

World must rein in autonomous weapons: UN, Red Cross

AFP | Geneva, Switzerland

The United Nations and the Red Cross warned yesterday that the world is “dangerously close” to a future where so-called “killer robots” could target humans, and issued an urgent appeal for international regulation of autonomous weapons.

The warning follows a 2023 call by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and Mirjana Spoljaric, president of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), for specific bans and restrictions on the rapidly-developing technology by this year.

“Today, we renew this call with even greater urgency,” they said in a joint statement, adding that while their “fundamental concerns remain unchanged... the risks have intensified”.

“We are now dangerously close to crossing a moral red line: the autonomous targeting of humans by machines,” they warned.

Lethal autonomous weapon systems are generally under-

stood as weapon systems that select targets and apply force without human intervention.

“Autonomous weapon systems are already used in the battlefield, they are used in broader environments, and that increases the risk for civilians being killed,” Laurent Gisel, head of ICRC’s arms and conduct of hostilities unit, told reporters.



Autonomous weapons are systems that can select and engage targets without direct human control once activated. They use technologies such as AI, sensors, computer vision and machine learning to identify and respond to targets.

12 hurt in drunk driver’s rampage in Portuguese town: police

AFP | Lisbon, Portugal

A drunk driver yesterday injured 12 people, including two police and a Polish national, as he mowed down pedestrians in a Portuguese resort, police said.

The 35-year-old Portuguese man refused a police order to stop his car at 3:00 am (0200 GMT) and sped off along a street known for its bars and night clubs in the Algarve beach town of Albufeira, po-

lice said.

Two police and 10 other people, aged between 18 and 22, were injured, the interior ministry said in a statement. One of the victims was in critical condition.

Police said the suspect had more than twice the permitted alcohol level in his blood and had been detained to face potential charges of causing bodily harm and dangerous driving under the influence of alcohol.

Chinese vessel caught with banned shark fin in Pacific

AFP | Sydney, Australia

Kiribati, a tiny Pacific neighbour to Hawaii that has grown ties with Beijing, detained a Chinese vessel this month for illegally harvesting shark fins, its maritime police told AFP.

The practice of cutting fins off live sharks and throwing the carcasses back into the sea is banned in much of the Pacific Ocean, but persists due to demand in East and Southeast Asia.

The Chinese ship was among four vessels detained in a surveillance crackdown by 11 Pacific island nations between August 3 and 14, assisted by the US Coast Guard in some areas and an Australian military aircraft. Kiribati, however, operates its own patrol boat.

The vessel was licensed to ply Kiribati’s waters but was detained by the maritime police after inspectors found shark fins on board, commander Tom Redfern told AFP.



Israel begins evicting UN training centre for Palestinians

AFP | Kafr ‘Aqab, Palestinian Territories

Israeli forces began evicting a vocational training centre run by the UN agency for Palestinian refugees in an east Jerusalem suburb yesterday, in its latest move targeting the beleaguered

organisation.

It follows repeated warnings by UNRWA that Israeli authorities were threatening its Qalandia training centre, located between the east Jerusalem neighbourhood of Kafr Aqab and the Qalandia refugee camp.

Israel threats to expel Gazans over kite-flying ‘outrageous’: UN

AFP | Geneva, Switzerland

The United Nations yesterday slammed Israel’s threat to expel people from areas where kites, drones and balloons are launched from in Gaza, lamenting “unacceptable rhetoric” coming from Israeli leaders.

“On the threat of expulsion due to children’s kite flying, I hope we can all agree that this is outrageous,” UN rights office spokeswoman Ravina Shamdasani told reporters in Geneva.

Israel warned Hamas on Sunday that it would step up operations in Gaza if launches of kites, drones and balloons towards Israel continued, after a recent increase in such incidents. Hamas has denied responsibility.

Israeli media reported that four kites were found in communities near the Gaza border on Saturday and one was shot down by the army on Sunday, bringing the total number recovered in recent days to around 10.

The incidents have revived memories of waves of incendiary kites and balloons launched from Gaza in previous years, which sparked fires in agricultural lands in southern Israel.

According to the reports, the Israeli military believes Hamas



Boys fly a kite against the backdrop of smoke rising from the Gath shelter, that houses displaced Palestinians, after an Israeli air strike in the west of Khan Yunis, southern Gaza Strip

was behind the launches, which did not carry explosives, and may have been testing how Israel would respond.

“Israel warns Hamas that if the launches toward Israel do not cease immediately, the IDF will take action to intensify targeted operations against those responsible... and will evacu-

ate the population from areas from which kites, drones and balloons are launched,” Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Israel Katz said Sunday in a joint statement.

The UN spokeswoman highlighted that Sunday’s statement was only the latest in a string of

threats.

“We continue to see unacceptable rhetoric coming from the highest level of the Israeli authorities, showing utter contempt for international human rights and humanitarian law, and advocating and inciting violence amounting to atrocity crimes,” she said.

Iranians queue for petrol after US announces new sanctions

AFP | Tehran, Iran

Long queues formed at petrol stations in Tehran on Tuesday after the United States announced fresh sanctions aimed at pressuring Iran into submission.

Washington has turned to pulling economic levers six months into a war on Iran that has ground to a stalemate militarily, with peace talks stalled and most traffic through the crucial Strait of Hormuz blocked.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent on Monday laid out plans for the “economic asphyxiation” of Iran, saying the “objective is to sever every economic lifeline that sustains this tyrannical regime”.

Announcing the new sanctions, Bessent said countries that did not support the US economic campaign would “share in the isolation” of Iran, adding Trump was making phone calls to world leaders asking

Trump says executions of Iran protesters must stop

AFP | Washington, United States

US President Donald Trump expressed outrage yesterday at the mounting number of executions in Iran of people allegedly involved in mass protests earlier this year before the Middle East war began.



“The failing Islamic Republic of Iran is not paying large segments of their military, while at the same time killing protesters, even when they are not protesting, at levels not seen before,” he wrote on Truth Social.

“It is a humanitarian crisis of epic proportions, and must be stopped, NOW,” he added.

It was not immediately clear what new information had spurred the early morning post, but there has been a steady increase in executions since the outbreak of the war on February 28.

Iranian authorities report-

ed more than 3,000 deaths, but attributed the violence to “terrorist acts” orchestrated by the United States and Israel.

Earlier this month, more than 30 countries signed a joint letter condemning “in the strongest terms the ongoing executions of protesters and use of the death penalty” by Iran.

The United States, where capital punishment is still legal, did not sign the letter.

Since then, at least three more people have been executed in Iran on charges related to the protests.

ing that they halt interactions with Tehran.

The Treasury Department said expanded secondary sanctions would target Iran’s digital assets and its technology, gold, aviation and shipping sectors.

It also issued new sanctions against 60 individuals, companies and vessels that allegedly aid Iran in oil revenue generation, weapons procurement and cyber operations.

The sanctions hit entities around the world, includ-

ing in the United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong, China, Singapore and in Europe.

China, a key customer for Iranian oil, said Tuesday that it opposed the sanctions and vowed to “take all necessary measures to firmly safeguard its own rights and interests”.

Bessent did not rule out the possibility of Chinese banks being targeted, and vowed that any entity “that facilitates money laundering on behalf of Iran will be removed from the US dollar system”.