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AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY

JOINT STATEMENT

18 February 2026

SINGAPORE: MALAYSIAN MAN HANGED IN UNLAWFUL DRUG-RELATED EXECUTION AS RIGHTS OF THOSE ON DEATH ROW VIOLATED

The undersigned organizations condemn in the strongest terms the execution of Malaysian Lingkesvaran Rajendaren in Singapore on 11 February 2026.¹ In violation of international human rights law and standards, he was sentenced to the mandatory death penalty for a drug related offence; and his execution proceeded after the Supreme Court rejected two appeals, as he sought judicial review of his claims of unfair proceedings at trial and ill-treatment while on death row, among other concerns. We renew our call on the government of Singapore to urgently establish a moratorium on executions as a first step towards full abolition of this cruel punishment.

In 2018 Lingkesvaran Rajendaren was convicted under Singapore's Misuse of Drugs Act of trafficking 52.77g of diamorphine (heroin).² His execution was the fourth of five carried out in Singapore in 2026, all involving men convicted of drug-related offences, following on from a record-high number of executions – 17– in 2025.³

On 10 and 11 February, the Court of Appeal rejected – without considering the substantive claims– two appeals on behalf of Lingkesvaran Rajendaren. The appeals, one submitted by him in a self-represented capacity and the other by his lawyer, sought a review of his claims of unfair proceedings at trial and ill-treatment while on death row.⁴ The Court adduced delays with the filing of the appeal, on one hand, and the irrelevance for his conviction and sentence of the outcome of the review of his treatment in detention, on the other, as main reasons to reject the appeals. Importantly, in one of the two judgments, Court of Appeal Justice Woo Bih Li JAD stated:

“Though the carrying into effect of [a death] sentence will necessarily prevent a [prisoner awaiting capital punishment, PACP] from seeing through any pending proceedings which he may be interested (including proceedings which are brought by him and may require his testimony), this is not intrinsically objectionable, as PACPs stand in a very different position from other persons who have not lost their right to life by reason of a lawfully imposed death sentence. In short, PACPs have their rights lawfully attenuated and any proceeding which does not affect the legality of the conviction or sentence or come within a limited exception of State-brought proceedings is not a relevant pending proceeding to obtain a stay of execution.”⁵

The reasoning in this paragraph is a chilling indication of the determination of the authorities of Singapore to pursue executions at all costs, and a disregard of international human rights law and standards. It also reflects the cumulative impact of legislative and policy steps taken by the government since 2024 to curtail execution notice periods, as well as to further restrict the grounds for applications to stay executions.⁶ It is gravely concerning in its denial of the “inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family” recognized in the first line of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It violates the principle of “equality of arms” – a fundamental principle of fairness and rule of law that guarantees the equal powers of prosecution and defence before the courts –⁷ by giving exceptional status to “State-brought proceedings” in applications to determine matters with life or death implications.

Our organizations are further concerned that several other alarming human rights violations affected Lingkesvaran Rajendaren's case, driven by the continued disregard on the part of the Government of Singapore of international

¹ Central Narcotics Bureau of Singapore, “Execution of a Convicted Drug Trafficker”, 12 February 2026, <https://www.cnb.gov.sg/mediaroom/news/execution-of-a-convicted-drug-trafficker-12022026/>

² High Court of Singapore, *Public Prosecutor v Lingkesvaran Rajendaren and another* [2018] SGHC 234, delivered on 29 October 2018.

³ Singapore Prison Service, “SPS and YRSG Annual Statistics Release for 2025”, 9 February 2026, https://www.sps.gov.sg/files/media%20releases/Press_Release_SPS_YRSG_Annual_Statistics_Release_for_2025.pdf

⁴ Court of Appeal of Singapore, *Lingkesvaran Rajendaren v Attorney-General*, [2026] SGCA 4, delivered on 10 February 2026; *Lingkesvaran Rajendaren v. Public Prosecutor*, [2026] SGCA 5, delivered on 11 February 2026.

⁵ Court of Appeal of Singapore, *Lingkesvaran Rajendaren v Attorney-General*, [2026] SGCA 4, delivered on 10 February 2026, para.41.

⁶ Amnesty International, Joint statement, Singapore: Authorities must end human rights crackdown and unlawful drug related executions, 31 October 2024 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/act50/8704/2024/en/>

⁷ UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 32, Article 14: Right to equality before courts and tribunals and to a fair trial, UN Doc. CCPR/C/GC/32, 23 August 2007, para.8.

safeguards set out under international law and standards to protect people against the **arbitrary deprivation of life**. We reiterate that, as it was for several other cases before his, these violations render the deprivation of life in his case unlawful and arbitrary under international human rights law and standards. The prohibition of arbitrary deprivation of life is recognized as a peremptory norm of customary international law and non-derogable.⁸ The imposition of the death penalty following trials and appeals that do not fully meet international standards for a fair trial violates the right to life.⁹

The use of the death penalty for **drug-related offences** violates international human rights law and standards, which restrict its use to the “most serious crimes”, most recently interpreted as referring to “crimes of extreme gravity involving intentional killing”.¹⁰ Several UN bodies, including the International Narcotics Control Board, have repeatedly clarified that drug-related offences do not meet this threshold.¹¹ The imposition of the **mandatory death penalty**, which removes judges’ power to consider the particular circumstances of the offence and the background of the convicted person, also violates international law and standards.¹²

The High Court found Lingkesvaran Rajendaren to have been involved only in transporting drugs, meeting the “courier” requirement under the Misuse of Drugs Act. However, the prosecution did not provide him with a **certificate** confirming that he substantively assisted investigations to disrupt further drug trafficking activities – a second condition to qualify for sentencing discretion in these cases – leaving no option to the judge but to impose the mandatory death penalty. This certificate requirement effectively shifts the sentencing decision to the prosecution in violation of the right to a fair trial, as it effectively places the decision between a life-or-death sentence in the hands of an official who is not a neutral party in the trial and should not have such powers. It further undermines the independence of the judiciary, breaking down the separation that must exist between prosecution and court; and violates the principle of “equality of arms”.

Lingkesvaran Rajendaren’s conviction also relied on the **unfair presumption of guilt** under the Misuse of Drugs Act, which the prosecution can invoke at trial to infer knowledge or possession of the drugs, shifting the burden of proof on to the defendant to be rebutted to the reversed –and therefore higher – legal standard of “on balance of probabilities”. Legal presumptions of guilt violate the right to be presumed innocent – a peremptory norm of customary international law – and other fair trial guarantees under international human rights law that mandate that the burden of proving all charges rests on the prosecution.¹³ In addition, presumptions of guilt have also had the effect of lowering the threshold of evidence needed to secure a conviction in capital cases.

The international community must not remain silent and take action to hold the Singapore government accountable for the repeated breaches of international safeguards and restrictions carried out in capital cases, including in the name of flawed drug control and security narratives. We oppose the death penalty unconditionally and renew our call on the Government of Singapore to immediately establish a moratorium on all executions; commute all death sentences; and review national legislation to bring it in line with international human rights law and standards, pending full abolition of the death penalty.

This statement is co-signed by:

Amnesty International

Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network

Capital Punishment Justice Project

Harm Reduction International

World Coalition Against the Death Penalty

⁸ Article 4.2 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 36 – Article 6: right to life, UN Doc. CCPR/C/GC/36, 3 September 2019, paras.67-68; and Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, UN Doc. A/67/275 (2012), para. 11.

⁹ UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 36 – Article 6: right to life, UN Doc. CCPR/C/GC/36, 3 September 2019, para.41.

¹⁰ Article 6(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; Safeguard No.1 of the UN Safeguards guaranteeing protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty, adopted through UN Economic and Social Council resolution 1984/50.

¹¹ UN Human Rights Committee, General comment No. 36 (2018) on article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, on the right to life, UN Doc. CCPR/C/GC/36, 30 October 2018, para.35; Report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions (2012), UN Doc. A/67/275, para.122; UN Chief Executives Board, “What we have learned over the last ten years: A summary of knowledge acquired and produced by the UN system on drug-related matters”, UN Doc. E/CN.7/2019/CRP.10; UN Chief Executives Board, “What we have learned over the last ten years: A summary of knowledge acquired and produced by the UN system on drug-related matters”, UN Doc. E/CN.7/2019/CRP.10; Report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2021, UN Doc. E/INCB/2021/1, para. 90.

¹² UN Human Rights Committee, General comment No. 36 (2018) on article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, on the right to life, CCPR/C/GC/36, 30 October 2018, para.37.

¹³ UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 24: Issues relating to reservations made upon ratification or accession to the Covenant or the Optional Protocols thereto, or in relation to declarations under article 41 of the Covenant (Art. 41), para.8.