national campaign will help move the global conversation along. We need national campaigns to ensure that states are not sleepwalking towards a future of autonomous weapons. Your victories are our victories and our victories are your victories.

CAMPAIGNING ONLINE WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

Clare Conboy

Campaign to Stop Killer Robots

Social media (such as Facebook, Instagram or Twitter) can be a campaigner's best friend but there is a lot of confusing information out there about how to use it effectively. Used well, social media can promote your campaigning, draw attention to your work, develop a community or following who support your cause and even better, convince people who don't know about your issue that it is worth caring about.

COMMON CONCERNS

Sometimes campaigners say (quietly) that social media can also feel like a distraction from substantive work, it can be uncomfortable because it sometimes relies on some self-promotion, or daunting because how to use social media effectively can change quickly. The value of social media isn't always apparent if these are your concerns, so it's worth thinking about the question, 'If a tree falls in a forest and nobody hears (or sees) it, did it happen?' This is true of some aspects of campaigning, particularly social media.

While the tree falling might disrupt the undergrowth or nearby trees, if the wider community around the forest doesn't know about it, then that disruption is kept local. So publicising your work is essential and often leads to new opportunities for effective campaigning.

Admittedly, self-promotion for some is really difficult, it is important to remember that actually, you're not promoting yourself, you're promoting your work. The best way to do that is to share your story and your activities. People are more likely to connect and engage with your cause if they see the work and the people behind it.

While social media can change quickly, an understanding of the basics, that I'll provide below, should help with the quick pace of change. If not, use a search engine to ask your question. People all over the world often have the same difficulties with social media so if in doubt, ask, because invariably someone has written a solution in a blog.

SOCIAL MEDIA TERMS

There are a lot of different social media terms, if this is a new area of work for you, there are some definitions in a glossary at the end of this guide to start you off.

A FEW GOLDEN RULES!

- The internet has a long memory. Make sure that what you say online is something that won't cause difficulty or embarrassment if you are asked about it in an interview with a journalist.

- Always read back over your post. Social media engagement is only as positive as the reputation it generates. A typo, unintended mistake in the background of a photo or a post in bad taste can cause social media users to engage negatively with you and going viral for the wrong reasons won't be fun!

"It is important to direct your content. Select a target group, and produce content relevant to their concerns and consumer tastes."

- Post interactive content. Platform algorithms push content that engages users. So make sure some of your content encourages likes, follows, shares, retweets and conversation, rather than simply reading or watching. Statistics prove that social posts that have pictures perform 2-3 times better than content without a picture. It's worth taking the time to include a visual.
- Fashions and trends. Social media trends come and go quickly. What may appeal to you personally in terms of fonts and colours may not be what will engage social media users. Be mindful of this and keep an eye on what other social media users are doing.

- Use hashtags. These can be unique to your region, country, city, town. Use a search engine or look on your Facebook and Twitter feeds to see what hashtags are popular or trending and don't be afraid to use the same hashtag. In saying this, make sure you are not using a hashtag inappropriately, research the content that uses the hashtag before jumping on the bandwagon. There is also a lot of benefit in using a hashtag unique to your event or campaign, eg. [#killerrobots](#)

WHERE TO START

Develop a strategy. It doesn't have to be complex but it's good for your output to have direction. One question to begin with is, "What do you want to achieve by using social media?"

There can be a variety of answers to this question and the answer may change with time or circumstance. Is there an event coming up? Is there some media coverage you need to respond to? Do you want to build up recognition of your campaign? Do you have a minor campaign coming up under the umbrella of your larger campaign goals? Just like developing a national campaigning strategy, you'll need to know what you're working towards with your social media presence in order to promote your cause effectively.

A good strategy should include answers or points listed under the following:

- ▶ What are your goals? (it's worth taking the time to be really clear)
- ▶ Who is your target audience?
- ▶ Which social platforms will you use?
- ▶ Can you give adequate time and resources to implement this strategy?

- ▶ What style of voice will you have online?
- ▶ How will you measure your success?

GOALS

While your overall campaigning goal might be to achieve a ban on killer robots, there will be smaller goals along the way. Your social media strategy can be particularly powerful in making an impact around the smaller campaign goals. Here are some questions that may help you refine your social media strategy goals.

- ▶ What constituencies do you want to engage online? Policy and decision makers? Experts? Members of the public? Media?
- ▶ What key messages from your campaign strategy do you want to communicate to the public?
- ▶ Whose support online could make a difference to our campaigning goals?
- ▶ Do you need short term engagement or long term loyalty?
- ▶ How much time and resources can you devote to your social media?
- ▶ What content will appeal to your target audiences?

TARGET AUDIENCE?

Be wary of targeting "the general public", it's likely that you're not providing content specific enough to engage individuals or communities. It is important to direct your content. Select a target group, and produce content relevant to their concerns and consumer tastes. This will increase engagement with your content and in turn your issue. Helpful questions:

- ▶ What type of content does your target audience enjoy?
- ▶ What defines their demographic? Age? Gender? Ethnicity? Geographical location? Political affiliation? Religious values? Profession? A mixture of some or all?
- ▶ Which platform(s) are they using?

WHICH SOCIAL PLATFORMS WILL YOU USE?

If your time and resources are limited, choose one or two platforms that you can engage with properly rather than setting up accounts across all platforms. Does platform use vary according to your target audience's demographic? Focus on the platform most popular with your target audience. What platforms are popular in your region? What tone will resonate with your target audience? Formal? Humorous? Technical? Educational? A mixture?

How often should you post on each platform? There's no hard and fast answer to this question, often it's down to a little experimentation, seeing what works and when in terms of engagement. Our time as campaigners is often limited, so before launching your social media strategy, it's important to look at your team and see if the work can be shared or is it the responsibility of one person? Set aside some time to create a weekly (or monthly) schedule of anchor content so your platforms are never too quiet. Social media algorithms reward engagement.



Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/stopkillerrobots>

Facebook is the most widely used platform internationally. Ideal for visual content, the use

of images and videos encourages engagement on Facebook's algorithms. Facebook has live streaming capabilities (Facebook live). It is an intergenerational platform with powerful local targeting and advertising tools, and a variety of content. Facebook wants you to focus on engagement so every post should be interesting enough for your supporters to like, share, or comment. As a general but very malleable rule, aim for 2-4 posts per week. It's about quality, not quantity. Facebook's algorithms reward less text. Statistically, posts with less than 70 characters perform best, while those with less than 250 characters still garner engagement, more than that though and you're limiting your post reach. Remember, you can always put the words in your image and it won't affect your character count!



Instagram

<https://www.instagram.com/stopkillerrobots>

Millennials are the most ardent users of Instagram. A visual platform where high quality, creative images or videos are necessary, reliant on good quality images, interesting graphics, and videos. A general rule is to aim for 1-2 posts a week.



Twitter

<https://twitter.com/bankillerrobots>

This fast-moving platform puts no limit to the number of tweets you can post daily so long as they're adding value. It's a conversational platform, and often about real-time interaction. It's a great opportunity to engage in conversation with your followers and news quickly. Aim for a third of your time on twitter being spent on replying to people or having conversations. Tweets also tend to get a lot more engagement when they include images or videos.



LinkedIn

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/campaign-to-stop-killer-robots/>

LinkedIn used by professionals for sharing updates relating to their work, links to relevant news stories, events, conferences etc. It's a great space to network and from the perspective of your organisation can be used to share information that those working in your field would be interested in. Photos and videos can also be effective here. Aim for 1-3 posts per week.



Snapchat

Snapchat is a mobile-only messaging app that allows users to send a photo or video "snap" that automatically deletes after being viewed. It is popular with those under 25 years old and creates what feels like a one to one experience. If youth is your demographic, Snapchat is the platform for you.

DEVELOP YOUR VOICE

It's worth thinking about the initial question I asked earlier in this guide, "what do you want to achieve by using social media?". How do you need to communicate in order to best achieve your goals? Take a step back and think about what influences you, your colleagues, friends, and family of different ages and backgrounds. You are the expert in your region, you know your culture. Use this knowledge and remember that social media allows for informality and humour. Remember that it's not just the text you put out, but the style

of your visual input that also defines your voice. Pay attention to successful social media users in your region and learn from them, but remember that your message and your voice is unique.

CROSS PROMOTION

Find new conversations to join, new accounts to follow, search for relevant hashtags and build relationships with other organisations

and influencers. These are small steps that can amplify your work ten-fold. Share each other's content and successes. Look out for opportunities to collaborate with others, every opportunity to grow and diversify is also an opportunity to reach a new audience.

MEASURE YOUR RESULTS

Monitoring and measuring your engagement is an important way of making sure that your hard work is not being invested in the wrong place. How you measure your results will depend on what goals you set. Most social media platforms have basic to detailed analytics available, essentially though, if one post is getting a lot of likes, shares etc. and another didn't, look at the difference between them. Social media is a lot of trial and error, often a post is less successful because of the time it was posted or if there was too much text. Helpful markers for measuring results are to look at how often your account is 'mentioned' online, has this grown? Is your reach and engagement rate increasing? In a nutshell, moving forward, do more of what worked, less of what didn't and continue to try new things!

TOOLS

There are some great tools available to help you create and manage your online content. Often there are free versions that work well and they can be worth investing in for access to more options if you are finding them useful. Don't worry if you have never used this kind of tool before, usually, the software provides step by step assistance but if in doubt, YouTube has numerous video tutorials to learn how to use the software listed below.

Images/graphics/photos/gifs:

In a world where we are inundated with images all day every day, making sure that your images are attractive and the correct sizing for the platform you are using is essential to communicate that you are en trend and professional.

1. Adobe Spark (free version with watermark, the paid version is very good)
2. Canva (free version available)
3. Google advanced image search (free but make sure the usage rights are open to your use)
4. Giphy (free)

Film editing:

Video is the fastest way to educate and communicate on social media. If possible, subtitle your videos. Firstly, it makes them accessible but also 85% of Facebook videos are viewed without sound.

1. iMovie (free with mac computer)
2. Lightworks (free)
3. Adobe Premiere Pro (paid)
4. Final Cut Pro (paid)

Scheduling:

This is a way of dispersing the content generation load. Take some time to add to your calendar of content and know that your content will go live without you having to press the post/tweet button!

1. Hootsuite
2. Tweetdeck
3. Lightly

SOME RESOURCES & VIDEO TUTORIALS:

How to create a Facebook page:

<https://nonprofits.fb.com/topic/create-a-page/>

How to use Facebook:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGcHOcj1SQA>

How to Live stream on Facebook:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EEiHuF9DAFU>

How to use Twitter:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5jWNpLvdocU>

How to use Instagram:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Z4AEDyKGdl>

How to use Snapchat:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HMxU-YcVsAmY>

Intro to LinkedIn:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3wb0yl4svas>

Intro to LinkedIn video:

<https://blog.linkedin.com/2017/august/22/Introducing-LinkedIn-Video-Show-Your-Experience-and-Perspective>

GLOSSARY:

Bitly: Bitly is a free web address (URL) shortening service used to condense long URLs to make them easier to share on social networks such as Twitter.

Blog: Blog was created from two words: “web log.” Blogs are regularly updated webpage usually managed by an individual or small group. Its content can be written or visual content that is topic specific or experience based. Blogs are usually informal or conversational.

Clickbait: Clickbait is a term to describe content that uses sensational headlines to encourage visitors to click on a link to a particular web page and boost engagement with their post.

Engagement: Engagement is a common way of evaluating your social media performance. For example, on Twitter, this translates to how many times your post on Twitter (tweet) is shared (retweeted), liked and how many followers you have and develop.

Follower: In the context of social media, a follower refers to a person who subscribes to your account in order to receive your updates.

Handle: Handle is the term used to describe someone’s @username on Twitter. For example, the Campaign to Stop Killer Robot’s Twitter handle is @bankillerrobots.

Hashtag: A hashtag is a word or phrase preceded by a hash sign (#), used on various social media platforms to identify content produced on a specific topic and make it easily searchable for users. For example, #killerrobots

Like: A user can use the ‘Like’ function across a number of platforms as a quick way to show approval or support (without having to make a written comment) for specific comments, tweets, posts, pictures, wall posts, statuses, or pages.

Live streaming: Live streaming is when a social media account transmits content over the internet in real-time.

Meme: A meme is typically an image or video with text above, below or on it that is humorous in nature. Often a meme is copied and spread rapidly by Internet users, often with slight variations.

Mention: A mention is a term used to describe one account using another account’s handle in their tweet or post to start a discussion or recognise their relevance to the situation.

Newsfeed: On Facebook, the News Feed is the homepage of users’ accounts where they can see all the latest updates from their friends. The news feed on Twitter is called Timeline. News Feed is the constantly updating list of stories in the middle of your home page.

Retweet: A retweet is when someone on Twitter sees your message and decides to re-share it with his or her followers. A retweet button allows them to quickly resend the message with attribution to the original sharer’s name.

Post: A piece of writing, an image, or other items of content published online, typically on a blog or social media website or application.

Tag: Tags allow social media users to engage an individual, business or any entity with a social profile when they mention them in a post or comment.

Troll: A troll refers to a person who is deliberately creating controversy or interacting with content online to provoke a reaction.

Viral: When a piece of social media content achieves noteworthy awareness. Viral distribution relies heavily on word of mouth and the frequent sharing of one particular piece of content all over the internet.

Vlogging: A video blog, a vlog uses a video to tell a story or report on information.

Webinar: A webinar is a seminar conducted over the Internet. Webinars are held to educate audiences about a particular topic.

This is an overview of common terms, if you come across one that you are unfamiliar with, a search engine will be able to provide the answer.

AUTHOR BIOS

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Bonnie Docherty is associate director of armed conflict and civilian protection at the Harvard Law School International Human Rights Clinic (IHRC) as well as a senior researcher at Human Rights Watch (HRW). She has been the lead author of all of HRW/IHRC's killer robots research publications and is active in numerous humanitarian disarmament campaigns.

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