



25 July 2023

This week [Singapore intends to execute](#) a 56-year-old Singaporean Malay man convicted of trafficking approximately 50g of diamorphine (heroin) and Saridewi Djamani, a 45-year-old Singaporean woman convicted of trafficking approximately 30g of diamorphine (heroin). It has been almost twenty years since Singapore last executed a woman. If these executions proceed, Singapore will have executed 15 people for drug offences since 30 March 2022, an average of one execution every month.

International law restricts the death penalty to the ‘most serious crimes’ understood as intentional killing: executions for drug offences clearly fail to meet the ‘most serious crimes’ criterion under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Singapore is among a handful of countries that have executed (China, Iran and Saudi Arabia) or are likely to have executed (Vietnam and North Korea) individuals for drug offences in 2022 (see reports of [Amnesty International](#) and [Harm Reduction International](#)).

In an interview in September 2022, Law Minister K. Shanmugam confirmed that Singapore’s harsh policy on drugs is not resulting in the arrest of the so-called ‘Kingpins’: [“Are we only catching the small guys and not the big guys? It’s a non-question because, you know, the big guys don’t come into Singapore for good reasons”](#). In July 2022, eight United Nations Special Procedures experts observed that [“A disproportionate number of minority persons were being sentenced to the mandatory death penalty in Singapore”](#). In sum, instead of disrupting drug cartels, as it often claims to be the objective, the Government of Singapore deliberately retains capital drug laws that, in practice, operate to punish low-level traffickers and couriers, who are typically recruited from marginalised groups with intersecting vulnerabilities.

In December 2022, 125 countries voted for a [moratorium on the death penalty at the United Nations](#). In June 2022, [Thailand removed marijuana and hemp \(that is below 0.2% THC\) from its narcotics list](#). In April 2023, Malaysia's parliament voted to abolish the mandatory death penalty, a law that took effect in July 2023, including for drug trafficking. The Government of Singapore is out of step with the global trend by continuing with this cruel and abhorrent practice.

The notion of national sovereignty cannot be used to undermine or negate the State's obligation to protect the right to life. We strongly urge the Government of Singapore to immediately halt these scheduled executions. Instead, Singapore should pursue effective measures to humanely address the complex problem of drug trafficking in the country, particularly in the absence of any evidence that the death penalty is a uniquely effective deterrent for those who commit drug offences.

We also call on the UN Office on Drugs and Crime to take concrete actions to urge States to dispel the misguided notion that capital punishment is allowed under the UN Drug Conventions.

We call on the international community, particularly States who have abolished the death penalty in law or practice, to help halt this inhumane, ineffective and discriminatory practice in Singapore.

**Signed:**

Amnesty International

Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network, Malaysia

Capital Punishment Justice Project, Australia

Coalition Against the Death Penalty, Philippines

Eleos Justice, Faculty of Law, Monash University, Australia

Ensemble contre la peine de mort (ECPM), France

Harm Reduction International, United Kingdom

Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Masyarakat (LBHM), Indonesia

Odhikar, Bangladesh

Transformative Justice Collective, Singapore