

“Killer Robots”. Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems

Experts Gather for UN-Hosted Meeting

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Experts from numerous countries around the globe are gathering for a United Nations meeting to discuss “killer robots.” The weeklong event that opened Monday is the second at the U.N. offices in Geneva and will focus on lethal autonomous weapons systems.

Futuristic robots that can conduct war without human intervention is a big concern among officials in the United Nations, [according to a report by ABC News](#). The experts who have gathered for the meeting will discuss ways to define and “deal with” the problems that could arise from the creation of “killer robots.”

Although U.N. officials say that in theory, fully autonomous, computer-controlled weapons don’t exist yet, and the debate is still in its infancy, the discussion is all but mandatory as the experts and officials have often grappled with the very basic definitions. The United States has argued that it’s premature to establish a definition of such systems, much less regulate them, but the meeting will focus largely on those aspects.

Other experts and some of the top advocacy groups say [governments and militaries should be prevented from developing such systems](#), which have sparked fears and led some critics to envision harrowing scenarios about their potential uses.

As the meeting got underway, Amnesty International urged countries to work toward a ban.

Killer robots are “no longer the stuff of science fiction,” Rasha Abdul Rahim, an artificial intelligence researcher for the human rights organization, said. Rahim warned that technological advances are outpacing international law.

Part of the trouble for activists, however, is that the U.N.-backed conference that convened the meeting works by consensus. A single participating country — like a big military power — therefore could scuttle efforts to reach an international ban. —[ABC News](#)

And who is to say that a ban will stop the future use of killer robots anyway? If a country decided to use them despite the ban, ink on paper will be meaningless.

Amandeep Gill, who is chairing the meeting and a former Indian ambassador to the [U.N.-backed Conference on Disarmament](#), said that he personally believes progress is being

made on the issue. He said all of the countries generally fall into three camps of thought: One seeks a formal, legal ban on such weapons; another wants a political, but non-binding agreement; and a third wants no changes at all.

“We are coming closer to an agreement on what should be the guiding principles — guiding the behavior of states and guiding the development and deployment of such systems around the world,” [Gill told reporters Monday](#). “And this is not an insignificant outcome.”

“There is a lot of movement within the governments,” said Nobel Peace Prize laureate Jody Williams. “We’re up to 26 now that have called for a ban,” said Williams, who won the [1997 Nobel for her work against landmines](#). “Logic would dictate — at least in my thinking — that there would be a mandate toward negotiating a binding instrument, and that’s what we’re pushing for here this week.”

At a news conference hosted by the [Campaign to Stop Killer Robots](#), Williams said the group wants “meaningful human control” when it comes to the use of military weapons. They also want to progress toward a ban on all computer-controlled weapons systems.

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