



STATEMENT - 28 September 2026

Singapore: Drop Charges against Civil Society Activists and Protect Peaceful Assembly

We, the undersigned, stand in solidarity with the Transformative Justice Collective (TJC) and other civil society advocates in Singapore. We express grave concern about reports of criminal proceedings in connection with anti-death penalty and pro-Palestine advocacy. We urge the Singaporean authorities to withdraw the charges relating to peaceful advocacy and uphold freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

Criminal Proceedings against Civil Society Activists

We received reports that Singaporean authorities have been prosecuting several civil society activists—including Jolovan Wham, Elijah Tay, Kokila Annamalai, Kirsten Han, Rocky Howe, Neo Swee Lin, Lim Kay Siu, and Suraendher Kumarr—for alleged violations of the Public Order Act and other related laws in connection with their advocacy activities. These actions include anti-death penalty activism (such as vigils for individuals facing imminent execution) and pro-Palestine initiatives (such as flying named kites, organising a shoe memorial for Gaza students, delivering petition letters, and chanting slogans). Additionally, individuals reportedly face charges for taking group photos outside the State Courts—which authorities allege constituted an assembly without a permit in a prohibited area—and for refusing to answer police questions during interrogations. Beyond those facing formal charges, several other participants in these events were reportedly issued conditional or stern police warnings.¹

¹ FIDH, *Singapore: Criminal proceedings against human rights defenders Jolovan Wham, Elijah Tay, Kirsten Han, and Kokila Annamalai over peaceful activism*.
<https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/human-rights-defenders/singapore-criminal-proceedings-against-human-rights-defenders-jolovan>

If proven guilty of these charges, the activists may face potential penalties, such as:

- **Public Order Act (POA) Charges:**
 - **Participating in an unauthorised public assembly / assembly in a prohibited area:** First-time convictions typically carry fines of up to SGD 3,000 to SGD 5,000. Repeat offenses or organising an assembly without a permit can result in higher fines (up to SGD 10,000) and potential imprisonment for up to 6 months. (For precedent, Jolovan Wham previously reportedly received fines between SGD 3,200 and SGD 3,500 per charge for similar offenses.)
- **Section 179 Penal Code (Refusing to Answer a Public Servant):**
 - Refusing to answer questions during a police inquiry carries a punishment of up to 1 month in prison, a fine of up to SGD 1,500, or both.
- **Section 298A Penal Code (Promoting Enmity / Disturbance of Public Tranquillity):**
 - Intentionally promoting enmity between different groups on racial or religious grounds carries a significantly harsher penalty of up to 3 years in prison, a fine, or both.

These prosecutions coincide with a surge in state executions, as Singapore reached its reported 19th hanging of the year on the same day that around 300 people gathered at court in solidarity with the charged activists.

Concerns about Freedom of Assembly and Civic Space

The usage of the Public Order Act against human rights defenders may amount to an unjustifiable infringement on the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Permit requirements in violation of international human rights law for peaceful gatherings restrict the democratic space required for civil society to function effectively. This could be compounded by alleged delay in the prosecution of offenses. Bringing charges and issuing warnings in September 2026 for peaceful activities conducted as far back as 2022 may subject advocates to protracted uncertainty. In our view, the use of criminal proceedings in response to peaceful advocacy raises serious concerns about the protection of freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. We believe that individuals should be able to express their views and participate in peaceful gatherings without restrictions that are against international human rights law.

Calls to Action

We strongly call on the Singapore government to:

- Immediately drop charges relating to peaceful advocacy activities.
- Safeguard the right of individuals to hold peaceful demonstrations in compliance with international human rights law.

Endorsed by:

1. Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network (ADPAN)
2. Capital Punishment Justice Project (Australia)
3. World Coalition Against the Death Penalty (WCADP)
4. Coalition Against the Death Penalty (CADP) (Philippines)
5. Together Against the Death Penalty (ECPM)
6. Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Masyarakat (LBHM) (Indonesia)
7. Maldivian Democracy Network (MDN)
8. Malaysians Against Death Penalty & Torture (MADPET) (Malaysia)
9. Taiwan Alliance to End the Death Penalty (TAEDP) (Taiwan)
10. Redemption Pakistan

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