



# CAMPAIGN TO **STOP** KILLER ROBOTS



## Report on Activities

2019 Global Meeting of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots  
Berlin, Germany  
21-23 March 2019

## About this report

This report details activities at the 2019 global meeting of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots in Berlin, Germany on 21-23 March. The meeting took place before the seventh Convention on Conventional Weapons meeting on lethal autonomous weapons systems, which opened at the United Nations in Geneva on 24 March.

The report records the activities leading up to the global meeting, the public event and visual stunt conducted in Germany, and an overview of meeting activities. The annexes provide a list of participants, a detailed schedule of the meeting, and an overview of media coverage of the campaign's activities.

The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots appreciates the generous donor support that allowed us to convene the global meeting and associated events and activities. We thank the Heinrich Boell Foundation for providing its beautiful conference space and catering free of charge.

The Campaign is grateful to the staff and volunteers of the German wing of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) for taking on the organizing of the meeting in close cooperation with German NGOs and the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots staff team.

This report is available on the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots website at:  
[www.stopkillerrobots.org/publications](http://www.stopkillerrobots.org/publications).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mary Wareham', with a stylized, cursive script.

Mary Wareham  
Washington DC  
9 January 2020

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## I. Lead-up to the Global Meeting

In December 2018, the Steering Committee agreed to convene a global meeting of the members of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots in Berlin, Germany on 21-23 March 2019. This would be the first international gathering of the campaign since London in 2014.

Berlin was selected due to the interest of German non-governmental organizations (NGOs), willingness of a small ground team to leap into action, and possibility of realizing a positive leadership position from the German government. The Campaign sought to pressure Germany's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Heiko Maas, to follow through on his September 2018 call for support to his "initiative to ban fully autonomous weapons – before it is too late!" In 2013 and 2018, the governing political parties negotiated grand coalition agreements committing Germany to work for a new killer robots treaty to ban killer robots. However, German diplomats and officials have proposed lesser measures such as a political declaration in an effort to broker agreement among major powers.<sup>1</sup>

Prior to the global meeting, on 15 March, German campaigners and the global Campaign coordinator Mary Wareham attended a day-long [conference](#) hosted by the foreign minister on "Capturing Technology. Rethinking Arms Control." At the meeting, Maas said, "new rules are needed for autonomous weapons," but did not explicitly propose negotiations on a new ban treaty. High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu reiterated the UN Secretary-General's call to ban fully autonomous weapons from his November 2018 statement calling fully autonomous weapons "politically unacceptable and morally repugnant."

The Campaign coordinator and Thoman Küchenmeister, director of Facing Finance, met with the representative of the major German industry association—BDI (Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie)—comprised of businesses and defense contractors including Rheinmetall. They discussed the [call](#) issued by BDI and articulated in a [5-page position paper](#) urging the government to work for a new treaty to ban killer robots.

Wareham and Küchenmeister also met with representatives of the German Informatics Society, an association of 20,000 members that published a [call](#) in February urging the German government to be more ambitious in working to ban killer robots.

In March 2019, Bishop Bedford-Strohm, Chairman of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), publicly advocated a ban on "killer robots".

Other notable activities in the lead-up to the global meeting included the January 2019 release by market research company Ipsos of a public opinion [survey](#) conducted in 26 countries that showed more than three in five respondents oppose the development and use of killer robots. In Germany, 72 percent polled opposed such weapons systems, while 14 percent expressed supported for them and 14 percent were unsure or undecided.

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<sup>1</sup> Germany's 2018 coalition agreement states "We reject autonomous weapon systems which lack human provision. We want to ban them globally."

Human Rights Watch issued a [press release](#) on 14 March recommending that Germany should cooperate with like-minded countries to open negotiations on a new treaty to prohibit killer robots.

## II. Global Meeting

The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots conducted public and media activities on Thursday, 21 March aimed at raising awareness and securing media coverage. The Campaign held a visual stunt in front of the Brandenburg Gate in the morning using boiler suits and the “David Wreckham” robot campaigner. It held a press conference afterwards moderated by Thomas Küchenmeister and featuring remarks from Nobel Peace Laureate Jody Williams, Professor Noel Sharkey of ICRAC and Wareham. A full summary of the media coverage can be found in Annex III.

That evening, approximately 200 people attended a 90-minute long public event hosted by the Campaign and the Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy – Germany, which featured a series of brief films and animations as well as brief monologues by 6 campaigners: Noel Sharkey, Laura Nolan, Thompson Chengeta, Ray Acheson, Jody Williams, and Raza Shah Khan. The Campaign livestreamed the event, including from Facebook page, and a full video recording is [available on Vimeo](#). The event concluded with a reception.

Nearly 100 campaigners participated in the two-day global meeting on 22-23 March at the Heinrich Boell Foundation. The goal was 1) to increase knowledge and awareness about the specific serious challenges raised by killer robots and 2) to enable campaigners to strategize and discuss how to prohibit killer robots via a new international treaty. Much of the meeting were conducted as breakout small group sessions to enable deeper engagement. The full agenda is annexed.

A post-meeting survey generated anonymous responses from 28 of the participants. Many appreciated the meeting’s friendly atmosphere of mutual respect and learning. They liked the diverse mix of newcomers and people who have been working on the issue since the Campaign’s inception. Some found it helpful to hear what others are doing as it helps inspire new ideas for national campaigning.

There were many suggestions for future global meetings to include sessions on engaging the private sector as well as issues such as race, religion, power and how these weapons will affect specific communities. Some requested more practice of skills such as how to lobby and do media interviews, including discussion of key messages and counter-arguments. There were suggestions for better representation on panels, which were gender-balanced, but included little regional diversity or few people of colour.

Several German non-governmental organizations joined the Campaign following the global meeting including [Deutsche Friedensgesellschaft - Vereinigte KriegsdienstgegnerInnen](#), one of the country’s oldest and biggest peace organizations, and the Berlin-based non-profit [Love for Life](#).

In May 2019, at Rheinmetall AG's annual shareholders meeting, Chief Executive Officer Armin Pappberger announced the company's commitment to not develop fully autonomous weapons, stating: "Rheinmetall does not develop, manufacture or distribute autonomous or semi-autonomous systems."

On 9 July 2019, the parliamentary assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) adopted a [declaration](#) urging the 57 OSCE member states "to support international negotiations to ban lethal autonomous weapons." Germany's Green MP Katja Keul led the effort to secure the language in the final text working together with other MPs from Germany, Liechtenstein, and Switzerland. In August 2019, Keul became the first member of parliament from any country to participate in the diplomatic talks on killer robots, when she attended the eighth CCW meeting on lethal autonomous weapons systems.

For more information, please see the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots [website](#) and [Flickr site](#) (photos).

# **Annex I – List of Participants**

Global Meeting of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots  
Berlin, Germany  
22-23 March 2019

## **Staff Team, Campaign to Stop Killer Robots**

Mary Wareham  
Clare Conboy-Stephenson  
Isabelle Jones  
Marta Kosmyna

## **Berlin Ground Team, ICAN Deutschland**

Anne Balzer  
Maria Lohbeck  
Martin Hinrichs  
Luca Callsen  
Johannes Mikeska

## **Association for Aid and Relief, Japan**

Yuki Sakurai

## **Amnesty International**

Rasha Abdul-Rahim  
Sarah Agnes Bodens  
Franziska Dorothea Wiedemeyer

## **Brot für die Welt**

Andreas Dieterich

## **Center for International Security and Policy (Kazakhstan), @cisp\_astana**

Alimzhan Akhmetov  
Oleg Butenko

## **Centre Delàs d'Estudis per la Pau**

Pere Brunet

## **ChangeMaker: Society for Social and Economic Development**

Syed Rahman

## **Clarity**

John Leaver

## **Colombian Campaign to Ban Landmines**

Ester Martínez

**Committee of 100 in Finland**

Kaisu Kinnunen

**Deutsche Friedensgesellschaft, @dfgwk\_bv**

Marius Pletsch

**Ethics & Technology**

Alena Popova

**Facing Finance, @FacingFinance**

Carla Bilson

Thomas Küchenmeister

Vanessa Müller

Johanna Trittenbach

Hélène Sturny

**Austria Campaign**

Marit Alex

**Future of Life Institute**

Ariel Conn

**Google**

Boaz Goldstein

**Handicap International/Humanity & Inclusion**

Eva Maria Fischer

**Hertie School of Governance**

Dorthe Manthey

Clara Nonnenkamp

**Hollywood, Health & Society**

Kate Folb

**Human Rights Watch, @hrw**

Steve Goose

Bonnie Docherty

Wenzel Michalski

Camille Marquis

**International Committee for Robot Arms Control, @icracnet**

Peter Asaro

Laura Nolan

Frank Sauer

Jürgen Altmann



Joaquín Rodríguez, University Autònoma de Barcelona  
Thompson Chengeta, University of Southampton

**IRIAD**

Barbara Gallo

**Mines Advisory Group (MAG)**

Lizzie Humphreys

**Mines Action Canada, @MinesActionCan**

Paul Hannon

Erin Hunt

**Nobel Women's Initiative**

Jody Williams

**Norwegian Peace Association**

Lene Grimstad

Sigrid Heiberg

**PAX, @PAXforpeace**

Alice Beck

Maaïke Beenes

Daan Kayser

Miriam Struyk

**Pax Christi International**

Jonathan Frerichs

**Pax Christi Vlaanderen, @paxchristiVL**

Willem Staes

**Peace Union Finland, @Rauhanliitto**

Tuuli Vuori

**Photocrhon.de**

Ralf Schlesener

**Project Ploughshares, @ploughshares\_ca**

Branka Marijan

Cesar Jaramillo

**Protection**

Ayman Sorour

**Rete Italiana per il Disarmo**

Francesco Vignarca

**Rosa-Luxembourg-Siftung**

Norbert Schepers

**SafeGround (Australia)**

Matilda Byrne

**SEHLAC, @SehlaOrg**

Maria Pia Devoto

**Soka Gakkai International, @SGI\_OUNA**

Anna Ikeda

Hayley Ramsay-Jones

**United Nations Association – UK**

Ben Donaldson

**Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, @WILPF @RCW\_**

Ray Acheson, Reaching Critical Will

Allison Pytlak, Reaching Critical Will

Sylvie Ndongmo, WILPF Cameroon

Taniel Yusef, WILPF UK

Ayo Ayoola-Amale, WILPF Ghana

Shirine Jurdi, WILPF Lebanon

Gabriella Irsten, WILPF Sweden

**WINAD**

Folade Mutota

**Albert-Ludwigs-Universität**

Paul Weber

**Freie Universität Berlin**

Christoph Benz Müller

**Harvard Law School International Human Rights Clinic**

Matthew Griechen

Daniel Moubayed

**Tampere University**

Rune Saugmann

**University of Balamand**

Habbouba Aoun

**University of Copenhagen**

Mira Bergem

Anne Sophie Sonnergaard

**University of Kiel**

Berenike Prem

**University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill**

Mark Gubrud

**Others**

Lucy Banisch

Esther Beaufils

Dalma Bíró

Annemarie Bloch

Christian Deutschmeyer

Alicia Gil de Oliveira

Sarah Jakobi

Maria Stachira

Mathana Stender

Dominikus Vogl

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# Annex II – Meeting Agenda

Global Meeting of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots  
Berlin, Germany  
22-23 March 2019

## FRIDAY, 22 MARCH

8.30am-9.30am – Registration

### 9.00am-9.30am – Welcome

1. Martin Hinrichs, Berlin Meeting Organizer, Campaign to Stop Killer Robots
2. Mary Wareham, Coordinator, Campaign to Stop Killer Robots
3. Heinrich Boell Foundation representative

### 9:30-10:30 – Panel I: Why we work to prohibit killer robots

Facilitator: Alena Popova, Ethics and Technology

1. What are ‘killer robots’? – Steve Goose, HRW
2. Ethical/moral objections – Peter Asaro, ICRAC
3. Legal concerns – Matthew Griechen, Harvard Law School International Human Rights Law Clinic
4. A human rights priority – Rasha Abdul Rahim, Amnesty International

10.30am-11.00am – Coffee/Tea Break

### 11.00am-12.30pm – Small Groups Session I: Rationale for prohibiting killer robots

Divide into four or more groups for a 45-minute workshops on each topic facilitated by the presenters. Each workshop will run twice (11:00-11:45 and 11:45-12:30). Participants should pick the workshops of their choice (no sign-up required). The participants move between workshops rather than the workshop facilitators moving.

12.30-1.30pm – Lunch Break

### 1.30pm-2.30pm – Panel II: Ways we work to prohibit killer robots

Facilitator: Thompson Chengeta, ICRAC

1. International pathways to a ban treaty – Jody Williams, Nobel Women’s Initiative
2. Building national campaigns – Erin Hunt, Mines Action Canada
3. Finding parliamentary champions – Willem Staes, Pax Christ International
4. Securing media coverage – Clare Conboy, Campaign to Stop Killer Robots
5. Mobilizing the public and measuring impact – TBD

2:30-3:00pm - Coffee/Tea Break

**3:00pm-4:30pm Small Groups Session II: How we work to prohibit killer robots**

Divide into five x 45-minute workshops on each topic. Each workshop runs twice (3:00-3:45 and 3:45-4:30pm).

**4:30pm-5:00pm – Plenary to close the day**

1. Report-backs on the workshops
2. Wrap-up and plans for next day

**SATURDAY, 23 MARCH**

8.30am-9:30am – Coffee/tea available

**9.30am-10.30am – Plenary III: How we will work to prohibit killer robots**

Facilitator: Mitzi Austero, Nonviolence International Southeast Asia

1. Collaborating with the technology sector – Laura Nolan, ICRAC
2. Women, gender and intersectionality – Ray Acheson, WILPF Reaching Critical Will
3. Financial sector engagement – Miriam Struyk, PAX
4. Science community and academic allies – Ariel Conn, Future of Life
5. Small grants and other support – Isabelle Jones, Campaign to Stop Killer Robots

10.30am-11.00am – Coffee/Tea Break

**11.00am-12.30pm – Small Groups Session III: Ways we work to prohibit killer robots**

Divide into five x 45-minute workshops to discuss on each topic. Each workshop runs twice (11:00-11:45 and 11:45-12:30).

12.30-1.30pm – Lunch Break

**1.30pm-2.30pm – Plenary IV: National and regional work to prohibit killer robots**

Facilitator: Gabriella Irsten, WILPF Sweden

1. Africa – Sylvie Ndongmo, WILPF Africa
2. Asia-Pacific – Yanitra Kumaraguru, Sri Lanka Campaign to Stop Killer Robots
3. Latin America – Maria-Pia Devoto, APP/SEHLAC
4. Europe – Daan Kayser, PAX
5. Germany – Thomas Küchenmeister, Facing Finance
6. Former Soviet Union – Alimzhan Akmetov
7. Middle East and North Africa – Ayman Sorour, Protection

2.30pm-3.00pm – Coffee/Tea Break

### **3.00pm-4.00pm – Small Groups Session IV: Planning our work to prohibit killer robots**

Divide into 5-7 groups led by presenters from the previous panel and:

1. Review 2019-2020 calendar and our plan for achieving the ban treaty;
2. Identify the tools and resources needed to achieve these goals;

Or, form your own group to discuss any topic not covered by the global campaign meeting.

### **4:00pm-5:00pm – Closing Plenary**

- Present joint calendar with major milestones
- Reflections and evaluation of the global meeting
- Closing remarks

### **Evening – Social Event**

## Annex III: Media Coverage

The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots activities in Berlin and Geneva in the second half of March 2019 have received significant coverage in the English-language media, German media, and has also been covered by different media agencies in French, Arabic, Spanish, and Russian.

In Germany, *Reuters* published articles citing the Campaign on 15 March and 21 March. *Reuters* also photographed and recorded video of the Campaign's visual stunt at the Brandenburg Gate. There was also coverage in *Deutsche Welle* and other outlets.

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**“Germany urged to champion global treaty to ban ‘killer robots,’” *Reuters*, 21 March 2019.**  
<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-robots/germany-urged-to-champion-global-treaty-to-ban-killer-robots-idUSKCN1R222W>

BERLIN (Reuters) - Nobel Peace Prize laureate Jody Williams and other activists warned on Thursday that fully autonomous weapons could be deployed in just 3-4 years and urged Germany to lead an international campaign for a ban on so-called “killer robots”.

Williams, who won the Nobel in 1997 for leading efforts to ban landmines, told reporters Germany should take bold steps to ensure that humans remained in control of lethal weapons. “You cannot lead from the rear,” she said.

Critics fear that the increasingly autonomous drones, missile defense systems and tanks made possible by new artificial intelligence could turn rogue in a cyber-attack or as a result of programming errors.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas called last week for action to ensure human control of lethal weapons, but is pushing a non-binding declaration rather than a global ban, given opposition by the United States, Russia and China.

The United Nations and European Union have called for a global ban, but discussions so far have not yielded a clear commitment to conclude a treaty.

Activists from over 100 non-governmental groups gathered in Berlin this week to pressure Maas and the German government to take more decisive action after twice endorsing a ban on fully autonomous weapons in their 2013 and 2018 coalition accords.

They rallied at Berlin's Brandenburg Gate, with a life-sized robot telling onlookers: “Not all robots will be friendly. Stop killer robots now.”

“If Germany showed leadership and got behind it, we'd soon have the rest of Europe behind it,” said Noel Sharkey, a leading roboticist and co-founder of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots.

He said it was only a matter of years before fully autonomous weapons could be deployed in battle given rapid advances in artificial intelligence and other technologies.

### **Also published in:**

***The New York Times:*** <https://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2019/03/21/world/europe/21reuters-germany-robots.html?partner=IFTTT>

***The Star:*** <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/world/2019/03/22/germany-urged-to-champion-global-treaty-to-ban-killer-robots/>

***EuroNews:*** <https://www.euronews.com/2019/03/21/germany-urged-to-champion-global-treaty-to-ban-killer-robots>

***India Times Post:*** <https://indiatimespost.com/germany-urged-to-champion-global-treaty-to-ban-killer-robots/>

**Investing.com:** <https://www.investing.com/news/world-news/germany-urged-to-champion-global-treaty-to-ban-killer-robots-1814597>

**Channel News Asia:** <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/world/germany-urged-to-champion-global-treaty-to-ban--killer-robots--11367756>

**Read Global News:** <https://www.readglobalnews.com/germany-urged-to-champion-global-treaty-to-ban-killer-robots/>

**DevDiscourse:** <https://www.devdiscourse.com/article/international/452547-germany-urged-to-champion-global-treaty-to-ban-killer-robots>

**Swiss Info:** <https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/germany-urged-to-champion-global-treaty-to-ban--killer-robots-/44841546>

**“World must keep lethal weapons under human control, Germany says,” Reuters, 15 March 2019.** <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-arms/world-must-keep-lethal-weapons-under-human-control-germany-says-idUSKCN1QW2C0>

BERLIN (Reuters) - Germany’s foreign minister on Friday called for urgent efforts to ensure that humans remained in control of lethal weapons, as a step toward banning “killer robots”.

Heiko Maas told an arms control conference in Berlin that rules were needed to limit the development and use of weapons that could kill without human involvement.

Critics fear that the increasingly autonomous drones, missile defense systems and tanks made possible by new technology and artificial intelligence could turn rogue in a cyber-attack or as a result of programming errors.

The United Nations and the European Union have called for a global ban on such weapons, but discussions so far have not yielded a clear commitment to conclude a treaty.

“Killer robots that make life-or-death decisions on the basis of anonymous data sets, and completely beyond human control, are already a shockingly real prospect today,” Maas said. “Fundamentally, it’s about whether we control the technology or it controls us.”

Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands signed a declaration at the conference vowing to work to prevent weapons proliferation.

“We want to want to codify the principle of human control over all deadly weapons systems internationally, and thereby take a big step toward a global ban on fully autonomous weapons,” Maas told the conference.

He said he hoped progress could be made in talks under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) this year. The next CCW talks on lethal autonomous weapons take place this month in Geneva.

Kathleen Lawand, head of the arms unit at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), told Reuters the weakened power of multilateral organizations made the push for regulation difficult, but action was urgently needed. “The technology is fast outpacing any norm-setting,” she said.

Human Rights Watch’s Mary Wareham, coordinator of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, urged Germany to push for negotiations on a global treaty, rather than a non-binding declaration.

“Measures that fall short of a new ban treaty will be insufficient to deal with the multiple challenges raised by killer robots,” she said in a statement.

Russia, Israel, South Korea and the United States, all of which are investing significantly in autonomous weapons, in November said they would not back negotiations for a new treaty.

China is also developing such weapons, but has called for a ban on their use.



In a new Ipsos survey, 61 percent of respondents in 26 countries opposed the use of lethal autonomous weapons.

**Republished in:**

**WorldStage (Nigeria)** - <https://www.worldstagegroup.com/world-rules-are-needed-to-limit-development-and-use-of-weapons-that-could-kill-without-human-involvement-germany/>

**Business Recorder (Pakistan)** - <https://www.brecorder.com/2019/03/16/481219/world-must-keep-lethal-weapons-under-human-control-germany-says/>

**The Star (Malaysia)** - <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/world/2019/03/16/world-must-keep-lethal-weapons-under-human-control-germany-says/>

**Devdiscourse** - <https://www.devdiscourse.com/article/international/446274-update-1-world-must-keep-lethal-weapons-under-human-control-germany-says>

**IDN-InDepthNews** - <https://www.brecorder.com/2019/03/16/481219/world-must-keep-lethal-weapons-under-human-control-germany-says/>

**“Resistance to killer robots growing,” DW, 24 March 2019.**

<https://www.dw.com/en/resistance-to-killer-robots-growing/a-48040866>

"I can build you a killer robot in just two weeks," says Noel Sharkey as he leans forward with a warning gaze. The white-haired English professor is a renowned specialist for robotics and artificial intelligence (AI). He was in Berlin to participate in an international meeting of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots that ended on Friday.

Sharkey objects to talking about "lethal autonomous weapons systems" (LAWs) as if they were something out a science-fiction novel. Fully autonomous weapons systems are in fact a well-established reality, he says, adding that there is no need to argue about the definition thereof: These are weapons that seek, select and attack targets on their own.

That is also how the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) defines them. Soldiers no longer push the firing button with such weapons; instead, the weapons themselves use built-in software to find and strike targets. Such weapons can come in the form of missiles, unmanned ground vehicles, submarines, or swarms of mini-drones.

The reality of fully automated autonomous weapons systems was on full display this February at IDEX in Abu Dhabi, the largest arms fair in the Middle East, where German arms manufacturers also enthusiastically hawked their new weapons with autonomous functions.

Violation of international law

The ICRC says that the use of such weapons is a clear breach of international law. "We all know that a machine is incapable of making moral decisions," emphasizes Sharkey, one of the leading figures in the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots. He notes that a machine cannot differentiate between combatants and civilians as stipulated by international law, referring to failed attempts at facial recognition in which innocent civilians were identified as supposed criminals.

Facial recognition depends on artificial intelligence (AI) to autonomously find a person of interest. Once the machine has identified that person, it can attack on its own. A growing number of critics are horrified by such a scenario.

Germany's position 'too soft'

Meanwhile, some 100 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have joined the global Campaign to Stop Killer Robots. At their Berlin meeting, those groups called on Germany to demand that autonomous weapons systems that violate international law be banned. The current German government affirmed such

intentions in its coalition negotiations in 2018. Nevertheless, it has meekly pushed only for non-binding political declarations at the UN in Geneva.

"That isn't enough to establish a ban," says Thomas Küchenmeister of the NGO Facing Finance. He says the German government should join the 28 countries currently pushing for a ban on lethal autonomous weapons systems.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the European Parliament are also in favor of a ban. Recently, the German Informatics Society (GI), an organization of computer researchers, as well as the influential Federal Association of German Industry (BDI), also called for a legally binding ban on LAWs.

### **Germany providing 'cover' for countries opposed to a ban**

Although countries such as the USA and China are leading the world in AI use, much of the research that such systems depend on comes from Europe. That lends great weight to European voices in the ongoing debate. Noel Sharkey is convinced: "If Germany takes the lead, others will follow." Sharkey also warns that non-binding political declarations, like those the German government is currently championing, provide "perfect cover" for countries opposed to a ban. Such countries include Russia, Israel and the USA.

The German government has argued that it is essentially in favor of a ban, but that it has pushed the notably weaker political declaration for tactical reasons. The logic behind that approach is that it allows Germany to maintain a dialogue with countries such as the USA, rather than alienating them altogether. Nobel Peace Laureate Jody Williams is wholly unconvinced by that argument. Speaking in Berlin, she called on German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas to reconsider his position. Williams argued that anyone waiting for the USA to come out in favor of a ban will be waiting forever.

International talks on how to regulate LAWs will be held in Geneva, Switzerland, from March 25 to March 29.

**“Killer robots must be regulated, says Germany foreign minister,” DW, 15 March 2019.**

<https://www.dw.com/en/killer-robots-must-be-regulated-says-german-foreign-minister/a-47941471>

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas on Friday called for international cooperation on regulating modern autonomous weapons systems.

Speaking at the "2019. Capturing Technology. Rethinking Arms Control" weapons conference in Berlin, Maas warned of the uncontrollable risks of autonomous weapons systems, high-tech rockets, cyberattacks and biological weapons.

"Killer robots that make life-or-death decisions on the basis of anonymous data sets, and completely beyond human control, are already a shockingly real prospect today," Maas said. "Fundamentally, it's about whether we control the technology or it controls us."

The United Nations and the European Union have both called for a global ban on autonomous weapons, but so far few internationally-accepted rules exist for such systems.

"The multilateral political system appears paralyzed in the face of potential threats," Maas told around 450 gathered experts, politicians and diplomats. He called for progress at talks under the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) this year. The CCW will hold talks on autonomous weapons in Geneva later this month.

"We want to want to codify the principle of human control over all deadly weapons systems internationally, and thereby take a big step toward a global ban on fully autonomous weapons," Maas said.

### **Global treaty**

The German government is thus far torn on whether to impose new restrictions on exports of autonomous systems, with its tough stance on exports already being criticized by fellow EU member states.

Mary Wareham, coordinator of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, urged Germany to pursue a global treaty, rather than a non-binding declaration.

"Measures that fall short of a new ban treaty will be insufficient to deal with the multiple challenges raised by killer robots," she said in a statement.

Russia, Israel, South Korea, China and the United States are all developing autonomous weapons.

**“Back ‘killer robot’ ban, activists tell German government,” E&T, 22 March 2019.**

<https://eandt.theiet.org/content/articles/2019/03/back-killer-robot-ban-activists-tell-german-government/>

Activists from more than 100 campaign groups have called on German politicians to champion an international ban on the development and use of lethal autonomous weapons.

The development of lethal autonomous weapons – such as ground-based systems capable of detecting enemy troops and automatically opening fire on them – have been strongly criticised by academics, campaigners and some industrial leaders. In July 2018, 160 tech companies and 2400 individuals (including Tesla CEO Elon Musk, Skype founder Jaan Tallinn and Google DeepMind co-founder Demis Hassabis) signed an open letter calling for an international ban on lethal autonomous weapons.

“AI weapons that autonomously decide to kill people are as disgusting and destabilising as bioweapons, and should be dealt with the same way,” the letter stated. Concerns about the weapons include the possibility of cyber attacks and programming errors causing the weapons to kill uncontrollably, as well as the ethical implications of allowing machines to make lethal decisions.

Other weapons with the potential to cause unnecessary and excessive suffering have been banned by international treaties. Land mines, biological weapons, nerve agents, space-based weapons of mass destruction and blinding lasers are among the weapons forbidden by these treaties.

A similar ban on lethal autonomous weapons has been discussed at international meetings, including a meeting of UN leaders, although no ban has been agreed upon. In an official statement, the Russian government rejected a potential ban on lethal autonomous weapons, arguing that this would be inappropriate and damaging to innovation.

At least one Russian company, Kalashnikov, is developing autonomous weapons systems, although these systems are also under development in the US, UK, China and many other countries. The US and China have also expressed disapproval towards proposals for an international ban, while the EU has expressed support for a ban.

In the latest push to stem the development of these systems, more than 100 NGOs assembled in the centre of the German capital with a large robot model, to pile pressure on the government to endorse an international ban on these weapons systems. The campaigners included Jody Williams, who was awarded the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize for leading the effort to ban landmines.

“If Germany showed leadership and got behind [the ban], we’d soon have the rest of Europe behind it,” Noel Sharkey, co-founder of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, told Reuters. According to the campaign, fully autonomous weapons systems could be deployed in just three to four years.

The German government has supported a ban on these systems in its 2013 and 2018 coalition agreements. Last week, Minister of Foreign Affairs Heiko Maas called for international action to ensure that lethal weapons remain under human control, although he is championing a non-binding declaration, rather than an outright international ban.

**HRW Article: (original link in [English](#) and [German](#))**

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