

JOINT PUBLIC STATEMENT

1 August 2026

SINGAPORE: SPREE OF UNLAWFUL EXECUTIONS CONDEMNED AS CLOSE TO HALF OF PEOPLE ON DEATH ROW SENT TO GALLOWS IN 2026

Amnesty International, the Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network (ADPAN), Capital Punishment Justice Project and Harm Reduction International are alarmed by the unrelenting execution spree by the Singapore authorities, following their announcement of the 15th hanging of 2026 on 23 July. Our organizations are dismayed at the continued violations of safeguards and restrictions on the use of the death penalty set out under international human right law and standards, which render these executions unlawful; and urge the government of Singapore to immediately establish a moratorium on all executions as a first step towards abolition of this cruel punishment.

On 23 July 2026, the Central Narcotics Bureau of Singapore announced the execution of a 35-year-old Singaporean man convicted of a drug-related offence.¹ His was the third execution carried out in July alone; and the 15th since the beginning of 2026. The sustained pace of executions follows an alarming rise in executions in 2025, when the yearly total (17) almost doubled the 2024 total (9). This also means that approximately two thirds of those believed to be under sentence of death at the end of 2024 (at least 40) were executed in 19 months – and close to half of those believed to have remained on death row at the end of 2025, hanged in the first half of this year alone.

All executions carried out in 2026 to date were for drug-related offences. We reiterate that 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”.² Several UN bodies, including the International Narcotics Control Board, have repeatedly stated that drug-related offences **do not** meet this threshold, and recommended abolition for these offences.³

All men were sentenced to the **mandatory death penalty**, which removes judges’ power to consider the particular circumstances of the offence and the background of the convicted person.⁴

While very limited information is available for most of these cases, for those whose identity is known to our organizations it has been possible to trace additional violations of international human rights law and standards, including the reliance on the **legal presumption of trafficking** under the Misuse of Drugs Act, based on the amount of drugs a person is found with. When these legal presumptions are invoked, the burden of proof is shifted onto the defendant to rebut the presumption 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.⁵ In addition, presumptions of guilt have also had the effect of lowering the threshold of evidence needed to secure a conviction in capital cases.

¹ Central Narcotics Bureau of Singapore, “Execution of a convicted drug trafficker - 23 July 2026”, 23 July 2026, <https://www.cnb.gov.sg/mediaroom/news/execution-of-a-convicted-drug-trafficker---23-july-2026/>

² 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.

³ Among other examples, 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.

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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.

In at least one case, the judge had found the man 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. The requirement 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, breaking down the separation that must exist between prosecution and court and violating the principle of “equality of arms”.

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.

The international community must not remain silent and take action to hold the Singapore government accountable for the repeated violations of the right to life and other breaches of international safeguards and restrictions carried out in capital cases, including in the name of flawed drug control and security narratives.

This statement is co-signed by:

Amnesty International

Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network (ADPAN)

Capital Punishment Justice Project

Harm Reduction International