The Stop Killer Robots Youth Network welcomes the opportunity to submit recommendations for consideration by the United Nations Secretary-General in response to Resolution 79/239 "Artificial intelligence in the military domain and its implications for international peace and security" adopted by the General Assembly on 24 December 2024. As a global network of young people under age 30 in over 50 countries working to secure a future free of automated killing, we have consistently advocated for the creation of a new treaty on autonomous weapons systems (AWS) — in particular, we insist on a total prohibition of anti-personnel autonomous weapons as we wish to build a world without such dehumanising weapons. While youth will inevitably face the risks of new weapons technologies, we remain underrepresented in the decision-making process and are often sidelined in forums that shape our interests. As youth who have grown up in an increasingly digital world, we wish to create a future where technology is used to promote peace, justice, equality, and human rights, not perpetuate violence.

With escalating conflicts and the rapid deployment of new weapons technologies around the world, there is an urgent need to reinvest in international law as a measure to build trust and achieve sustainable peace and security. The application of artificial intelligence (AI) in the military domain presents numerous challenges that concern us as youth, including digital dehumanisation, the gamification of violence, and the further erosion of human control and involvement over the use of force.

Military AI & AI systems already in use

Artificial intelligence has been progressively implemented in the military domain over the past decade, however, due to the opacity of military activities and development, the wide public has not been aware of this issue until recently when the active uses of AI systems have been mediatized. We have seen and monitored the use of AI systems to support the targeting of both objects and people. Unfortunately, the use of such systems have not been able to alleviate civilian suffering, for example, in Gaza where one third of victims are children and where too many civilian infrastructures, including critical infrastructures such as humanitarian camps, hospitals[1], and schools[2], have been either directly targeted or indirectly impacted by the hostilities.

There have been other concerning uses[3] of AI systems outside of the military which need to be considered as they might be implemented in the military domain, mainly predictive AI and facial recognition. Predictive AI technologies have been used in the police and judicial systems since the early 2010s and have been shown to be ineffective, incorrect, and subject to reinforcing

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[1] World Health Organization (2025), 'oPt Emergency Situation Update'. https://www.emro.who.int/images/stories/Sitrep_57.pdf

[2] Save the Children (2025), 'Education Under Attack In Gaza, With Nearly 90% Of School Buildings Damaged Or Destroyed'. https://www.savethechildren.net/blog/education-under-attack-gaza-nearly-90-school-buildings-damaged-or-destroyed

[3] Julia Angwin, Jeff Larson, Surya Mattu and Lauren Kirchner, ProPublica (2016), 'Machine Bias'. https://www.propublica.org/article/machine-bias-risk-assessments-in-criminal-sentencing

discriminatory behavior.[4] If predictive AI were to be implemented in the military domain, it could lead to the increasing risk of civilians being targeted as they could be labeled as possible fighters or being indirect victims of military activities due to the multiplications of targets with predicted military advantages. Facial recognition technologies (FRTs) are also of concern as they are also unreliable especially when it comes to the identification of non-white males. Facial recognition-enabled targeting in military operations must be prohibited as those systems cannot comprehensively analyse every factor that makes military personnel or civilians a target or not.

Digital dehumanisation

One of the main concerns we have about the use of AI systems in the military domain is the proliferation and banalisation of **"Digital dehumanisation"**. We define digital dehumanisation as the process whereby humans are reduced to data, which is then used to make decisions and/or take actions that negatively affect their lives. This process deprives people of dignity, demeans individuals' humanity, and removes or replaces human involvement or responsibility through the use of automated decision-making in technology.[5] Additionally, the increased speed and scale of target production through military AI erodes moral restraints in war and lowers the impact and capacity of decisions from human operators[6], thus enabling the AI systems to make decisions without meaningful human control, which further dehumanises the decision-making process.

Relying on (Big) data leads to problems

We also believe that the use of (big) data in the military leads to multiple issues which need to be considered.

One of the primary issues is the challenge of data labeling—the process of categorizing and tagging data to train algorithms. Inaccurate or biased labeling can have far-reaching consequences, particularly in the context of distinguishing between combatants and non-combatants in conflict zones. If the data used to train military AI systems is flawed or biased, it can lead to disastrous mistakes, such as the targeting of innocent civilians or misidentification of threats.

A critical issue when relying on big data is that the nature data itself is often broken and is incomplete. This means that the data used to train AI models can be incomplete, outdated, or unrepresentative of real-world situations. Such flaws in data can lead to systems that fail to generalize properly, resulting in inaccurate or incorrect predictions and decisions. For example,

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[4] Will Douglas Heaven, MIT Technology Review (2020), 'Predictive policing algorithms are racist. They need to be dismantled'. 'https://www.technologyreview.com/2020/07/17/1005396/predictive-policing-algorithms-racist-dismantled-machine-learning-bias-criminal-justice/

[5] Automated Decision Research (2022), 'Autonomous weapons and digital dehumanisation'. https://automatedresearch.org/news/report/autonomous-weapons-and-digital-dehumanisation-a-short-explainer-paper/

[6] Marta Bo and Jessica Dorsey, OpinioJuris (2024), 'Symposium on Military AI and the Law of Armed Conflict: The 'Need' for Speed – The Cost of Unregulated AI Decision-Support Systems to Civilians'. http://opiniojuris.org/2024/04/04/symposium-on-military-ai-and-the-law-of-armed-conflict-the-need-for-speed-the-cost-of-unregulated-ai-decision-support-systems-to-civilians/

in combat situations, a lack of diversity in the data used to identify individuals could lead to inaccurate targeting, with devastating consequences. Important data might be missing or poorly represented, such as the exact location of civilians or combatants, which can lead to AI failing to make informed and balanced decisions. In a war scenario, a system trained with data from a specific past conflict may not be capable of handling a new, unpredictable situation. For instance, an AI system that has been fed data from one particular type of conflict might struggle to apply that data to a war with entirely different characteristics, resulting in errors in target identification or incorrect decision-making.

Another significant problem is that many AI systems operate as black boxes. This means that while these systems make decisions and predictions based on the data they process, the decision-making process is not transparent or easily understood. In military scenarios, where the consequences of decisions are extremely serious, the lack of transparency is particularly concerning. If an AI system makes an error, such as wrongly identifying a civilian as a combatant, the absence of clarity about how the system reached that conclusion makes it nearly impossible to understand the origin of the error. This makes accountability difficult, as we cannot determine why the system acted in a particular way. The lack of explanation regarding the decision-making processes of AI also makes it impossible to correct or adjust the system's behavior, potentially perpetuating errors without the ability to fix them effectively.

Linguistic and cultural bias embedded in data which is used to train AI systems can create security vulnerabilities and catastrophically misinterpret communications, behaviors, and intentions across diverse cultural contexts, potentially triggering lethal automated responses to misunderstood signals.[7] These systems risk automating and amplifying existing prejudices at unprecedented scale and speed with life or death consequences in conflict zones where cultural misunderstandings could rapidly escalate into devastating military actions causing dire consequences.

Accountability

The inclusion of AI systems in the command and decision-making chains will indubitably lead to a lack of accountability and liability for those relying on these systems to make decisions. It will create a sense of distance and lack of liability on the consequences of a decision which mean that decisions may be made without specific, consistent and thorough analysis of the lawfulness and humane characters of the decision. Then, if an action taken using AI systems violates IHL, the people involved in the implementation and those involved in the decision making should be held accountable and the use of an AI system shall never exempt people from their responsibilities.

We recognize that military operations are bound by multiple bodies of law - national law, International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law (IHRL) - which need to be respected and implemented in order for operations to be lawful. Unfortunately, rules of

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[7] Jimena Sofía Viveros Álvarez, Humanitarian Law & Policy (2024), 'The risks and inefficacies of AI systems in military targeting support'. https://blogs.icrc.org/law-and-policy/2024/09/04/the-risks-and-inefficacies-of-ai-systems-in-military-targeting-support/

engagement and of targeting - and all the exceptions - cannot be fully understood and implemented by AI systems. Concepts like doubt, proportionality, and the balance between humanity and necessity are inherently human judgments that cannot be captured by an algorithm. Machines cannot be trusted to uphold these standards on their own. Therefore, it is critical that AI systems never act in a vacuum and that humans retain oversight and decision-making power at all times.

What the future might look like

While AI theoretically has the potential to enhance precision and efficiency in military operations, its integration into warfare raises significant concerns about the future of global security. Autonomous weapons systems, capable of making life-or-death decisions without human control, introduce ethical dilemmas and risks of unintended consequences. The use of AI in military technology is likely to aggravate the existing arms race, as nations compete to develop increasingly sophisticated AI systems, widening the power gap between technologically advanced countries and those less developed, leaving them vulnerable in terms of military readiness. The deployment of autonomous weapon systems and AI-driven tools makes conflict more unpredictable, scalable, and asymmetric, granting certain nations the ability to unleash devastating technologies that smaller states or non-state actors may not be able to counter. The proliferation of AI in the military sphere also raises the threat of terrorism, as organized actors could easily access advanced AI-powered systems. Moreover, the fast-paced, constantly evolving nature of AI development turns military strategies into a "cat and mouse" game, where advancements are met with equally rapid countermeasures. In light of these challenges, the future of military AI must be handled with extreme caution, emphasizing robust ethical frameworks, international regulations, and stringent human oversight to prevent these technologies from destabilizing global peace.

What we need

We call for the establishment of a meaningful legally binding instrument for the use of AI driven systems in the military requires comprehensive integration of the technical sector alongside state actors, addressing the urgent need for standardized verification protocols and trust-building mechanisms between nations. Such an instrument should define clear autonomy thresholds that specify permissible levels of independence in target selection and engagement, mandate extensive documentation of algorithmic decision processes and testing methodologies and establish explicit red lines that cannot be crossed including prohibited deployment scenarios, target categories, and operational environments. This framework should apply consistently across developing and developed nations, incorporate independent verification bodies with appropriate technical expertise to conduct regular compliance audits, and establish enforcement mechanisms with meaningful consequences for violations, all while facilitating technical data sharing and research that builds confidence between stakeholders in this domain.

These systems present an unprecedented threat to global security and human rights, and the risks they pose to non-combatants are immense. It is crucial that it implements a robust framework of monitoring, accountability and oversight. Firstly, the states need to be bound by positive

obligations to ensure the responsible use of AI in the military domain. Accountability is a fundamental aspect of this framework. We call for comprehensive mechanisms that oversee every stage of the AI system lifecycle, from development and updates to transfers and research. States must ensure that any uses of AI systems are monitored, with clear reporting structures in place to address incidents promptly. Furthermore, it is vital that human operators using these systems receive thorough training and guidance to make ethical decisions in the field. The principle of meaningful human control must remain central when it comes to the use of AI in the military domain to ensure that ultimate responsibility for any actions remains with human decision-makers.