



Annual Report 2023



An overview of activities carried out by
Stop Killer Robots from April 2023 to March 2024

Our mission

We didn't expect a campaign to Stop Killer Robots to be needed in the world - but it is. With growing digital dehumanisation, the Stop Killer Robots coalition works to ensure human control in the use of force. Our campaign works for an international legal treaty to prohibit autonomous weapons systems that would target humans or that would operate without meaningful human control - a treaty that contains rules to protect our humanity.



Our vision

The campaign to Stop Killer Robots is working for a world:

- in which we respect each other's inherent dignity;
- where we all take responsibility for how our choices regarding technology change the relationships between us, individually and collectively;
- in which technology is developed and used to promote peace, justice, human rights, equality and respect for law; and
- where people work together, as activists, to build a better society and overcome inequalities and systems of oppression.

It is a world that rejects the automation of killing and instead, promotes the principle of human control over emerging technologies that affect our lives, livelihoods, and relations with each other.

Towards that vision, we seek:

- to build and strengthen social norms that reject autonomous killing by machine in warfare, policing, border control and other circumstances;
- to demand meaningful human control, which ensures responsibility and accountability, in any use of force;
- to counter digital dehumanisation and to protect human rights, now and in the future;
- to build recognition that we are individually and collectively responsible for developing and shaping the technologies that frame interaction between us;
- to challenge the inequalities and oppressions in society that are reproduced or exacerbated through technology.

Achievements in 2023

In 2023, the Stop Killer Robots campaign continued to blaze a trail towards negotiations of a new international treaty on autonomous weapons systems, with several significant achievements that have built political confidence and solidified commitment to action among partners and the public.

This report summarises key achievements over the 2023 fiscal year.



**Inspiring senior political movement
towards a treaty**

- **Stop Killer Robots participated in four UN multilateral meetings on autonomous weapons at the CCW in Geneva and the UNGA in New York, with diverse expert delegations** made up of 21 campaigners from 15 countries (Argentina, Australia, Cameroon, Colombia, Egypt, France, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Lebanon, Nigeria, Norway, Peru, United Kingdom, Zimbabwe), maintaining high expectations for States to commit to launch negotiations of a treaty.
- **The number of States supporting the negotiation of a legally binding instrument on autonomous weapons systems grew 30% in the reporting period, from 90 to 117.**
- **A [landmark joint appeal](#) by the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres and President of the International Committee of the Red Cross Mirjana Spoljaric** called on States to “to establish specific prohibitions and restrictions on autonomous weapons systems, to shield present and future generations from the consequences of their use” and to conclude negotiations on a legally binding instrument by 2026.



- The First Committee of the **UN General Assembly adopted the first-ever resolution on autonomous weapons with overwhelming support, with 164 States voting in favour, 5 against, and 8 abstentions.** Led by Austria and a group of 43 co-sponsoring states, the resolution recognized the “serious challenges and concerns that new technological applications in the military domain, including those related to artificial intelligence and autonomy in weapons systems, also raise from humanitarian, legal, security, technological and ethical perspectives.” **The resolution requests the UN Secretary-General prepare a report in 2024 reflecting the views of member and observer states on autonomous weapons systems** and ways to address the related challenges and concerns they raise. The resolution also **establishes an agenda item on autonomous weapons at the UNGA in 2024**, providing a further platform for States to pursue the launch of negotiations. Stop Killer Robots ran a concerted lobbying campaign in support of the resolution, conducting direct outreach to diplomatic and government representatives of 171 States, and working closely with the co-sponsoring group to secure votes in favour of the resolution.



- Supported by Stop Killer Robots and coalition member Soka Gakkai International, in September 2023 **Trinidad and Tobago and CARICOM IMPACS** hosted *‘The CARICOM Conference - The Human Impacts of Autonomous Weapons’* a regional governmental conference attended by government ministers and Ambassadors from CARICOM member states, the ICRC, UN agencies, academics, and civil society. The conference resulted in the **‘CARICOM Declaration on Autonomous Weapons Systems’**, a **negotiated political declaration from the region** which resolved to “support the indispensability of meaningful human control over the use of force and thereby encourage the pursuit of an international legally binding instrument which incorporates prohibitions and regulations on AWS.”
- Representatives of Stop Killer Robots **participated in state-hosted international and regional conferences on autonomous weapons to conduct both high-level political engagement**, including the ‘Luxembourg Autonomous Weapons Systems Conference’ and the ‘Manila Meeting on Indo-Pacific Perspectives on Autonomous Weapons Systems’.



**Demonstrating our policy and
technical expertise**

- In 2023, Automated Decision Research **continued to grow its representation of state positions in its [State Positions Monitor](#)**, which now features 186 states. 117 of these states support the negotiation of a legally binding instrument on autonomous weapons systems.
- Automated Decision Research **launched its [Weapons Monitor](#) resource**, highlighting a number of different weapons systems of concern, with weapons systems which feature various autonomous capabilities.
- Automated Decision Research **officially introduced its work to diplomats at a side event** during the CCW GGE in Geneva in May 2023, and **participated in a panel of experts in [a side event on autonomous weapons and human control](#)**, organised and hosted by Austria, at the United Nations General Assembly in New York.
- The Automated Decision Research team **organised and participated in [a panel on state positions, autonomous weapons systems and technological trends](#)**, in a side event hosted by Belgium, at the United Nations General Assembly in New York.
- Automated Decision Research **held its first virtual expert roundtable on the topic of [‘Regulating AI: algorithmic systems, human rights, and national security loopholes’](#)**, featuring Francesca Fanucci, Senior Legal Advisor at the European Center for Not-for-Profit Law.
- At RightsCon 2023, Automated Decision Research **hosted [a virtual workshop on AI and automated decisions in the civil and military spheres](#)**.



- The Automated Decision Research team **published the report** ['Convergences in State Positions on Human Control'](#), which presents an examination of convergences in state positions on human control in the context of autonomy in weapons systems, and highlights that despite differences in phrasing when discussing the human element as it relates to autonomous weapons systems, there is much common ground among states in their understandings and requirements as to what 'meaningful', 'sufficient', or 'appropriate' levels of human control or involvement requires.
- **In a briefing paper titled** ['Targeting people and digital dehumanisation'](#), Automated Decision Research explained the need for a prohibition on autonomous weapons systems designed or used to target humans, and the digital dehumanisation inherent in such systems.
- Together with Francesca Fanucci, Senior Legal Advisor at the European Center for Not-for-Profit Law, Automated Decision Research Manager Dr Catherine Connolly wrote **a short piece on the** [EU's AI Act, the Council of Europe AI Convention, and their relevance to the use of AI for military and security purposes.](#)
- Automated Decision Research was invited to **deliver a** [statement](#) **to the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States.**
- Automated Decision Research was also invited to give a presentation on autonomous weapons systems at the **hearing of experts on the social and humanitarian impact of autonomous weapons systems and artificial intelligence at the 147th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly.**



- Automated Decision Research **delivered a virtual presentation on the need for a legally binding instrument on autonomous weapons systems** to the Regional Event on Achieving the Universalization of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) in Southern and Eastern Africa, organised by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, and **delivered a virtual presentation on key issues with autonomous weapons** at the [CARICOM Conference on the Human Impacts of Autonomous Weapons](#).
- Automated Decision Research **travelled to Finland to deliver a keynote presentation and participate in a panel on autonomous weapons**, to [meet Finnish parliamentarians and diplomats from the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#), and to participate in a number of media interviews (see [here](#) and [here](#))
- The Automated Decision Research team were **interviewed by numerous media outlets on the issue of autonomy in weapons systems**, including [the BBC](#), [Wired](#), [Politico](#), [Breaking Defense](#), and [Bloomberg](#).
- Automated Decision Research continued its [news monitoring activities](#), **launching a public-facing newsletter to circulate its weekly news briefings to the general public as well as to the campaign membership.**



**Enhancing our visible identity as a
campaign**

- Stop Killer Robots' successful [Digital Dehumanisation campaign](#) continued as planned into 2023. This campaign focused on framing autonomous weapons within a wider societal context of automated harm and the dangers of unregulated or oppressive artificial intelligence. In 2023 the **Digital Dehumanisation campaign explored cutting edge topics and produced interviews and digestible social media material** from the use of [an 'AI actor' and chat GPT to an interview with Amnesty Tech](#) on the use of oppressive facial recognition technologies in New York, Mumbai and the occupied Palestinian territories.
- We [launched a travelling exhibition 'Automated by Design'](#) in New York alongside the UN General Assembly in October 2023, followed by the launch of the [exhibition microsite](#) in early 2024. The exhibition supports public, political and media outreach, and demonstrates how autonomous weapons and digital dehumanisation are issues relevant to the lives of individuals, communities, and our society as a whole.
- In collaboration with efforts to strengthen the mobilisation of our campaign, we produced **numerous resources in multiple languages to facilitate shared understanding and cohesion on key policy and campaigning points**. A primary output was the ['What are autonomous weapons' explainer animation](#) but other outputs consist of reports, policy primers, advocacy sheets, brochures, shareable social media content and postcards.



- The ‘Vote Against The Machine’ global advocacy and communications campaign focused on building support and awareness for the first resolution on autonomous weapons at the UN General Assembly in October 2023. The multifaceted campaign ensured that messaging and branding was coherent and recognisable across platforms and for our chosen target audiences: diplomats, policymakers, media and Gen Z and millennial members of the public. Stop Killer Robots provided ‘Vote Against The Machine’ branded resources for campaigners to use in both their advocacy and public awareness campaigns. Coordinated ‘Vote Against the Machine’ [visual actions](#) took place around the world from Johannesburg to Oslo and Paris. Stop Killer Robots campaigners in New York for the UN General Assembly took part in a [light projection action in Manhattan](#) and in front of the [Brooklyn Bridge](#). As a result of combined advocacy and campaigning efforts by campaigners around the world and at the UN in New York, the resolution was adopted by states with an unprecedented 164 votes in favour.



- We saw **substantial media coverage** throughout 2023. We called on expertise from the Automated Decision Research team as well as members of staff and the wider campaign with interviews conducted by numerous media outlets on the issue of autonomy in weapons systems, including the [New York Times](#), [Le Monde](#), [the BBC](#), [Wired](#), [Politico](#), [Breaking Defense](#), and [Bloomberg](#).
- Stop Killer Robots social media continued to reach and engage new audiences. Across all social media channels we saw a **94.7% increase in new followers in comparison with the previous year, and our post reach increased by 55.2%**. Engagement on Instagram spiked during the Vote Against the Machine campaign, with an increase in our followers by 30% and a 58% increase in the number of posts being saved by our audience. Instagram, Tiktok and Twitter/X remain our most popular channels with a focus on creating educational, engaging, and actionable content to raise the issue of autonomous weapons and digital dehumanisation. This work ensures that policy makers at an international level feel that the world is witnessing their efforts and expecting action to ensure a legal response to challenges posed by autonomy in weapons systems.



**Strengthening coalition
mobilisation to amplify our impact**

- The Stop Killer Robots **coalition membership grew to 253 members**, further amplifying our influence and reach to new communities and stakeholders across 70 countries.
- Two cycles of the **Small Grants Programme** (June-December 2023; January-March 2024) funded \$224,900 to campaign members to bolster their capacity and further advocacy initiatives at the national, regional, and thematic levels – **supporting national activities in 28 countries** (Australia, Belgium, Burundi, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Colombia, Costa Rica, Finland, Germany, Ghana, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Italy, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Somalia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Togo, and Zimbabwe); **regional projects** in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Pacific Islands, and the Middle East and North Africa; and one **cross-regional project focusing on the principles of non-discrimination and the implications of AWS on religious and racial discrimination**. During these two cycles of the Small Grants Programme, projects were funded to campaign members in **three new countries of work: the Central African Republic, Mozambique, and Poland**.



- Stop Killer Robots coalition member organisations expanded parliamentary outreach in 2023. In the United Kingdom, **members of the Stop Killer Robots campaign provided [submissions and testimonials](#) to the House of Lords AI in Weapons Systems Committee**, advocating for the committee to take action to address the significant security threat posed by autonomous weapons. Through campaigner outreach supported by the Small Grants Programme, **57 parliamentarians from across Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Finland, France, Germany, and Norway pledged their support for the campaign’s [Parliamentary Pledge](#)**, committing to urge their national governments to negotiate new international law on autonomous weapon systems and ensure meaningful human control over the use of force.
- The UN Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to strengthen calls on States to respond to the threats posed by autonomy in weapons through the development of new international law. In the **[‘A New Agenda for Peace’ report](#)** the UN Secretary-General recommended that **States undertake and conclude negotiations of a legally binding instrument to prohibit and regulate autonomous weapons systems by 2026**, noting that “machines with the power and discretion to take lives without human involvement are morally repugnant and politically unacceptable and should be prohibited by international law”.



- Sponsorship of **delegations and advocacy missions** enabled Stop Killer Robots coalition members to **conduct grassroots outreach** at RightsCon Costa Rica, Museums for Peace Uppsala Conference in Sweden, and Sziget Festival in Hungary.
- The **Stop Killer Robots Youth Network** grew to 67 members in 2023, representing a more than **123% increase in our campaigners under age 30** participating in the movement to stop killer robots in their capacity as students, volunteers, or young professionals, not otherwise affiliated with a member organisation. Youth Network members marked the 2023 [United Nations Disarmament Week with blog pieces](#) on the themes of disarmament and autonomous weapons systems.
- In concert with visible identity enhancement goals, **informative policy resources in multiple languages** were produced to facilitate **cohesive and sustained campaigning** among member organisations including reports, policy primers, advocacy sheets, brochures, and postcards.



Finance and Governance

Finance

The Stop Killer Robots campaign is not an independently registered entity at this time. Campaign co-founder Mines Action Canada (MAC), a registered Canadian non-profit incorporation, is the fiscal and legal sponsor for the Stop Killer Robots campaign. Human Rights Watch (HRW) acts as the fiscal sponsor of the charitable giving program of the Campaign. Both organizations serve on the Steering Committee.

During the reporting period, the campaign received the majority of its funding through the Geneva-based Swiss Philanthropy Foundation who passes on the funding to Mines Action Canada to be overseen by the campaign's Treasurer. Additionally, a private Japanese donor called United Peace International (UPI) provided funds for the campaign's outreach and advocacy activities.

Our audited financial statements to follow. Our auditors examine the financial statements annually to confirm that the accounts conform to legal and statutory requirements. Our current auditors are Parker Prins Lebano Chartered Professional Accountants.



Governance

The Campaign to Stop Killer Robots is overseen by a Steering Committee comprised of 9 organizations.

Steering Committee members are responsible for the governance of the Campaign - this includes membership, small grants, finance, and human resources - as well as guidance on policy development and strategy.

Our Steering Committee

Amnesty International

Article 36

Association for Aid Relief Japan

Human Rights Watch

International Committee for Robot Arms Control (ICRAC)

Mines Action Canada (MAC)

PAX

Seguridad Humana en Latino América y el Caribe (SEHLAC)

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)



Staff team

The coalition is supported and energised by a young Staff Team who liaise with governments and campaign members, design inspiring communications materials and stay up to speed on the latest developments in weapons, robotics and artificial intelligence.

In January 2024, Richard Moyes of Article 36 stepped down as Campaign Coordinator. The Staff Team continues to be coordinated and supported by the members of the campaign's Steering Committee.

Catherine Connolly

Monitoring & Research Manager

Charlotte Akin

Projects & Logistics Officer

Clare Conboy

Media & Communications Manager

Gugu Dube

Researcher

Isabelle Jones

Campaign Outreach Manager

Ousman Noor

*Government Relations Manager
(until January 2024)*


Sai Bourothu

Researcher

Salena Barry

Digital Communications Officer





COUNTRIES MUST
#VOTEAGAINSTTHEMACHINE

Your support

is protecting humanity

Only governments can come together to make international law - but it falls to civil society, international organisations and the public to create the will to make that happen.



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