**Singapore’s Submission to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights’ Request for Information for the report of the un secretary-general to the human rights council on the question of the death penalty, pursuant to decision 18/117 and resolution 22/11 of the human rights council**

1. Singapore continues to be one of the safest countries in the world. We rank consistently high in Gallup’s Global Law and Order Index, including being ranked first in 2022, and we are among the top three countries for “Order and Security” in the World Justice Project’s Rule of Law Index. Underpinning these outcomes is an impartial criminal justice system, with strong enforcement of effective laws and robust safeguards to ensure that persons accused of crime receive a fair trial and due process, as well as an independent and effective judiciary.

**Capital Punishment in Singapore**

1. Capital punishment in Singapore is applied only after due process of law and with robust judicial safeguards. It is applied only to the most serious crimes in Singapore – crimes which cause grave harm to life and to society such as murder, terrorist bombing, and trafficking of large quantities of drugs, and it has been effective in deterring those crimes. It is not applied to persons below the age of 18 years at the time of the offence, persons of unsound mind, and pregnant women.
2. Any person who faces capital charges is ensured legal representation under the Legal Assistance Scheme for Capital Offences. Once charged with a capital offence, legal counsel is offered to the person free of charge, regardless of the person’s nationality. All persons sentenced to capital punishment in Singapore are accorded due process under the law, and there are additional safeguards in capital cases.[[1]](#footnote-1)
3. Every country has the sovereign right to develop its own legal systems and determine appropriate legal penalties, considering its own circumstances and in accordance with its international law obligations. This right was reaffirmed most recently, and for the fourth consecutive time in the biennial 77th UN General Assembly resolution on a “Moratorium on the use of the death penalty” in 2022 and should be respected.

**Capital Punishment has Deterred Serious Crimes**

1. Capital punishment serves the larger interest of Singapore society by deterring the commission of these crimes and ensuring our people’s fundamental human right to live in safety and security. To illustrate this, based on Singapore’s experience:
2. In 1961, capital punishment was introduced for kidnapping. Kidnapping cases fell by more than 93%, from 29 cases to 2 or fewer cases annually, in all but two years since then.
3. In 1971, capital punishment was introduced for firearm offences. The number of such cases fell by 39% from 174 to 106 cases the next year, reversing the hitherto rising trend. Today, firearm offences are rare in Singapore.
4. Singapore is located near the Golden Triangle and is a lucrative market for the illicit drug trade. Singapore would be flooded with drugs if we did not have a zero-tolerance policy.
5. In 2021, a record one billion methamphetamine tablets and more than 155 tonnes of methamphetamine were seized in Southeast Asia. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has stated that the region is “swimming in methamphetamine” and that “organised crime treats the Mekong region like a playground”. Due to the large supply, the price of methamphetamine has fallen in the region.
6. The illicit manufacture, trafficking and use of heroin remains a significant security and health problem in the Mekong region.[[2]](#footnote-2) Heroin is the second most frequently trafficked drug in Southeast Asia, after methamphetamine. The UNODC has noted that Myanmar is now the world’s largest source of opium,[[3]](#footnote-3) and that poppy cultivation in Myanmar is expanding and becoming more productive, as farms adopt increasingly sophisticated means of cultivation and enhanced practices such as use of irrigation systems.[[4]](#footnote-4) The amount of opium and heroin that can be produced is anticipated to increase.
7. Singapore has successfully kept the drug problem under control and has prevented major drug syndicates from establishing themselves in Singapore. This can be attributed to the strong deterrent effect that capital punishment has on drug trafficking.
8. When mandatory capital punishment was introduced in 1990s for the trafficking of more than 1,200g of opium, there was a 66% reduction in the average net weight of opium trafficked, as compared to the four-year period before the introduction.
9. A study conducted by the Singapore Ministry of Home Affairs in 2018 found that drug traffickers deliberately reduced the amount of drugs they carried in order not to exceed the capital threshold.[[5]](#footnote-5) It showed that drug traffickers were willing to risk imprisonment, but not capital punishment.
10. A 2021 study which surveyed over 7,200 people from regional countries found that:
11. 87% believed that capital punishment deters people from trafficking substantial amounts of drugs into Singapore; and
12. 83% believed that capital punishment is more effective than life imprisonment in discouraging people from trafficking drugs into Singapore.[[6]](#footnote-6)
13. Capital punishment has contributed to the improvement of the drug situation in Singapore over the decades. Between the 1990s and today, even though the national population has increased by 80%, the number of drug abusers arrested has halved (i.e., 6,000 to 3,000). This is despite the increase in the supply of drugs from countries in the region, and drugs becoming more accessible during this period.

**Strong Domestic Support for Capital Punishment**

1. The Singapore Government engages Singaporeans on capital punishment, including conducting regular surveys on capital punishment. Recent surveys show that a significant and clear majority of Singaporeans continue to support capital punishment and consider it to be an effective deterrent against the most serious crimes. A 2021 survey of Singapore residents found that:
2. Most believed that capital punishment – whether mandatory or discretionary – is appropriate as the punishment for intentional murder (88%), use of firearms (82%) and trafficking a significant amount of drugs (73%).
3. Most believed that the mandatory capital punishment is appropriate as the punishment for intentional murder (81%), use of firearms (71%) and trafficking a significant amount of drugs (66%).
4. Most believed that capital punishment deters intentional murder (86%), use of firearms (86%), and trafficking a significant amount of drugs (83%).[[7]](#footnote-7)

**Conclusion**

1. International law does not prohibit capital punishment. There is no international consensus against the use of capital punishment when it is imposed in accordance with due process of law and judicial safeguards.
2. Every country has the sovereign right to choose the approach that best suits their own circumstances, and in accordance with its international law obligations. Singapore will continue to implement evidence-based measures that have worked well for us.

**29 March 2024**

**Word Count**: 1062 words

1. All persons sentenced to capital punishment have the right to seek a pardon or commutation of the capital sentence and the right to have one’s conviction and sentence reviewed by a higher tribunal. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. World Drug Report 2020, Booklet 3, UNODC. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Southeast Asia Opium Survey 2023, “Overview” (page iii), https:///www.un library.org/content/books/9789213587393. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Southeast Asia Opium Survey 2023, “Key Takeaways” (page v). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Some of the thresholds for key drug trafficking offences punishable with capital punishment in Singapore are as follows: Cannabis (more than 500 grammes), Diamorphine (more than 15 grammes), Methamphetamine (more than 250 grammes), Opium (more than 1,200 grammes and containing more than 30 grammes of morphine). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. **Perception of Residents in Regional Cities on Singapore’s Crime Situation, Law and Safety**, conducted in 2018 and 2021, <https://www.mha.gov.sg/docs/default-source/default-document-library/htbsc-2021-study-on-perception-of-residents-in-regional-cities-on-singapore-s-crime-law-and-safety.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. **Survey on Singapore Residents’ Attitudes towards the Death Penalty** (2021), <https://www.mha.gov.sg/docs/default-source/default-document-library/publication-dp-survey-2021.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)