



CCW REPORT

*Civil society perspectives on the CCW meeting of experts
on autonomous weapon systems
13–17 April 2015*



Reaching Critical Will

**13 April 2015
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EDITORIAL: A CHANCE TO PUT HUMANITY FIRST

Ray Acheson | Reaching Critical Will of WILPF

Today the CCW begins its second dedicated meeting on autonomous weapon systems. As it did last year, this gathering will provide an opportunity for states to consider crucial issues related to the technical, legal, moral, and ethical dimensions of weapons that can kill without human intervention. Delegations must make the most of this chance to explore the parameters of meaningful human control over every individual attack. They must evaluate the lawfulness and morality of future autonomous weapons. And they will need to take steps to address this issue concretely, preferably through agreeing to negotiate a treaty to prohibit autonomous weapons.

In two weeks, WILPF will celebrate its 100th anniversary. For 100 years, we have worked to prevent the development of violent technologies and called instead for the development of norms, principles, practices, and institutions of peace and justice.

As a member organisation of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, WILPF is gravely concerned at the possibility of weapons that may operate without meaningful human control. As the oldest women's peace organisation in the world, WILPF promotes non-military and nonviolent solutions to resolve disputes. But there is something especially cynically abhorrent in the idea of human beings assigning the killing of other human beings to a technological creation. The taking of life requires accountability, human accountability, for our actions, determined by morality and law. Without that we shirk our responsibilities and betray our common humanity.

Thus, at this meeting on autonomous weapons, we encourage states to:

- Affirm that meaningful human control must be exercised over all weapons and every individual attack or use of force;
- Explain how such control is exercised over existing weapon systems and how human control is defined in relevant national policies;
- Support the development of an international prohibition of weapon systems operating without meaningful human control; and
- Call for work on this subject to continue at the multilateral level.

Reaching Critical Will, the disarmament programme of WILPF, will provide full coverage of the CCW proceedings through this daily report. It will provide analysis and advocacy, highlights from the expert discussions, and reports on side events. You can subscribe to receive this report by email by going to www.reachingcriticalwill.org. On that website, you can also find statements, documents, archived CCW Reports, and more information.

You can also follow the discussions on Twitter at #CCWUN, #KillerRobots, @RCW_, and @BanKillerRobots, among others. For information about the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, please see www.stopkillerrobots.org.

CCW Report is produced by the Reaching Critical Will programme of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), a member of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots.



**CAMPAIGN TO STOP
KILLER ROBOTS**

MAKING PROGRESS AT THE SECOND MEETING ON AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS*Mary Wareham | Campaign to Stop Killer Robots*

Many of the 120 high contracting parties to the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) are participating in this week's informal meeting of experts on the emerging technology of "autonomous weapons systems" or "killer robots" in addition to key United Nations agencies such as UNIDIR, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and our Campaign to Stop Killer Robots delegation of more than 40 campaigners from a dozen countries.

We hope to hear substantive input from all delegations participating in this meeting. As our compilation of country positions shows, more than 50 states have expressed their views on autonomous weapons since 2013.

We are grateful to Ambassador Michael Biontino, chair of the 2015 CCW experts meeting, and his team for the work they have undertaken to prepare for this meeting, particularly for their effort in striving for gender diversity for the expert panels that will help lead-off deliberations. At least eight women experts are confirmed to speak at this 2015 meeting compared to last year's record of none.

Banning autonomous weapons

For our campaign the CCW meetings on killer robots mark the beginning of a process that could conclude in a treaty banning these weapons, either through a sixth CCW protocol or some other means. Our call for a pre-emptive ban on the development, production, and use of autonomous weapons has been endorsed by five states to date and we encourage all governments to support this objective.

We sometimes hear the call to "regulate not ban" autonomous weapons yet note that no government has made the case to use such weapons in future warfare. There is strong support for retaining a human in or on the decision-making loop, which is why the programme of work lists "prohibitions" as one of the possible outcomes for these deliberations, alongside lesser restrictions and voluntary measures.

From our perspective, the 2015 experts meeting must not simply reiterate discussions from the first experts meeting in May 2014. All delegations must work to ensure a substantive outcome. This week, the campaign encourages all participating states to:

- Articulate national policy on fully autonomous weapons, including by explaining how such control is exercised over existing weapon systems and how human control is defined in relevant national policies;
- Affirm that meaningful human control must be exercised over autonomous weapons and express their view on the call for the development of a new international instrument to pre-emptively ban fully autonomous weapons;

- Express support for a continuation of the CCW deliberations on autonomous weapons systems and for a strengthened and expanded mandate that dedicates more time to the topic in 2016 and creates a more formal group "with a view to future negotiations."

We also invite you will listen to and read our campaign's case for a ban at this meeting. That includes the new "Mind the Gap" report by Human Rights Watch detailing the many significant hurdles to assigning personal accountability for the actions of fully autonomous weapons under both criminal and civil law. We encourage all delegates to also read the "Killing by Machine" briefing note by Article 36, which elaborates on key issues for understanding and applying the principle of meaningful human control.

The campaign has grown over the past year and we're pleased that Ms. AJung Moon from International Committee to for Robot Arms Control (ICRAC) and Ryan Garipy from Clearpath Robotics will be addressing our side event tomorrow on why autonomous weapons are ethically unacceptable. Our delegation includes experienced humanitarian disarmament campaigners from Latin America and the Middle East, who are helping us to expand and get the message out in the Global South.

We invite all delegates to attend the side events hosted this week by our Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, on Monday, Tuesday, and Friday. We're encourage you all to check out our member WILPF's Reaching Critical Will webpage on this meeting, where you'll be able to find statements and the CCW Report. •

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The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Reaching Critical Will, or the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots.



SETTING POLITICAL DIRECTION TO ENSURE MEANINGFUL HUMAN CONTROL

Richard Moyes | Article 36

The April 2015 informal expert meeting of the CCW on autonomous weapons is an opportunity for states to set a clear direction regarding how the international community will respond to the issues raised by increased autonomy in weapons systems.

The CCW must not allow potentially tangled debates about the technology or legality of hypothetical future weapons systems to distract from the establishment of common ground on key principles. It should be possible to identify such key principles that can set discussion in a productive direction.

No delegation has argued that autonomous weapons should be allowed to operate without human control, or with “meaningless” human control. So this meeting should be used to build agreement that meaningful human control is necessary in the use of weapons. Some states will argue that this needs to be defined before it can be accepted. They should therefore push for this theme to be the subject of focused work in future CCW discussions.

International humanitarian law is one important legal framework through which autonomous weapons can be approached. However, if discussion is too focused on undefined hypothetical systems then legal arguments can become separated from reality.

In particular, we should be wary of legal discussions that forget that the law is a human framework, addressed to humans. Processes of calculation and computation in a machine are not equivalent to deliberative human reasoning within a social framework. Machines do not make “legal judgements” and “apply legal rules”. The basic IHL rules on the conduct of hostilities are to be applied, by humans, on an attack-by-attack basis, taking into account the specific circumstances of each attack.

Whilst an attack can comprise different acts of violence against the adversary, it must be bound in time and space. Increasing autonomy in weapons systems risks expanding the notion of an attack in ways that undermine the exercise of meaningful human control. In the context of weapons that can detect and engage target objects, less control can be exercised by the weapon user over the effects of the weapon if:

- It operates for a longer time;
- It operates over a wider area;
- It uses broader proxy indicators; and
- It is used in an environment where there are a greater number of persons and objects that match those parameters (a “cluttered” environment).

An attack must therefore be sufficiently contained (geographically and in time) to allow a commander to acquire and assess the contextual information necessary to make informed judgments about the military utility, necessity, moral acceptability, and legality of the proposed use of force. The CCW needs urgently to apply itself to these questions if it is to establish a process of work that gets to the heart of the matter.

Some states perhaps fear that recognising a requirement for meaningful human control over individual attacks would set them on a slippery slope towards the prohibition of certain weapons systems, or certain uses of weapons. Such a fear probably arises from recognition that arguing in favour of weapons that operate without meaningful human control is morally and legally untenable. That in turn is simply an admission that fully autonomous weapons, those that do not allow meaningful human control, should be prohibited. The CCW should establish the key principles from which this issue should be approached and then draw the boundaries of the necessary prohibitions. The international community will at some point legislate on this issue, because the moral questions it poses are too fundamental to ignore.

The CCW’s fifth Review Conference scheduled for November 2016 is an important marker on the landscape. Committed states should consider what might be achieved at that meeting, not only in agreeing a mandate to negotiate new rules on this issue, but also in terms of collectively stating, at that point, a recognition of the key principles from which autonomous weapons can effectively be addressed. •

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

When	What	Where	Who
10:00-13:00	General Debate	TBC	
13:15-14:45	Time for Swift Action	Conference Room XXIV	Campaign to Stop Killer Robots
15:00-18:00	Technical Issues	TBC	

NEW PUBLICATION BY ARTICLE 36

ARTICLE 36 | APRIL 2015

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KILLING BY MACHINE

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KEY ISSUES FOR UNDERSTANDING MEANINGFUL HUMAN CONTROL

A 10x10 grid of 'x' marks, totaling 100 points, used for scoring.

A 10x10 grid of 'x' marks, where every cell contains an 'x', representing a 100% probability distribution.