



*Countries are meeting in Geneva to decide whether to consider banning 'killer robots' which can make decisions by themselves about when to kill people. Human rights groups claim weapons like these raise serious moral questions about how we conduct war.*

*BBC reporter: Imogen Foulkes*

**Drones** have already raised questions about 21st century **warfare** – but while they have no pilots, they are controlled by humans on the ground. **Lethal autonomous** weapons, or 'killer robots', are programmed in advance; on the battlefield it could be the robot, not the human, which decides who to kill.

The United States, Britain and Israel are all developing lethal autonomous weapons, although all three countries say they don't plan to take humans **out of the decision-making loop**.

Supporters of the new technology say it could save lives, by reducing the number of soldiers on the battlefield, but human rights groups question the **ethics** of allowing machines to take decisions over life and death.

Now the 50 countries which have **ratified** the convention on conventional weapons – the countries which have already approved a ban on **blinding** laser weapons – will consider whether to begin talks on banning killer robots.

## Vocabulary and definitions

drones	aircraft which are controlled by people on the ground
warfare	the activity of fighting a war
lethal	causing death
autonomous	independent, able to make its own decisions
out of the decision-making loop	not part of the process of making decisions
ethics	set of beliefs or principles that tell people what is right and wrong
ratified	made (an agreement become) official
blinding	causing blindness (not able to see)

### Read and listen to the story and the vocabulary online:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/language/wordsinthenews/2013/11/131115\\_witn\\_killer\\_robots.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/language/wordsinthenews/2013/11/131115_witn_killer_robots.shtml)

### Related story:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-24941919>