# Aotearoa New Zealand CAMPAIGN TO STOP KILLER ROBOTS

## Appendix: 'Act Now on Killer Robots' Petition Submission Supporting Open Letters and Submissions

**AI Researchers Call for Action on Autonomous Weapons**
**Open letter supporting the 'Act Now on Killer Robots' petition**

We are members of New Zealand's academic community of AI researchers. We are writing to support the 'Act Now on Killer Robots' petition to parliament which calls on New Zealand to take a firm stand against weaponising AI and take action at the national and international levels.

We applaud the work New Zealand has done so far to develop a national policy on autonomous weapon systems, and we look forward to seeing a national policy that clearly defines a category of autonomous weapons (AWs) that are banned by New Zealand. We also urge New Zealand to engage actively in the development of an international framework to effectively prohibit and regulate AWs.

New Zealand is a developer of AI technologies, through work happening in the New Zealand tech industry, and also through our academic research, which we normally place in the public domain as is customary in academia. AI technologies often have very general applications: for instance, machine learning, computer vision, and robot technologies can all be deployed in many different domains. Our public domain AI research can be used for many socially useful purposes - but it could also readily be incorporated into AWs, developed anywhere in the world - an outcome that would be abhorrent to us personally, and we believe to the wider New Zealand public too. The only thing that can effectively prevent this from happening is effective international, as well as national, regulation to ban AWs. AI technologies are so general that the only way to control them is by regulating their use.

Autonomous weapon systems threaten to become the third revolution in warfare. If developed, they will permit armed conflict to be fought at a scale greater than ever, and at timescales faster than humans can comprehend. The deadly consequence of this is that machines - not people - will determine who lives and dies. Without regulation, another global arms race will be precipitated, compounding and intensifying existing arms races, at a time when the world must focus on reducing international tensions, and promoting international cooperation, to address critical global emergencies, in climate change and pandemic response. Furthermore, autonomous weapon systems would also end up in the hands of non-state actors such as terrorist organisations and even individuals. As New Zealand-based AI researchers, we urge the New Zealand government to do its utmost to ban the development or use of AWs, to prevent an escalation of deadly technologies.

An autonomous weapon system is one which is not under 'meaningful human control'. There is a commonly articulated distinction between a fully autonomous weapon system, that 'once activated, can select and engage targets without further intervention by a human operator' (US Department of Defense Directive 3000.09), and a weapon system with a human controller 'on the loop', whose operator can monitor and halt an otherwise autonomous weapon's target engagement.[1] There have been suggestions that meaningful

human control could be ensured through a human 'on the loop' applied through programming constraints governing target selection and engagement, and an ability to disengage the system if required.

Many of us have experience of how humans can control automated systems; these researchers wish to voice scepticism about the argument that a human 'on the loop' is sufficient to ensure meaningful human control. Often, the speed of engagement may well prevent meaningful human control from being achieved by providing a "disengage" button to a human. But it is not just a matter of speed. Human factors research in psychology clearly shows that humans struggle to adequately monitor systems that operate autonomously for any length of time.[2] This is what makes it hard for people to operate a car that 'mostly drives itself', but occasionally requires intervention by a human driver to avoid a crash. AI research also shows that humans can learn to trust an AI system over time, to the extent that they do not question the recommendations or decisions being made and simply assume that the computer is correct.

We are also concerned about the possibility for errors in the operation of AWs - especially errors that arise through the compilation of unrepresentative training sets, leading to various forms of bias. These problems have been thoroughly documented by AI researchers, and no current AI technologies are immune to them. But even if AI systems improve to a point when they perform better than humans on the relevant measures - still a good way off, in our estimation - we still do not want to turn over decisions about life and death to machines, and we still don't want to see another arms race which is still at present entirely avoidable.

Autonomous weapon systems that remove meaningful human control from determining the legitimacy of targets and deploying lethal force sit on the wrong side of a clear moral line, and will make the world less secure. New Zealand has a long and proud history of moral leadership in this area, as seen for instance in its strong position against nuclear weapons, and its role in the Convention on Cluster Munitions. We hope that the current New Zealand government can continue to build on this proud legacy.

*Signed (as at 17 November 2021):*

Assocociate Professor Alistair Knott, Associate Professor of Conputer Science, University of Otago

Dr Andrew Chen, Research Fellow, Koi Tū: The Centre for Informed Futures, The University of Auckland

Professor Michael Winikoff   , Professor and Head of School, Te Herenga Waka-Victoria University of Wellington

Dr Fabio Morreale, Lecturer, University of Auckland

Professor Stephen Cranefield, University of Otago

Dr Rodelyn Jaksons, Data Scientist, Plant and Food Research

Dr Thomas Gregory, Senior Lecturer in Politics and International Relations, University of Auckland

Mr Pradeesh, Student, University of Otago

Dr Veronica Liesaputra,     Lecturer, The University of Otago

Mr Jithin,   PhD Scholar,   University of Otago

Professor Brendan McCane, Professor and HoD, University of Otago

Dr Brendon Woodford, Senior Lecturer, University of Otago

Mr Ali Abdul Hussain, PhD Student, Massey University

Dr Geeta Duppati, Senior Lecturer in Finance, Waikato Management School, University of Waikato

Dr Harith Al-Sahaf, Lecturer, Victoria University of Wllington

Dr James Atlas, Senior Lecturer, University of Canterbury

Dr Nick Lim Jin Sean, Post Doctoral Researcher, University of Waikato

Nuwan Gunasekara, PhD Student, University of Waikato

Dr Feng Hou, Postdoc, Massey University

Dr Nirmal Nair, Associate Professor, University of Auckland

Mr Wayne Rumbles, Associate Professor, Te Piringa - Faculty of Law, University of Waikato

Dr Haibo Zhang, Senior Lecturer, University of Otago

Mr Jinge Li, Data Scientist, Interpine

Dr Karaitiana Taiuru

Professor Anthony Robins, Professor of Computer Science, University of Otago

Dr Steven Mills, Associate Professor, University of Otago

Associate Professor Michael Cree, University of Waikato

Miss Katrina Bennett, R&D Engineer, Soul Machines

Gray Manicom, PhD student, The University of Auckland

Mr Kiarie Ndegwa, Data Scientist, Dragonfly Datascience

Dr Peter Whigham, Associate Professor, University of Otago

Dr Neset Tan, PhD Student, The University of Auckland

Dr Andrew Lensen, Lecturer in Artificial Intelligence, Te Herenga Waka-Victoria University of Wellington

Mr Jordan MacLachlan, Doctoral Candidate, Victoria University of Wellington

Dr Ruwang Jiao, Postdoc, Victoria Unversity of Wellington

Mr Kaan Demir, PhD Student, Victoria University of Wellington

Dr Mark Sagar, CEO, Soul Machines

Dr Khurram Jawed, Director of Research, Soul Machines

Mr Zackary Molloy, Student, University of Otago

Professor James Maclaurin, Co-Director, Centre for AI and Public Policy (CAIPP), University of Otago

Caitlin Owen, University of Otago

Mr David Knox, Data Scientist, Lynker Analytics

Abira Sengupta, PhD, Otago University

Dr David Eyers, Associate Professor, University of Otago

Dr Michael Mayo, University of Waikato

Daniel Guppy, PhD Candidate, Otago University

Professor Eibe Frank, Professor University of Waikato

Mr Hayden Andersen, PhD Student, Victoria University of Wellington

Mr Jian Liu, Data scientist, Plant and food research

Mr Davis Cooper, PhD Student, Victoria University of Wellington

Professor Geoff Wyvill, Emeritus Professor, University of Otago

Associate Professor Peter M Andreae, Deputy Head of the School of Engineering and Computer Science, Victoria University of Wellington

Professor Neil Dodgson, Dean of Graduate Research, Victoria University of Wellington

Alvaro Menendez, PhD candidate, University of Auckland

Dr Tony C Smith, Senior Lecturer, University of Waikato

Dana Contreras, PhD student, University of auckland

Mr Baligh Al-Helali, Postdoc, Victoria University of Wellington

Mr Damien O'Neill, Doctoral Candidate, Victoria University of Technology

Professor Bing Xue, Victoria university of Wellington

Mrs Amritha Menon Anavankot, Doctoral Candidate, University of Otago

Mr Daniel Thomas Braithwaite, PhD Candidate, Victoria University of Wellington

Ms Briony Blackmore, PhD Student, University of Otago

Mr Harisu Abdullahi Shehu, PhD Researcher, Victoria University of Wellington

Professor Lisa Ellis, Steering Committee Member, Centre for AI and Public Policy, University of Otago

Dr Stefanie Zollmann, Senior Lecturer, University of Otago

Dr Andrew Vonasch, Senior Lecturer, Psychology, University of Canterbury

Dr Fei Dai PhD, Otago University

Professor Hans W Guesgen, Chair in Computer Science, Massey University

Dr Janet Toland, Associate Professor, Victoria University of Wellington

Dr Tobias Langlotz, Associate Professor, University of Otago

Dr Nathan Pages, R&D software engineer, SoulMachines

Dr Oliver Sinnen, Associate Professor, University of Auckland

Dr Zhiyi Huang, Associate Professor, University of Otago

Professor Holger Regenbrecht, Head of Department, University of Otago, Information Science

Pascal Omondiagbe, Research Software Engineer, Landcare Research/ Otago University

Dr Kuda Dube, Lecturer, Massey University

Mr Amr, PhD candidate, Victoria University of Wellington

Professor Rhema Vaithianathan, Professor AUT

Dr Daniel Wilson, Professional Teaching Fellow, Waipapa Taumata Rau / University of Auckland

Dr Damien William Mather, Senior Lecturer, University of Otago

Professor Tim Dare, Professor of Philosophy, University of Auckland

Dr John Williams, Senior Lecturer, University of Otago

Dr Danielle Lottridge, Senior Lecturer, School of Computer Science, University of Auckland

Dr Suzanne Woodward, Researcher, Public Policy Institute

Dr Thomas Lacombe, Professional Teaching Fellow, University of Auckland

Hemi Edwards, Research Assistant, University of Auckland

Dr Juergen Gnoth, Professor, Otago University

Dr Lech Szymanski, Lecturer, University of Otago

Dr Ethan Plaut, Lecturer, Waipapa Taumata Rau | University of Auckland

Dr Jonathan Conder, R&D Software Engineer, Soul Machines

Professor Nikola Kasabov, Professor, AUT

Sara Cole Stratton, Founder, Māori Lab

Dr Val O'Reilly, Executive Director, The Career Development Company

Dr Linley Jesson, Group Leader Data Science, Plant and Food Research

Ms Hanna Van der Giessen, Clinical Research Scientist, HeartLab Limited

Dr Greg Bodeker, Director, Bodeker Scientific

Dr Martin Takac, Senior R&D, Soul Machines Ltd.

Associate Professor Grant Dick, University of Otago

Professor Albert Bifet, University of Waikato

_____

[1] 'Defense Primer: US Policy on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems', US Congressional Research Service, Dec. 2020

[2] See e.g. Zerilli et al., *Algorithmic Decision-Making and the Control Problem, Minds and Machines* (2019) 29:555–578

# Youth Call for Action on Autonomous Weapons
## Supporting the 'Act Now on Killer Robots' petition

Fully autonomous weapon systems are mechanised weapons of war capable of choosing and attacking targets without any meaningful human intervention. These killer robots are able to make their own decisions over the life and death of human beings – based on pre-programmed stereotypes, labels, and strings of digital code. While they may seem like something out of science fiction, their rapid development around the world makes them one of the most pressing threats to humanity. These weapons pose major ethical, legal, and moral challenges which cannot be ignored.

We, the rangatahi, will be the ones most directly affected by the development and spread of these systems. Competitive development of inhuman new weapons like killer robots will make the world increasingly unstable, and make armed conflict more frequent, indiscriminate and horrific.

Growing up as part of a generation that has been so overtly aware of the major threats we face in our future – from climate change to nuclear war – it is easy to be overwhelmed by the sheer number of seemingly insurmountable challenges before us.

However, now is the time for us to take action.

We were not there at the advent of nuclear weapons. Nor were we there when the first landmine or cluster-bomb was used. We did not get a chance to have a say before those indiscriminate methods of killing brought indescribable suffering to so many.

We get this chance with autonomous weapon systems. Youth get a chance to have our say on the next evolution of warfare, and make our abhorrence heard. We have the chance to push for our government – and governments around the world – to take action to ensure that the devastating impacts of these weapons are never unleashed on humanity.

We have such an amazing opportunity to change the world for the better, proactively – before destruction and devastation force us to. We must make the most of that opportunity, and that's why we are calling on New Zealand to take action now.

*Signed (as at 17 November 2021)*

Dylan Maynard, Student, Wellington

Dhanya Herath, Software Developer, Auckland

Molly, Student, Wellington

Oliver Ewert, Lower Hutt

Jack Remiel Cottrell, Writer, Omori

Gareth Christopher Stanley Jones, Software Developer, Wellington

Sulaiman, Student, Auckland

Joy Beumelburg, Auckland

Craig Spence, Software Engineer, Wellington

Jessica McLean, HR, Wellington

Serena Chen, Software Designer

V Scott, Palmerston North

Max Martin, New Zealand

Georgia Carson, Post-doc, Wellington

Sarah Paterson-Hamlin, Auckland

Zelle Marcovicci, Developer, Wellington City

Bonnie Moore, Tutor, Wellington

Carl Bennett, Software Engineer, Wellington

Daniel Jackson, Lawyer, Nelson

Chris Lynch, New Zealand

Ethan Rose, Auckland

Jonathan Rickard, Software Developer, Auckland

Frances Mountier, Researcher and Coordinator, Ōtautahi

Fei Dai, student, Dunedin

Matt Hegarty, CSR, Wellington

Teresa Lee, Student, Auckland

Oscar Morgan, Student

Katharine Woolrych, New Zealand

Rhea Dias

Benjamin Ward, Student, Wellington

Nick Foulkes, New Zealand

Thomas Walsh, Policy Analyst, Wellington

Cass, New Zealand

Katie Knowles, Student, Wellington

Becks Ireland, Masters Student, Auckland

Blake Scanlen, Student,Auckland

Hayden McAlister, Student, Dunedin

Catherine Murupaenga-Ikenn, Human Rights Defender, Whangarei

Oscar Andrew, Student

Andrew Chen, Research Fellow, Auckland

**Australia Campaign to
Stop Killer Robots**

Matilda Byrne
National Coordinator
Australia Campaign to Stop Killer Robots
SafeGround

12th November 2021

RE Letter in support of the 'Act Now on Killer Robots' Petition submitted to New Zealand
Parliament

Dear Committee members,

I write on behalf of the Australia Campaign to Stop Killer Robots (the Campaign) with regard to
the petition delivered to the New Zealand Parliament *'Act Now on Killer Robots'*. Increasing
autonomy in weapons poses significant moral, ethical, legal and security concerns. The
international community is at a critical juncture where regulation is urgently required, to be
adopted internationally as well as on domestic levels.

New Zealand has already shown leadership in acknowledging the threat these weapons pose
and the need to establish prohibitions and limits. The Campaign in Australia, recognising the
work that has already been done on this matter, calls for the New Zealand House of
Representatives to enact legislation to prohibit the development, production and use of lethal
autonomous weapon systems and support international negotiations of a legally binding
instrument to ensure meaningful human control is maintained and human dignity upheld. This
political will facilitates the international action that this issue demands. New Zealand has always
been a leader in the area of disarmament, and this issue is an important moment for humanity
as technology increases in all facets of life. A clear message to reject fully autonomous
weapons, which would be destabilising and accelerate/intensify conflict is needed through our
region and internationally.

We are encouraged that the New Zealand government is already taking a strong stance, and
urge that the Parliament can reflect these principles in national legislation and lead in
international discussions.

We thank you for considering and acting upon this urgent issue.

Yours faithfully,

Matilda Byrne
National Coordinator - Australia Campaign to Stop Killer Robots
SafeGround Inc

10th November 2021

Dear committee members,

**RE: Act now on Killer Robots**

The Stop Killer Robots campaign represents an international coalition of 185 Non Governmental Organisations across 67 countries. We provide this letter in support of the 'Act now on killer robots' petition submitted to committee members of the House of Representatives of New Zealand.

Our campaign works for a world in which technology is developed and used to promote peace, justice, human rights, and equality. We recognize how our choices regarding technology change the relationships between us and believe that developments in artificial intelligence should be used to build better societies and overcome inequalities and systems of oppression.

The rapid evolution of autonomous technology threatens to strip humans of their role in the use of force, and raises fundamental ethical, moral, accountability and security concerns. Weapons systems that select and engage targets without meaningful human control would undermine basic principles of international humanitarian law and human rights law including the rights to life, remedy, and dignity.

It is urgent that states work together to solve this problem before the use of autonomous weapon systems proliferates, and before the threat that these weapons pose to the safety and security of the world becomes irreversible.

This year, dozens of states from all continents, both within and outside discussions at the Convention on Conventional Weapons at the United Nations, have converged around a shared proposal for a legally binding framework that includes both prohibitions on certain types of autonomous weapon systems -including those that would target humans- and regulations to ensure meaningful human control over all weapon systems incorporating autonomy. There is clear momentum towards achieving this framework, and political leaders, the UN Secretary General, the International Committee of the Red Cross, scientists and civil society from around the world are calling for this to happen.

We call upon New Zealand to take leadership in the international movement towards safeguarding peace, security and respect for international law through

enacting legislation to prohibit the development, production and use of lethal autonomous weapon systems and supporting negotiations for a new international treaty to retain meaningful human control over the use of force by prohibiting such weapons.

Urgent action is an ethical imperative and a legal necessity, and is achievable due to our shared desire for a more peaceful world and more secure future for us and the generations to come.

Thank you

Yours Faithfully

Isabelle Jones, Campaign Outreach Manager, isabelle@stopkillerrobots.org

Ousman Noor, Government Relations Manager, ousman@stopkillerrobots.org

Campaign to Stop Killer Robots

**A R M S   D I V I S I O N**
**Steve Goose,** *Executive Director*
**Mary Wareham,** *Advocacy Director*
**Mark Hiznay,** *Associate Director*
**Bonnie Docherty,** *Senior Researcher*
**Susan Aboeid,** *Associate*

**H u m a n   R i g h t s   W a t c h**

**Kenneth Roth,** *Executive Director*
**Tirana Hassan,** *DED/Chief Programs Officer*
**Wisla Heneghan,** *DED/ Chief Operating Officer*

**Michele Alexander,** *Chief Development Officer*
**Lauren Camilli,** *General Counsel*
**Mei Fong,** *Chief Communications Officer*
**Colin Mincy,** *Chief People Officer*
**James Ross,** *Legal and Policy Director*
**Bruno Stagno Ugarte,** *Chief Advocacy Officer*

**A-05**

8 November 2021

RE: Support for the New Zealand 'Act Now on Killer Robots' petition

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing on behalf of Human Rights Watch in support for the petition to the New Zealand Parliament from the Aotearoa New Zealand wing of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, which was presented to parliament on 30 September.

Human Rights Watch is a co-founder of the International Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, which now encompasses more than 185 non-governmental organizations in 65 countries. We endorse the petition's two-pronged call for the New Zealand government to move with urgency to 1) enact national legislation to prohibit autonomous weapon systems in New Zealand; and 2) support negotiations on a new international treaty to retain meaningful human control over the use of force by prohibiting such weapons.

Certain countries are investing heavily in the military applications of artificial intelligence and developing air, land, and sea-based autonomous weapons systems without constraint. It's increasingly apparent that international law needs to be expanded to ensure human control and accountability in the use of force. The fundamental moral, legal, and security concerns raised by autonomous weapons systems warrant a strong and urgent response in the form of a new international treaty. It's both feasible and essential to draw the line now on these problematic emerging technologies.

Dozens of states participating in Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) talks on lethal autonomous weapons systems have expressed their desire for a new international treaty containing prohibitions and restrictions on such weapons. Since 2018, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has urged states to prohibit weapons systems that could, by themselves, target and attack human beings, calling them "morally repugnant and politically unacceptable." In May, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) called for countries to negotiate an international treaty to prohibit autonomous weapons systems that are unpredictable or target people and establish regulations to ensure human control over other systems.

There is growing support for banning autonomous systems that are legally or morally unacceptable. There is strong interest in prohibiting weapons systems that by their nature select and engage targets without meaningful human control, including complex systems that use machine-learning algorithms to produce unpredictable or inexplicable effects. As awareness increases, there's

growing support for a prohibition on antipersonnel weapons systems that rely on profiles derived from biometric and other data collected by sensors to identify, select, and attack individuals or categories of people.

Most states propose complementing these prohibitions with regulations to ensure that all other autonomous weapons systems are only used with meaningful human control. "Meaningful human control" is widely understood to require that technology is understandable and predictable and that its operations are constrained in space and time.

Human Rights Watch concurs with New Zealand's Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control, Hon. Phil Twyford, who has expressed concern that current diplomatic talks "are not delivering." We welcome his suggestion that those concerned by the prospect of autonomous weapons systems come together and "design something truly fit-for-purpose."

New Zealand should be explicit in elaborating its desire for a new international treaty for autonomous weapons, be unequivocal in seeking comprehensive prohibitions and restrictions, be open to exploring every avenue to achieve this goal, such as the Review Conference of the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) in December 2021. New Zealand should elaborate its views on this common ground and articulate its policy in depth to prepare for the inevitable treaty negotiations.

Finally, New Zealand should adopt national legislation to prohibit and restrict autonomous weapons systems. Strong legislation would help bolster the emerging norm against removing meaningful human control from the use of force. National law could help raise awareness and provide momentum to the international consideration of this issue.

For more information, I can be reached at the contact information below. In New Zealand, please do not hesitate to contact Mary Wareham, Advocacy Director of the Arms Division at Human Rights Watch at wareham@hrw.org.

Sincerely,

Steve Goose
Executive Director, Arms Division

Human Rights Watch
1275 K St. NW, Ste 1100
Washington, DC 20005 USA
Tel: +1-202-612-4355 | Fax +1-202-612-4333 | Email: gooses@hrw.org
https://www.hrw.org/topic/arms

# MINES ACTION CANADA

**PO Box 4668 Postal Station E Ottawa  ON   K1S 5H8    CANADA**
**tél: +1.613.241.3777    fax: +1.613.244.3410    info@minesactioncanada.org   www.minesactioncanada.org**

November 10, 2021

Support for the 'Act now on killer robots' petition

Dear Committee members,

Mines Action Canada would like to express our support for the 'Act now on Killer robots' petition. As a co-founder of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, Mines Action Canada endorses the petition's goals of enacting legislation to prohibit the development, production and use of lethal autonomous weapons systems in New Zealand, and urges the Government of New Zealand to support negotiations on a new treaty to retain meaningful human control over the use of force by prohibiting such weapons.

For many years, we have worked closely with New Zealand's government and civil society to alleviate the impact that indiscriminate weapons can have on the rights, dignity, and well-being of civilian populations as well as to eliminate the serious humanitarian, environmental and developmental consequences such weapons cause. Based on this past experience, we know that it is much easier and less costly to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe than it is to assist communities after civilians have suffered.

Now New Zealand has the opportunity to step into a leadership role and prevent a future humanitarian disaster. Autonomous weapons systems will pose risks to humanity if they continue to go unregulated. Unlike existing weapons, autonomous weapons systems do not depend on human control or intervention which puts them outside the bounds of international humanitarian law. Autonomous weapons lack human judgement, an ability to understand context and a sense of compassion, they are not capable of acting with the skill, judgement and accountability of human military personnel.

Proponents of autonomous weapons systems often say that taking the human out of the decision making process will make conflict safer for civilians because autonomous systems will not be impacted by anger and revenge and they will not commit atrocities like sexual violence. This is false. Autonomous weapons could be used to commit gender and sexual-based violence. Rape is often used as a weapon of war to assert power and shame populations; there is no reason that autonomous weapons could also not be used in such a manner.

…/2

Further, the ability for such machines to be able to follow international humanitarian law and properly distinguish between civilians and soldiers is impossible due to sensor failure, programming biases and technological mistakes. Algorithms lack the contextual understanding, respect for international law and humanity that well trained human soldiers bring to a conflict.

Studies have also shown that human biases end up influencing artificial intelligence, meaning that marginalized communities would be disproportionately affected by autonomous weapons systems, as the data and intelligence that programmed such machines will reflect our systemic patriarchal and racist society.

Mines Action Canada is a firm believer that life-and-death decisions should never be delegated to a machine, especially when the possibility of failure is so dangerously high, and the cost of error is the loss of lives of innocent civilians.

With these considerations in mind, Mines Action Canada strongly urges that the demands in the 'Act now on Killer robots' petition be acted on immediately by the New Zealand government. With technology advancing rapidly, we could soon be seeing autonomous weapons systems being used during conflicts, and the consequences could be extreme for all parties involved.

Sincerely,

Mines Action Canada

**Support for the "Act now on killer robots" petition**

From: Mx. Ray Acheson, Director of Reaching Critical Will, the disarmament programme of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)

8 November 2021

Dear Committee members,

Thank you for considering this issue. I write as a representative of my organisation, WILPF, which has been working to mobilise feminists for peace and disarmament since 1915. WILPF a steering committee member of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, among other coalitions. Our work with CSKR is aimed at preventing the development of weapon systems that will automate violence and undermine human control over the use of force.

On behalf of WILPF and in my personal capacity, I support the requests contained within this petition. Action by New Zealand at the national and international levels is vital to preventing the development and deployment of autonomous weapon systems, especially those that would have the capacity to select and engage targets without meaningful human control. Such weapons pose grave risks to human rights, life, and dignity. Software and sensors must never be allowed to "take decisions" about whether to harm human beings. Algorithms and artificial intelligence cannot understand the value of human life. While proponents of such weapons claim they will be more "precise" than human soliders, we have already seen how such claims about armed drones have proven false time and again. We already know that biases within software can lead to human suffering. Weaponising this technology will not protect civilians, it will put us all at even more risk, including of racial- and gender-based violence. And most fundamentally, increasing autonomy in weapon systems undermines our shared humanity and erodes the protections we have collectively built through international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Thank you for considering the petition.

Best,

Ray Acheson

Geneva office
Rue de Varembé 1
Case Postale 28
1211 Geneva 20
Switzerland
Tel : +41 (0)22 919 7080

New York Office
777 UN Plaza, 6th Floor
New York
NY 10017
USA
Tel : +1 () 212 682 1265

www.wilpf.o

11 November 2021

Tēnā koe Committee members,

**Support for the Petition: Act Now on Killer Robots**

Oxfam Aotearoa is part of a worldwide Confederation that works with over 3,500 partner organisations across 67 countries, collectively reaching more than 22 million people through our long-term development, advocacy and humanitarian action. We work across the world with people who endure the severe harm and suffering caused by war and conflict, as well as with communities who experience long-term poverty and loss of opportunity because of conflict. We have a history of action for peace, including working for several years to help make the United Nations Arms Trade Treaty a reality. Oxfam Aotearoa is part of the Aotearoa New Zealand Campaign to Stop Killer Robots Campaign because we know the destruction that the weapons we already have cause. Human society does not need new weaponry, particularly autonomous weapons systems that can select targets and deploy lethal force without any meaningful human control.

Right now, conflict causes 100 million people to go hungry every day, and has forced 48 million people to flee their homes in fear. Yet, instead of investing in human wellbeing, governments across the world spend billions on military hardware and operations. Despite the coronavirus pandemic, global military spending rose by $51 billion in 2020 – enough to cover six and a half times what the United Nations says it needs to stop people going hungry.

We do not need governments to spend more in new forms of weaponry or in trying to engage in a new arms race for autonomous weapons systems. Weapons contribute nothing to human or planetary well-being. The spectre of autonomous weaponry is frightening and their use would be devastating, especially for people who are already enduring poverty and exclusion. As a global community we must all act now to put in place global and national prohibitions against this sort of weaponry.

Oxfam believes that Aotearoa New Zealand can lead the way to ban autonomous weapons systems, just as we do in promoting a nuclear-free world. We are a nation of people who value peace, and human and planetary well-being. Our country's stance against nuclear weapons gives us a solid foundation to lead on stopping killer robots. Other countries see us as a country that acts in good faith for the collective good. This reputation relies on our actions at home, as well as beyond our borders. To maintain our credibility we must put our values into action here at home. And to stop the development of autonomous weapons systems governments must prohibit them within their own jurisdictions. We urge this government to enact national level legislation to prohibit the development, production and use of autonomous weapons in New Zealand. A domestic prohibition would be consistent with our values of manaakitanga, kaitiakitanga and whanaungatanga, mahi tahi and kotahitanga.

Aotearoa New Zealand is well-placed to actively support negotiations on a new treaty to prohibit autonomous weapons systems. These weapons pose significant ethical, moral, legal, technical and operational threats to humankind, and must be banned. There are several reasons these weapons must be stopped, including the following.

- Machines are not able to assess complex contextual and emotional situations in the way that human beings can, and should not be relied upon to make decisions about who lives or dies without meaningful human control.
- Responsibility, and therefore accountability, for the use of force must remain the domain of human beings, allowing regulation of this force through global humanitarian, human rights and criminal legal frameworks.
- As a form of artificial intelligence, autonomous weapons are at risk of programming bias that can replicate and reinforce existing societal prejudices and bias, therefore placing at risk people in society who already experience discrimination and oppression.
- Further, there is the potential for autonomous weapons to lower the threshold for the use of force, because they are perceived to be 'out of sight, out of mind' beyond public scrutiny (such as already occurs with the use of drones for extrajudicial assassinations), and because they may be seen to be more politically acceptable to deploy in comparison with the human, voting public.

We urge the Committee members to recommend the Government enact domestic legislation to prohibit the development, production and use of autonomous weapons systems in Aotearoa New Zealand; and actively support negotiations on a new treaty to retain meaningful human control over the use of force by prohibiting such weapons.


Joanna Spratt
Communications and Advocacy Coordinator
joanna.spratt@oxfam.org.nz

## Christian World Service
### ACTION AGAINST POVERTY

Christian World Service
PO Box 22652
Christchurch 8140
Aotearoa New Zealand

**Phone** +64 3 366 9274
**Skype** cws8140
**Email** cws@cws.org.nz
**www.cws.org.nz**

To the Committee Members

**A-09**

November 10, 2021

**Support for the Petition: Act now on Killer Robots**

Christian World Service is strongly opposed to the development and use of lethal autonomous weapons in any form.

We ask the New Zealand Government to use its diplomatic resources to advocate for a new international treaty to ban the development, production and use of these weapons, as well as prohibit the same in Aotearoa New Zealand.

There are already too many ways to kill and maim people.  Globally, military expenditure is rising (last year US $1,981 billion or nearly US$2.8 trillion).  The international community has repeatedly proved itself unable to respond to increasingly complex conflicts and is failing to meet the huge demand for humanitarian support in multiple longstanding conflicts.  The very thought that machines could be developed to remove human agency in war is morally repugnant.

CWS has been part of the campaign to halt the development and production of these weapons of destruction as part of our deep and abiding commitment to peace. We promoted this issue in our Peace Sunday resources, prepared for New Zealand churches.

CWS was founded by our partner churches: Anglican, Christian Churches, Methodist and Presbyterian – and the Religious Society of Friends – as well as our loyal supporters who come from these churches and from the wider community.

For 75 years New Zealand churches have raised funds to provide humanitarian assistance to communities devastated by war and destruction.  Our commitment is to peace and finding ways to end violence and discrimination wherever it may occur.

Our partner churches are members of larger networks including the World Council of Churches that support 'a pre-emptive ban on drones and other robotic weapons systems that will select and strike targets without human intervention when operating in fully autonomous mode'.

Peacemaking is at the heart of the work that many of our local partner organisations do in places where danger is always present.  They campaign for the protection of women and children at home and in the community.  Activities that build understanding between people of different castes, religion and ethnicity, and promote national or regional reconciliation are central to their work.  In Gaza for example, the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees runs three primary health care clinics that are highly valued by the local communities.  Psychosocial care is a core service they offer to the many mothers and children traumatised by conflict.  In places like South Sudan, the Mission for Sustainable Advancement actively participates in national peace discussions while assisting people displaced by conflict to develop new livelihoods or in education.  The use of Killer Robots will undermine this humanitarian work and the human rights of all people.  Such weapons have the potential to unleash widespread environmental damage and kill with impunity. There is no place for them in our world.

To the Committee Members

From: Audrey van Ryn
audrey@writeaway.co.nz
021 035 4431

10 November, 2021

**1.** My submission strongly supports the "Act now on killer robots" petition to parliament, the petition being worded as follows:

"That the House of Representatives, as a matter of urgency: a) enact legislation to prohibit the development, production and use of lethal autonomous weapon systems in New Zealand; and b) urge the Government to support negotiations on a new treaty to retain meaningful human control over the use of force by prohibiting such weapons."

**2.** I would find it unacceptable for machines to make independent decisions to kill humans. Autonomous weapon systems should never be given control to independently choose human targets and attack them.

**3.** If the military are to continue to use machines to kill people, then such decisions should be made by humans, preferably in consultation with other humans, based on the situation at hand, about which they are as fully informed as possible. Humans should maintain this degree of control because we have the ability to think, to empathize, to understand the value of human life and the significance of its loss, to make ethical decisions, to feel responsibility for our decisions and to accept accountability for them. We are able to feel compassion and therefore understand and work to avoid suffering and death for others.

**4.** Machines have become very useful for present society in many ways and can inform our decision making. However, they cannot replace decision making by humans. Their actions should always be informed by human thinking and be subject to human control, responsibility and accountability. Machines do not have the legal and ethical judgment to ensure the protection of civilians in complex situations. AI machines work with algorithms; my understanding is that human lives would therefore equate to numerical values.

**5.** Programming bias as regards race, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity and so on is also an issue with regard to autonomous weapon systems, and is already a widespread concern in relation to other technologies that use artificial intelligence.

**6.** AI and technology experts have warned that it is not possible to predict the outcome of machine learning in weapon systems. If we cannot understand why an autonomous weapon chooses a target or makes a decision to attack, then we cannot rely on machines to make decisions that we would find acceptable. Machines could attack innocent victims without being able to be stopped. Unauthorised users could seize these weapons and use them indiscriminately.

**7.** Soldiers have been known to disregard orders to kill or launch weapons because they have been able to access information that is not available to those who issued the orders. Soldiers on the ground can make appropriate decisions, including at the last minute. AI would not necessarily have this ability.

**8.** An autonomous weapon would find it difficult to tell the difference between enemy soldiers and children playing with toy guns. It may not be able to distinguish between civilians and soldiers.

**9.** Autonomous weapons would seem likely to lead to more frequent use of force against a perceived enemy, partly because there may be no witnesses such killings and no risk of harm to the human aggressors who need not be physically present.

**10.** A number of governments (China, Israel, Russia, South Korea, the United Kingdom and the United States) are investing hugely in autonomous weapons research and development. This money could be used for the wellbeing of citizens instead. (The US budget for autonomous weapons between 2016 and 2020 was US$18 billion.)

**11.** There is a danger of autonomous weapons being developed to incorporate chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.  Future development may also lead to a huge increase in scale, scope and speed. Any errors in deployment could be enormously magnified and difficult to stop.

**12.** Autonomous weapons could become cheap and easy to obtain. They could be used by terrorists. They could also be vulnerable to hacking and technological failure.

**13.** There is the likelihood that war crimes could be perpetrated with no one to hold accountable. This could weaken the laws of war.

**14.** The governments of 30 countries: Algeria, Argentina, Austria, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ghana, Guatemala, Holy See, Iraq, Jordan, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, State of Palestine, Uganda, Venezuela, Zimbabwe, thousands of experts across a range of fields, including scientists and AI experts, as well as corporations and the general public have all objected to the use of autonomous weapons.

**15.** In July 2018, a pledge was issued not to assist with the development or use of fully autonomous weapons and has been signed by many tech leaders, academics and civil society organisations. It reads:

*"We the undersigned, agree that the decision to take a human life should never be delegated to a machine. There is a moral component to this position, that we should not allow machines to make life-taking decisions for which others – or nobody – will be culpable. There is also a powerful pragmatic argument: lethal autonomous weapons, selecting and engaging targets without human intervention, would be dangerously destabilizing for every country and individual. Thousands of AI researchers agree that by removing the risk, attributability, and difficulty of taking human lives, lethal autonomous weapons could become powerful instruments of*

*violence and oppression, especially when linked to surveillance and data systems. Moreover, lethal autonomous weapons have characteristics quite different from nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, and the unilateral actions of a single group could too easily spark an arms race that the international community lacks the technical tools and global governance systems to manage. Stigmatizing and preventing such an arms race should be a high priority for national and global security.*

*We, the undersigned, call upon governments and government leaders to create a future with strong international norms, regulations and laws against lethal autonomous weapons. These currently being absent, we opt to hold ourselves to a high standard: we will neither participate in nor support the development, manufacture, trade, or use of lethal autonomous weapons. We ask that technology companies and organizations, as well as leaders, policymakers, and other individuals, join us in this pledge."*

**16.** More than 160 faith leaders and more than 20 Nobel Peace Prize laureates have supported a ban on autonomous weapons. Several international and national public opinion polls have found that a majority of people who responded opposed developing and using fully autonomous weapons.

**17.** In the light of this global support for national prohibitions on these weapon systems, and for states to negotiate a new treaty to prohibit them, I urge the New Zealand Government to take an active role in working towards a global ban on autonomous weapon systems.