

# WORLD DAY AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY 2023

## Action for Salisbury Amnesty Group

Action to be taken on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> October

**A**mnesty's focus this year is on the use of the death penalty and drugs-related offences. The Salisbury Group have noted the increasing number of such executions taking place in Singapore and you are asked to send a letter or an email to:

Mr K Shanmugam  
Law and Home Affairs Minister  
Ministry of Home Affairs  
Courtyard  
195 Pearl's Hill Terrace  
Singapore 168976  
SINGAPORE

Email: [mps@chongpang.org](mailto:mps@chongpang.org)



## Background

- In 2022, Singapore was 1 of 6 jurisdictions that executed people for non-violent drugs offences, including Iran, China, Saudi Arabia, North Korea and Vietnam.
- Laws in Singapore permit the use of the death penalty for people convicted of trafficking more than 15 g of heroin, 250 g of meth, or 500 g of cannabis.
- In 2022, 11 men are known to have been hanged by the State. Other sources give the number since the resumption of State executions in March 2022 to today's date as 16. Accurate numbers are difficult to obtain because no official figures are released. Information can be obtained only from families and campaigning organisations.
- In April of this year, *Tangaraju Suppiah* became the first person to be executed in Singapore in 2023. His case involved the trafficking of little more than 1 kg of cannabis. This made headlines around the world, with individuals and organisations expressing surprise at the continuing strictness of the State's approach to drugs.
- In July of this year two people were executed following convictions for drugs- related offences – a man, *Mohammed Aziz Hussain*, and a woman, *Saridewi Djamani*. Ms Djamani was the first woman to be executed by hanging for 20 years. Amnesty had called for both executions to be halted.

Human Rights experts from the UN have said 'a disproportionate number of minority persons were being sentenced to the mandatory death penalty in Singapore.' Research conducted by the Transformative Justice Collective (TJC) shows that almost two-thirds of prisoners on death row were of Malay ethnicity.

- The TJC believe there to be 54 people on Singapore's death row, with all but 3 sentenced to death for drugs-related offences.
- In August of this year, the Singapore Government announced a plan to execute more prisoners convicted of non-violent drugs offences.
- Law and Home Affairs Minister Mr K Shanmugam in the course of an interview with Bloomberg in May 2022 stated:

***The Government had to act in the best interest of society by keeping the death penalty;***

***The deterrent effect of the death penalty against drug trafficking saved thousands of lives;***

***More than 65% of Singaporeans supported the death penalty.***

*(Note: This interview took place in 2022, but I understand the majority continue to support the mandatory death penalty. Mr Shanmugam continues to hold his ministerial role.)*

## Action

Please write/email in your own words, but suggested points you might include:

- Draw attention to the day and date - 10<sup>th</sup> October – 21st WDADP
- Express concern at the executions that have taken place in Singapore this year for drugs-related offences, and at the Government's plans for more;
- Call for the commutation of all the death sentences imposed for drugs-related offences to terms of imprisonment, or for release – depending on the time served;
- (?As a member of Amnesty, you are opposed to the death penalty in all circumstances as a cruel and inhumane punishment.) Where countries do retain capital punishment, International Human Rights Law prohibits the use of the death penalty for crimes other than 'the most serious' and that cause lethal consequences. Non-violent drugs offences do not meet this threshold.
- Research does not bear out Mr Shanmugam's claim that the death penalty acts as a deterrent to drugs-related crimes.
- More than two-thirds of countries have abolished the death penalty in law or practice. Singapore's close neighbour Malaysia has observed an unofficial moratorium on executions since 2018 and has recently repealed the mandatory death penalty, including for drugs-related offences.

*Please post/send your appeal on 10<sup>th</sup> October.*

**Thank you for taking this action.**