August 14, 2018

Secretary of Defense James N. Mattis
Department of Defense
1400 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1400

Dear Secretary Mattis,

We write to you in advance of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) Meeting on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, which will take place on 27-31 August in Geneva. Amnesty International, a global human rights organization with over 7 million members and supporters worldwide and over 1 million in the United States, urges you to publicly support calls for a ban on the development, transfer, deployment and use of autonomous weapons systems.

Extensive advances in artificial intelligence and other technologies will make possible the development and deployment of fully autonomous weapons systems which, once activated, can select, attack, kill and wound human targets, and will be able to operate without effective human control. The rapid development of these weapons systems could not only change the entire nature of warfare, it could also dramatically alter the conduct of law enforcement operations and raises extremely serious human rights concerns, undermining the right to life, the prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment, and the right to security of person, and other human rights.

We note that the United States has expressed that it does not support the development of a politically or legally binding agreement on fully autonomous weapons. Amnesty International's view is that fully autonomous weapons systems would be fundamentally incompatible with the laws of war and international human rights law, and therefore calls for a pre-emptive ban on the development, production, and use of such weapons. Details on Amnesty's reasons for supporting a ban can be found in the organization's briefing "*Autonomous Weapons Systems: Five Key Human Rights Issues for Consideration*" (https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/ACT3014012015ENGLISH.pdf)

In light of this meeting, we urge the US government to cease the development of autonomous weapons systems that do not have effective and meaningful human control over the "critical functions" of identifying, selecting and applying force to targets. We also urge the United States to:

- Work toward a legally-binding instrument that prohibits fully autonomous weapons: the United States should engage substantively in the CCW GGE meeting in August and express support for a negotiating mandate to create new international law to ban fully autonomous weapons systems. At the CCW meeting of States Parties in November 2018, States should agree to begin negotiations on a legally-binding instrument;

- Adopt national policy and legislation and promotes other normative developments to prevent the development of fully autonomous weapons. States should take action at the national level with a

view to ban fully autonomous weapons and work in coordination with civil society and other national stakeholders to support the negotiation of a new treaty;

- Send human rights experts to the CCW Experts Meeting on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems on 27-31 August, in order to ensure that the human rights implications of AWS are discussed and addressed fully at the Meeting.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with your staff to further discuss our human rights concerns about fully autonomous weapons systems.

Sincerely,

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