

JOINT PUBLIC STATEMENT

27 September 2025 ACT 50/0341/2025

SINGAPORE: CRUEL AND UNLAWFUL DRUG-RELATED EXECUTION OF MALAYSIAN MAN RENEWS URGENCY FOR MORATORIUM ON EXECUTIONS

Amnesty International and the Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network condemn in the strongest terms the execution in Singapore of Malaysian national Datchinamurthy a/l Kataiah on 25 September 2025 and are alarmed at the continued violations of international human rights law and standards associated with the use of the death penalty in the country.¹ 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.

CRUEL ANGUISH AS EXECUTION TEMPORARILY STAYED

Datchinamurthy a/l Kataiah was set to be executed at 6am on 25 September 2025, following a shortened notice period that started on 21 September. According to information received by our organizations, just over five hours before it was due to be carried out, the execution was temporarily stayed to allow the President of Singapore, Tharman Shanmugaratnam, to consider his clemency request. The family was later notified that the execution would proceed at approximately 1.40pm, after the appeal was rejected.²

The last-minute stay of execution left Datchinamurthy a/l Kataiah and his relatives in excruciating anguish for approximately seven hours.

We oppose the death penalty unconditionally as the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. We strongly condemn the treatment of Datchinamurthy a/l Kataiah and his family, which amounts to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment in line with international standards on the death penalty.³ Torture and other ill-treatment or punishment are absolutely prohibited under international human rights law,⁴ and this is also a rule of customary international law binding on all states, whether or not they are parties to particular treaties which include this prohibition.

This continued pursuit of executions by the Singapore government at all costs, including with shortened notice periods, must immediately stop.

DEATH SENTENCE UNLAWFUL UNDER INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW AND STANDARDS

Datchinamurthy a/l Kataiah was convicted and sentenced to the mandatory death penalty after he was found in possession of 44.96 grams of diamorphine (heroin), presumed to have knowledge of the drug and to possess it for the purpose of trafficking under the Misuse of Drugs Act and convicted.

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

¹ Central Narcotics Bureau, “Execution of a Convicted Drug Trafficker - 25 September 2025”, 25 Sep 2025, <https://www.cnb.gov.sg/NewsAndEvents/News/Index/execution-of-a-convicted-drug-trafficker--25-september-2025>

² We, The Citizens, “No more. Not in my Name”, 26 September 2025, <https://www.wethecitizens.net/no-more-not-in-my-name/?ref=we-the-citizens-newsletter>

³ UN Human Rights Committee, *Earl Pratt and Ivan Morgan v. Jamaica*, Communication No. 210/1986, U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/35/D/210/1986 (1989), paras.13.7 and 14.

⁴ Article 2 of the Convention against Torture; Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; Committee Against Torture, General Comment No.2, UN Doc.CAT/C/GC/2, 24 January 2008, para.1; International Committee of the Red Cross/Red Crescent, Rule 90. Torture and Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment.

gravity involving intentional killing”.⁵ Several UN bodies, including the International Narcotics Control Board, have repeatedly clarified that drug-related offences **do not** meet this threshold.⁶

We also remain alarmed by the continued resort to the **mandatory death penalty**, which removes judges’ power to consider the particular circumstances of the offence and the background of the convicted person, also in violation of international law and standards;⁷ and 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 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.⁸ In addition, presumptions of guilt have also had the effect of lowering the threshold of evidence needed to secure a conviction in capital cases.

URGENT NEED FOR MORATORIUM ON EXECUTIONS AS CRITICAL FIRST STEP

So far in 2025, Singapore has executed 11 men, including nine for drug-related offences. In recent years, only two countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) were known to have carried out executions – Singapore and Viet Nam. With the recent abolition of the death penalty for transporting drugs in Viet Nam on 25 June 2025, Singapore is due to be the last ASEAN country to carry out executions for this offence.⁹

Several others remain at imminent risk of execution in Singapore, including Malaysian nationals Pannir Selvam Pranthaman, Saminathan Selvaraju, Lingkesvaran Rajendaren and Singapore national Jumaat bin Mohamed Sayed. We 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.

⁵ 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.

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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.

⁸ 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.

⁹ UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Viet Nam: Parliament votes to abolish death penalty for some offences”, 27 June 2025, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/06/viet-nam-parliament-votes-abolish-death-penalty-some-offences>