



# CAMPAIGN TO STOP KILLER ROBOTS

**Aotearoa New Zealand**

Campaign to **Stop** Killer Robots,  
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Rt Hon Winston Peters, Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control,  
Fletcher Tabuteau, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Disarmament and Arms Control,  
Parliament Buildings, Wellington.

Dear Minister and Under-Secretary,

I am writing on behalf of the Aotearoa New Zealand Campaign to Stop Killer Robots\* which is coordinated by Peace Movement Aotearoa, a founding member of the global Campaign to Stop Killer Robots. The Campaign is an international coalition of civil society groups working to pre-emptively prohibit the development, production and use of fully autonomous weapons that have the ability to select and attack targets without any human intervention. Such a prohibition must be developed through an international treaty, as well as through national laws and other measures, to ensure that there is always meaningful human control over targeting and attack decisions.

We are deeply concerned that New Zealand has not yet developed national policy in relation to autonomous weapon systems, despite the assurance of the then Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2013 that it would be. Furthermore, while we appreciate New Zealand has participated in the meetings of the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) Group of Governmental Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (GGE), it has not yet made a clear statement supporting an immediate start to negotiations for a treaty to prohibit autonomous weapons and to retain meaningful human control over the use of armed force.

The level of international concern about the development of autonomous weapons continues to rise, as does the increasingly urgent need to address the unprecedented threat such weapons pose to humanity. Last year, for example, the European Parliament passed a resolution calling for an international prohibition on the development, production and use of autonomous weapons “before it is too late”; the Belgian parliament called for an international and national ban; the UN Secretary-General called on states to prohibit these “politically unacceptable and morally repugnant” weapons; almost fifty states referenced the need for control of autonomous weapons in their UN General Assembly statements; and at least twenty eight states have explicitly called for a ban.

Since 2012, thousands of scientists, including artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics experts, leaders of AI and robotics companies, more than twenty Nobel Peace Laureates, religious leaders, international law experts and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) around the world have called for a prohibition on autonomous weapons; more than 200 technology companies (including New Zealand based Aeronavics), NGOs (including the AI Forum of New Zealand), 2,600 AI experts and other individuals have pledged to “neither participate in nor support the development, manufacture, trade, or use of lethal autonomous weapons”; thousands of technology workers - supported by more than eight hundred scholars, academics, and researchers involved in information technology - have refused to work on

military contracts connected to autonomous weapons; and tech giant Google announced last year that it will not design or deploy AI related to “weapons or other technologies whose principal purpose or implementation is to cause or directly facilitate injury to people”.

Fully autonomous weapon systems not only pose an unprecedented threat to humanity, but also to the foundations of international humanitarian, disarmament and human rights law which comprise rules around human conduct developed through time by the international community to protect and enhance human dignity, and to ensure accountability and responsibility for human actions - autonomous robotic weapons obviously do not fit within that paradigm. There is a clear obligation on New Zealand as a state party to a range of humanitarian, disarmament and human rights treaties to do all it can to ensure that any new weapons which pose such extraordinary threats are not developed or deployed.

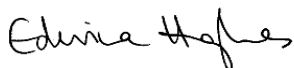
Yet despite all of the above, New Zealand - which has in the past taken a leading role in the development of new humanitarian disarmament law to prohibit particularly harmful weapons (for example, being actively involved in the negotiations for the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions and the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons) - has remained on the sidelines of the international debate.

The key legal, operational, ethical, technical, proliferation and other issues around autonomous weapons have been identified and explored by the CCW GGE, which will next meet from 25 to 29 March in Geneva, and it is now time for action.

We therefore urge New Zealand to step up at the forthcoming CCW GGE meeting and announce its full support for negotiations to begin immediately on a new treaty to prohibit autonomous weapons and to retain meaningful human control over the use of armed force. Furthermore, it is crucial that national policy leading to legislation to prohibit the development, production or use of fully autonomous weapons systems in New Zealand be developed as a matter of urgency, and an announcement that this will be done could usefully be made at the CCW GGE.

We look forward to hearing from you and welcome the opportunity to discuss further the significant threat to international peace and security posed by fully autonomous weapons.

Yours sincerely,



Edwina Hughes,  
Coordinator, Peace Movement Aotearoa

CC: Simon Connor, Chairperson, Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Select Committee  
Tim Macindoe, Deputy-Chairperson, Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Select Committee  
Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Select Committee members: Golriz Ghahraman, Todd McClay, Chris Penk, Priyanca Radhakrishnan, Jamie Strange and Louisa Wall  
Mary Wareham, Global Coordinator, Campaign to Stop Killer Robots.

*\* The Aotearoa New Zealand Campaign to Stop Killer Robots is supported by the: Artificial Intelligence Forum of New Zealand, Anglican Pacifist Fellowship, Human Rights Foundation, Human Rights Lawyers Association, Pax Christi, Peace Movement Aotearoa, Quaker Peace and Service, The Peace Place, and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Aotearoa.*