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FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

WORLD  
COALITION  
AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY

8 May 2026

## Universal Periodic Review: UN member states urged to act on Singapore's use of the death penalty

Ahead of Singapore's fourth Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on 12 May 2026, the undersigned organisations call on member states to urge Singapore to end its use of the death penalty and bring its laws and practices into line with international human rights law and standards. We also call on the Government of Singapore to immediately establish a moratorium on executions and commute all death sentences with a view to the full abolition of the death penalty.

Several of the undersigned organisations, together with other civil society partners, made a detailed stakeholder submission to the UPR process on 10 October 2025 documenting Singapore's use of the death penalty.<sup>1</sup> In the intervening seven months, Singapore has carried out a further 14 executions, bringing the total since its previous UPR in May 2021 to 51 executions – 49 men and two women, of whom 48 were executed for drug-related offences.

Singapore's national report, submitted for its upcoming UPR, makes no reference to the death penalty, capital punishment, or executions.<sup>2</sup> As outlined in the UN's own compilation of information prepared ahead of this review, multiple UN treaty body committees have long called on Singapore to establish a moratorium on executions and move towards abolition of the death penalty.<sup>3</sup> The absence of any engagement with these calls in Singapore's national report is deeply concerning.

<sup>1</sup> Capital Punishment Justice Project and Ors, 'Singapore's 4th UPR: Urgent call for death penalty reform' (Joint Submission, 10 October 2025), <https://www.cpjp.org.au/news/upr-singapore>.

<sup>2</sup> Singapore, *National Report submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 5/1 and 16/21*, UN Doc. A/HRC/WG.6/52/SGP/1 (10 February 2026), <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/WG.6/52/SGP/1>.

<sup>3</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Singapore: Compilation of information prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, UN Doc. A/HRC/WG.6/52/SGP/2 (11 February 2026), <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/WG.6/52/SGP/2>.

## Executions for drug-related offences

Singapore has executed nine men so far in 2026, all for drug-related offences. Seventeen people were executed in 2025 – the highest number since 2003 – including 15 for drug-related offences, five of whom were Malaysian nationals. One of those executed in 2025 was a woman, believed to be the last woman on death row in Singapore.<sup>4</sup> This trajectory is deeply alarming and reflects an intensifying reliance on capital punishment.

Singapore's continued use of the death penalty for drug-related offences is a clear violation of international human rights law and standards, which clarify that the death penalty may only be imposed for the 'most serious crimes'. UN human rights bodies have consistently defined those as crimes of extreme gravity involving intentional killing, and reiterated that drug-related offences never meet this threshold.<sup>5</sup> Singapore is one of only a small number of countries in the world that continues to execute people for drug-related offences, alongside China, Iran, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia.<sup>6</sup>

## Violations of international law and standards

Legal presumptions of trafficking, possession, and knowledge under the Misuse of Drugs Act shift the burden of proof onto defendants in capital cases, in violation of the presumption of innocence – a peremptory norm of customary international law – and other fair trial guarantees.<sup>7</sup>

The mandatory death penalty, which removes judicial discretion to consider the individual circumstances of an offence or an offender, is inherently arbitrary and violates international law.<sup>8</sup> All 51 people executed since Singapore's previous UPR were sentenced under this regime.

The certificate of substantive assistance mechanism under Section 33B of the Misuse of Drugs Act introduces a narrow exception to the mandatory death penalty – but only where the Public Prosecutor chooses to issue one. This places what should be a sentencing decision in the hands of a party to the proceedings rather than the judiciary, undermining the separation of powers, the independence of the courts, and the right to a fair trial.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Kirsten Han, 'Gender and the death penalty' (Blog Post, 12 March 2026), <https://kirstenhan.com/2026/03/12/gender-and-the-death-penalty>.

<sup>5</sup> UN Human Rights Committee, *General Comment No. 36 – Article 6: right to life*, UN Doc. CCPR/C/GC/36 (3 September 2019), para. 35, <https://docs.un.org/en/CCPR/C/GC/36>.

<sup>6</sup> Harm Reduction International, *The Death Penalty for Drug Offences: Global Overview 2025* (Report, 2026), <https://hri.global/flagship-research/death-penalty/the-death-penalty-for-drug-offences-global-overview-2025/>; Amnesty International, *Death Sentences and Executions 2024* (Report, 8 April 2025), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/act50/8976/2025/en/>.

<sup>7</sup> 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*, UN Doc. CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.6 (11 November 1994), para. 8, <https://docs.un.org/en/CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.6>.

<sup>8</sup> UN Human Rights Committee, *General Comment No. 36 – Article 6: right to life*, UN Doc. CCPR/C/GC/36 (3 September 2019), para. 37, <https://docs.un.org/en/CCPR/C/GC/36>.

<sup>9</sup> Amnesty International, *Cooperate or die: Singapore's flawed reforms to the mandatory death penalty* (Report, 11 October 2017), pp.6-7, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/act50/7158/2017/en/>.

The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) expressed concern that Malay persons are disproportionately represented among those sentenced to the mandatory death penalty under the Misuse of Drugs Act, and has called on Singapore to apply a moratorium on the death penalty with a view to abolition.<sup>10</sup> CERD further noted that “associating drug trafficking issues with certain ethnic minority groups, particularly Malays, may exacerbate prejudice and intolerance towards them.”<sup>11</sup>

By removing individualised consideration, mandatory sentencing regimes exacerbate structural and systemic biases within the criminal justice system, denying judges the ability to remedy their disproportionate impacts.

### **Executions carried out while court proceedings are ongoing**

In recent years, Singapore has executed individuals while related court proceedings – including civil applications and professional conduct complaints – were still pending. Most recently, this includes the execution of Lingkesvaran Rajendaren, a Malaysian man executed on 11 February 2026 after the Supreme Court rejected two appeals as he sought judicial review of claims of unfair proceedings at trial and ill-treatment while he was on death row. Several of the undersigned organisations condemned the Supreme Court’s reasoning as:

*“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... reflect[ing] 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.”<sup>12</sup>*

The Government has adopted a policy position that only proceedings directly affecting the legality of a conviction or sentence constitute ‘relevant’ proceedings capable of staying an execution.<sup>13</sup> This approach is inconsistent with UN safeguards designed to protect people facing the death penalty, which provide that capital punishment shall not be carried out while any appeal, recourse procedure, or proceeding relating to pardon or commutation is pending.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, *Concluding observations on the initial report of Singapore*, UN Doc. CERD/C/SGP/CO/1 (2 February 2022), paras. 21-22, <https://docs.un.org/en/CERD/C/SGP/CO/1>.

<sup>11</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Singapore: Compilation of information prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, UN Doc. A/HRC/WG.6/52/SGP/2 (11 February 2026), para. 27, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/WG.6/52/SGP/2>, citing Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, *Concluding observations on the initial report of Singapore*, UN Doc. CERD/C/SGP/CO/1 (2 February 2022), para. 13, <https://docs.un.org/en/CERD/C/SGP/CO/1>.

<sup>12</sup> Amnesty International and Ors, ‘Singapore: Malaysian man hanged in unlawful drug-related execution as rights of those on death row violated’ (Joint Statement, 18 February 2026), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/act50/0723/2026/en/>.

<sup>13</sup> *Lingkesvaran Rajendaren v Attorney-General* [2026] SGCA 4 [40]-[44], [https://www.elitigation.sg/gd/s/2026\\_SGCA\\_4](https://www.elitigation.sg/gd/s/2026_SGCA_4); *Pannir Selvam Pranthaman v Attorney-General* [2025] SGCA 43 [55]-[56], [https://www.elitigation.sg/gd/s/2025\\_SGCA\\_43](https://www.elitigation.sg/gd/s/2025_SGCA_43).

<sup>14</sup> *UN Safeguards Guaranteeing Protection of the Rights of Those Facing the Death Penalty*, Safeguard No. 8, adopted by UN Economic and Social Council resolution 1984/50 (25 May 1984), <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/protection.pdf>.

In practice, this policy has meant that people have been executed before their own testimony could be heard in ongoing proceedings. Pannir Selvam Pranthaman was executed on 8 October 2025 while a complaint he filed against his former lawyer to the Law Society of Singapore remained unresolved – a complaint that the Law Council of Australia warned may have compromised his right to challenge his conviction and sentence.<sup>15</sup> At least two other people were executed in similar circumstances, with complaints against the same lawyer pending at the time of their executions and their testimony never preserved.<sup>16</sup>

### **Access to justice issues**

The Post-appeal Applications in Capital Cases Act 2022 (PACC Act) has further narrowed the legal avenues available to people on death row. Since coming into effect in June 2024, post-appeal applications have been almost uniformly dismissed without oral hearings.

Amendments to the Administration of Justice (Protection) Act in late 2024 extended contempt of court liability to lay persons who assist those on death row in preparing legal applications, deterring family members, civil society organisations, and others from providing such support.

The reduction of execution notification periods to as few as four or five days for individuals who have previously received a stay – a practice upheld by the Ministry of Home Affairs – further constrains the ability of people on death row to exercise their legal rights in the final days of their lives.<sup>17</sup> It can also force such people to choose between spending those last days with family or launching a final court proceeding.

### **Executing persons living with disabilities**

Singapore has executed individuals assessed by psychiatrists to have intellectual and psychosocial disabilities. Despite ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2013, Singapore has not incorporated it into domestic law. As a result, people with disabilities face execution without any legally enforceable right to the procedural accommodations the CRPD requires, rendering any such deprivations of life potentially arbitrary. Singapore's courts have confirmed that CRPD protections do not apply absent domestic legislative implementation.<sup>18</sup>

The CRPD Committee, in its concluding observations on Singapore, has explicitly called on the Government to abolish the death penalty for persons with intellectual disabilities,

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<sup>15</sup> Law Council of Australia, 'Letter to the Law Society of Singapore Regarding Death Penalty Case' (News, 7 March 2025),

<https://lawcouncil.au/media/news/letter-to-the-law-society-of-singapore-regarding-death-penalty-case>.

<sup>16</sup> Roslan bin Bakar v Attorney-General [2024] SGCA 51 [53], [https://www.elitigation.sg/gd/s/2024\\_SGCA\\_51](https://www.elitigation.sg/gd/s/2024_SGCA_51); Masoud Rahimi bin Mehrzad v Public Prosecutor [2024] SGCA 56 [70],

[https://www.elitigation.sg/gd/s/2024\\_SGCA\\_56](https://www.elitigation.sg/gd/s/2024_SGCA_56).

<sup>17</sup> Mohammad Azwan bin Bohari v Public Prosecutor [2024] SGCA 38 [12], [https://elitigation.sg/gd/s/2024\\_SGCA\\_38](https://elitigation.sg/gd/s/2024_SGCA_38).

<sup>18</sup> Nagaenthran a/l K Dharmalingam v Attorney-General [2022] SGCA 26 [57], [https://www.elitigation.sg/gd/s/2022\\_SGCA\\_26](https://www.elitigation.sg/gd/s/2022_SGCA_26).

psychosocial disabilities, and autistic persons, and to immediately cease imposing and carrying out the death penalty in such cases.<sup>19</sup>

## Restrictions on freedom of expression and harassment of human rights defenders

At its third UPR in 2021, Singapore accepted recommendations to ensure that its laws and policies on freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association comply with international human rights standards. The prosecution of an activist under the Public Order Act for peacefully attending candlelight vigils near Changi Prison – with the case heard as recently as April 2026 – sits uneasily with those commitments.

Singapore has systematically used laws and administrative processes to intimidate human rights defenders and suppress legitimate advocacy about the death penalty. The Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act 2019 (POFMA) “provides excessive powers to the government and has been used to target activists and critics”, including civil society organisations and human rights defenders who raise concerns about the use of the death penalty.<sup>20</sup> The Transformative Justice Collective (TJC) – a Singapore-based organisation that supports people on death row and their families, and raises public awareness about capital punishment – has received seven POFMA correction directions since 2023, five within a five-month period in 2024, and was subsequently issued a two-year 'Declared Online Location' order requiring it to display notices on all its platforms stating that its content had communicated multiple falsehoods.<sup>21</sup> In January 2025, TJC and three of its members were summoned for criminal investigation under POFMA. In October 2024, the Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network, then based in Malaysia, received correction directions regarding posts about Singapore's use of the death penalty, demonstrating POFMA's purported extraterritorial reach.<sup>22</sup>

Beyond POFMA, the then Minister for Law and Home Affairs publicly named five anti-death penalty advocates and organisations in Parliament in May 2024, including placing a human rights defender's personal email address on the parliamentary record.

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<sup>19</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Singapore: Compilation of information prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, UN Doc. A/HRC/WG.6/52/SGP/2 (11 February 2026) para. 9, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/WG.6/52/SGP/2>, citing CRPD, *Concluding Observations on the initial report of Singapore*, UN Doc. CRPD/C/SGP/CO/1 (5 October 2022), para. 20, <https://docs.un.org/en/CRPD/C/SGP/CO/1>.

<sup>20</sup> CIVICUS Monitor, 'Singapore: Government continues its crackdown on anti-death penalty activism and other forms of expression' (online, 5 February 2025), <https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/singapore-government-continues-its-crackdown-on-anti-death-penalty-activism-and-other-forms-of-expression/>.

<sup>21</sup> 'Anti-death penalty activist group Transformative Justice Collective handed another POFMA order', *Channel News Asia* (online, 14 December 2024), <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/transformative-justice-collective-handed-fifth-pofma-order-4806911>; Ministry of Digital Development and Information, 'Operators of Transformative Justice Collective's online platforms prohibited from receiving financial benefit due to history of communicating multiple falsehoods' (Media Release, 20 December 2024) [3], [https://www.pofmaoffice.gov.sg/files/media-releases/pofma\\_pr\\_mddi\\_20Dec2024.pdf](https://www.pofmaoffice.gov.sg/files/media-releases/pofma_pr_mddi_20Dec2024.pdf).

<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Home Affairs, 'Issuance of Correction Directions under POFMA regarding Statements by the Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network concerning the Legal Processes for Prisoners Awaiting Capital Punishment and Treatment of Anti-Death Penalty Activists' (Press Release, 9 October 2024) [21], [https://www.pofmaoffice.gov.sg/files/media-releases/pofma\\_pr\\_mha\\_9oct2024.pdf](https://www.pofmaoffice.gov.sg/files/media-releases/pofma_pr_mha_9oct2024.pdf).

The cumulative effect of these actions has created a chilling effect on public discourse about the death penalty in Singapore that is incompatible with Singapore's stated commitment to freedom of expression.

**The undersigned organisations call on member states participating in Singapore's Universal Periodic Review to recommend that Singapore:**

- **impose an immediate moratorium on all executions** with a view to full abolition of the death penalty, and commute all existing death sentences;
- **end its use of the death penalty for drug-related offences**, in line with the 'most serious crimes' threshold under international human rights law;
- **abolish the mandatory death penalty** and restore full judicial discretion in capital cases; and
- **end the use of laws and administrative processes** to silence civil society organisations and human rights defenders who raise concerns about the use of the death penalty.

**This statement is co-signed by:**

Capital Punishment Justice Project

Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network

Australian Injecting and Illicit Drug Users League (AIVL)

ECPM (Together Against the Death Penalty)

Harm Reduction International

Julian Wagner Memorial Fund

The Advocates for Human Rights

The Australian Civil Society Committee on UN Drug Policy

World Coalition Against the Death Penalty