



Draft

Title: **The Prohibition of Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems**

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Draft text

1 Because of the rapid advancement of digital technology, our everyday lives and
2 society are increasingly confronted with automated decision making.

3 In relation to defence and security this has led to the development of lethal
4 autonomous weapon systems (LAWS).

5 There is currently no agreed definition of autonomous weapon systems, but the
6 International Committee of the Red Cross defines them as “any weapons that
7 select and apply force to targets without human intervention”.^[1]

8 In March 2020, a United Nations Security Council report on the Libyan civil war
9 indicated that lethal autonomous weapons systems had been utilized in combat.
10 The report stated that these weapons had the ability to attack targets without
11 the need for data connectivity between the operator and the munition.^[2]

12 On May 21, 2021 Russian Defense Minister Army General Sergei Shoigu said at a
13 lecture: “The serial production of combat robots has begun. What has emerged are
14 not simply experimental, but robots that can be really shown in science-fiction
15 films as they are capable of fighting on their own”.^[3] Other countries, such as
16 China, Israel, and the US, are also investing in the development of weapon
17 systems with increasing autonomy.

18 The use of lethal autonomous weapon systems or “killer robots” poses serious

19 legal and ethical issues.

20 First of all, there is a lack of accountability. The lack of human intervention
21 is the key difference with other weapon systems. Who is responsible for the
22 actions of an autonomous weapon system when it leads to violations of
23 humanitarian law or war crimes? When an attack happens without human oversight
24 it makes it difficult to assign responsibility.

25 And what if a lethal autonomous weapon system makes a mistake? The inaccuracy of
26 facial recognition technology e.g. is often mentioned. As a report of the
27 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights states: facial recognition
28 technology has higher error rates when used on women and people of colour,
29 producing biased results.^[4]

30 Further, there is the dehumanization of the decision-making process to use
31 force, which is an ethical consideration. An algorithm should not have the power
32 to decide about life and death. How would it be able to correctly interpret the
33 difference between civilians and soldiers, which is a fundamental principle in
34 international law? Empathy, an important element often already lacking in armed
35 conflicts, is completely absent in lethal autonomous weapon systems.

36 Additionally, lethal autonomous weapon systems decrease the need for the
37 involvement of soldiers, which might lower the threshold to launch attacks.
38 Potentially this can lead to more armed conflicts, as these conflicts would not
39 be restrained by the loss of the lives of soldiers.

40 Finally, there is the risk of proliferation. The development of lethal
41 autonomous weapon systems can start a new arms race, leading to additional risks
42 to human security and more conflicts. There is an additional risk of these
43 weapon systems falling into the hands of groups not under government control,
44 such as terrorist groups or private military companies.

45 A call to ban “killer robots” was issued by United Nations Secretary-General
46 António Guterres, on 11 November 2018 at the Paris Peace Forum: “Imagine the
47 consequences of an autonomous system that could, by itself, target and attack
48 human beings. I call upon States to ban these weapons, which are politically
49 unacceptable and morally repugnant.”^[5]

50 However, until now the UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons only agreed

51 to continue discussions.^[6]

52 Several times, such as in 2018 at the initiative of the Greens/EFA group, the
53 European Parliament voted to work towards an international ban on “killer
54 robots”.^[7] Recently, in the 2022 resolution on artificial intelligence in a
55 digital age, the Parliament repeated its call for a ban, and called on the
56 Council to adopt a joint position on autonomous weapons systems that ensures
57 meaningful human control over their critical function; insisted on the launch of
58 international negotiations on a legally binding instrument that would prohibit
59 fully autonomous weapons systems; and stated that such an international
60 agreement should determine that all lethal AI weapons must be subject to
61 meaningful human oversight and control, meaning that human beings remain in the
62 loop, and are therefore ultimately responsible for the decision to select a
63 target and take lethal action.^[8]

64 The Greens/EFA group managed to exclude in the European Defence Fund Regulation
65 any of the Defence Fund's €13 billion from being spent on “killer robots”.^[9]

66 Taking into consideration all these factors, we call on:

67 • The EGP to stress in its Manifesto that the EU should primarily always
68 strive towards peace and global disarmament. In times of growing
69 militarisation, we need to make sure that no new military systems are
70 developed that pose great risks to humanity.

71 • The international community to start negotiations and work on an
72 international treaty on the prohibition of the development, production and
73 use of lethal autonomous weapon systems that enable strikes to be carried
74 out without meaningful human control.

75 • The European Union to actively work towards this international ban. Since
76 there are currently no hopeful developments within the UN Convention on
77 Certain Conventional Weapons, the EU should take the lead in developing a
78 multilateral ban with like minded countries.^[10]

79 • MP's and MEP's to support the parliamentary pledge of the Stop killer
80 robots campaign.^[11]

81 • The EGP member parties, especially those in government, to adopt laws

82 banning lethal autonomous weapon systems, and take a leading role in the
83 international developments for an international ban.

84 [1] <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/what-you-need-know-about-autonomous-weapons>

85 [2] [https://documents-dds-](https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/037/72/PDF/N2103772.pdf?OpenElement)
86 [ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/037/72/PDF/N2103772.pdf?OpenElement](https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/037/72/PDF/N2103772.pdf?OpenElement)

87 [3] <https://tass.com/science/1292483>

88 [4] [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2019-facial-](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2019-facial-recognition-technology-focus-paper-1_en.pdf)
89 [recognition-technology-focus-paper-1_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2019-facial-recognition-technology-focus-paper-1_en.pdf)

90 [5] [https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2018-11-11/allocution-du-](https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2018-11-11/allocution-du-secr%C3%A9taire-g%C3%A9n%C3%A9ral-au-forum-de-paris-sur-la-paix)
91 [secr%C3%A9taire-g%C3%A9n%C3%A9ral-au-forum-de-paris-sur-la-paix](https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2018-11-11/allocution-du-secr%C3%A9taire-g%C3%A9n%C3%A9ral-au-forum-de-paris-sur-la-paix)

92 [6] [https://meetings.unoda.org/ccw-/convention-on-certain-conventional-weapons-](https://meetings.unoda.org/ccw-/convention-on-certain-conventional-weapons-group-of-governmental-experts-on-lethal-autonomous-weapons-systems-2023)
93 [group-of-governmental-experts-on-lethal-autonomous-weapons-systems-2023](https://meetings.unoda.org/ccw-/convention-on-certain-conventional-weapons-group-of-governmental-experts-on-lethal-autonomous-weapons-systems-2023)

94 [7] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2018-0341_EN.pdf

95 [8] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0140_EN.pdf

96 [9] [https://www.greens-efa.eu/en/article/press/kein-eu-geld-fuer-killerroboter-](https://www.greens-efa.eu/en/article/press/kein-eu-geld-fuer-killerroboter-aber-milliardengeschenk-fuer-ruestungsindustrie)
97 [aber-milliardengeschenk-fuer-ruestungsindustrie](https://www.greens-efa.eu/en/article/press/kein-eu-geld-fuer-killerroboter-aber-milliardengeschenk-fuer-ruestungsindustrie)

98 [10] An overview of states' positions can be found at
99 https://automatedresearch.org/state-positions/?_state_position_negotiation=yes.

100 [11] <https://www.stopkillerrobots.org/parliamentary-pledge/>

Supporters

Ecolo (Belgium), déi gréng (Luxembourg), GroenLinks (the Netherlands)