

PUBLIC

To: Health Professionals
From: Medical Office/Asia Program
Date: 24 February 2004

MEDICAL ACTION

SINGAPORE

The death penalty: A hidden toll of executions

"I've got more important things to worry about"
Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong during an interview with the BBC in September 2003 in response to a question asking why he did not know the precise number of people executed in 2003.

"He was educationally sub-normal, but that does not absolve him from his criminal deeds"
Judge sentencing Malaysian, Rozman Jusoh, to death, August 1995 (Newspaper, 15 August 1995) See page 6 for case details

Summary

On 15 January 2004 AI launched its report, *Singapore: The death penalty: A hidden toll of executions* (ASA 36/001/2004). Among other things the report describes the scope of the death penalty in Singapore, conditions on death row, trials and procedures and the lack of public debate on the issue.

The report also includes specific recommendations to the Singapore authorities including taking immediate steps towards abolition by imposing a moratorium on all executions and commuting all pending death sentences to terms of imprisonment. AI is also calling on the authorities to end the policy of secrecy on the issue by making public information including on the number of death sentences passed and carried out each year, on clemency procedures and clemencies granted; to encourage debate in Parliament and other public fora and take leadership in preparing public opinion for abolition. In addition, AI is urging the Singapore authorities to sign and ratify key international human rights treaties.¹

On 16 January 2004, the Singapore Government issued a Press Release in reaction to AI's report (see Appendix 1). On 30 January, the government further clarified its position in a 19-page rebuttal. To view the full response, see the Ministry of Home Affairs website:

¹ While Singapore is not a party to major international human rights treaties including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, there have been a number of resolutions adopted by UN bodies which apply to all member states, including Singapore. For more information, see page 4 of report.

http://www2.mha.gov.sg/mha/detailed.jsp?artid=990&type=4&root=0&parent=0&cat=0#_ftnref11):

The Government's Response stated, *inter alia*, that:

- "Singapore imposes capital punishment only for the most serious crimes";
- The death penalty deters potential criminals (in particular drug-traffickers) from committing crimes and so contributes to making "Singapore one of the safest place in the world to live and work in";
- AI deliberately chose to misrepresent the facts to "advance its political campaign against the death penalty", and made errors, particularly with regards to the number of foreigners executed.

The International Secretariat (IS) regards the Government's Response as an opportunity to enter into dialogue and to encourage further public debate. One of the problems AI has faced is the very limited information that the Singapore authorities release on the death penalty. While the Response provided some extra information, it is by no means comprehensive. The IS has therefore replied by letter to the Minister of Home Affairs, stating that the Response failed to allay the organization's concerns in relation to the application of the death penalty in Singapore, but welcoming the opportunity to clarify the Government's position and to access further statistical data.

Goals of Action

The principal purpose of this medical action is to call on the Singapore Medical Association to adhere to professional ethical obligations. In addition, it will target the Singapore government to reiterate AI's concern about the use of the death penalty in Singapore and urge them to support AI's call for a moratorium on the death penalty as well as to raise awareness of AI's concerns on the death penalty in Singapore with your own governments.

Timing

The Singapore action is running from 15 January to 15 May 2004.

Special instructions

AI Health Professionals' Network Coordinators should consult with the appropriate person in their section office before carrying out any outreach or publicity activities.

Relevant Materials

Report: "Singapore- The death penalty: A hidden toll of executions" -AI Index: ASA 36/001/2004. <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGASA360012004>

Press release: "Singapore: High execution rate shrouded in secrecy" -AI Index: ASA36/002/2004. <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGASA360022004>

Response from the Singapore Government, 16 January 2004 (attached)

Background

The death penalty is prescribed in Singapore for a wide range of offences. However in recent years it is only known to have been imposed for drug trafficking, murder and firearms offences, all of which carry a mandatory death sentence. The Kidnapping Act also provides for the death penalty for the crime of kidnapping for ransom. According to the

Criminal Procedure Code, the death penalty may not be imposed on pregnant women or on youth offenders who are aged under 18 at the time of the offence. Singapore continues to defy world trends towards abolition of the death penalty. In 1998 the death penalty was expanded to include a mandatory death sentence for manufacturing, importing, exporting or trafficking of 15g or more of heroin, 30g of cocaine, 30g of morphine, 200g of cannabis resin, 500g of cannabis, or 1.2kg of opium. Possession of these drugs is regarded as prima facie evidence of trafficking.

More than 400 prisoners have been hanged in Singapore since 1991, mostly for drug trafficking, giving the small city-state the highest known execution rate in the world relative to its population of just over four million people. The execution figures include a significant percentage of foreign nationals. It is not known how many prisoners are currently on death row, but the death toll from executions continues to rise – in 2003, at least 13 prisoners were hanged at Changi prison.

In Singapore the death penalty often falls disproportionately and arbitrarily on the young, drug users, the poorly educated, impoverished or unemployed and migrant workers. Observers in Singapore have drawn attention to the need to combat the existing social conditions which can give rise to drug abuse and addiction, rather than resorting to execution as a solution.

The position of the Singapore Medical Association (SMA)

In recent years the Association has publicly stated its support for capital punishment. In an article entitled “Conversations with Past Presidents [of the Association],” Dr Tan Kok Soo (SMA President from 1993-1996) gave the following account of the SMA’s response to protests from foreign medical associations, particularly the American Medical Association, at the SMA’s position that it is acceptable for doctors to participate in pre- and post-caning examinations².

“The Singapore Medical Association takes the ethical code of the medical profession very seriously. We have no difficulties adhering to the provisions in Singapore laws concerning crime and punishment. These laws, which include caning and death penalty for certain criminal offences reflect Singapore’s own set of social standard and order. It is because of our tough laws that we are able to keep Singapore orderly and relatively crime-free. As doctors, we are indeed glad that Singapore’s approach to crime and punishment helps to preserve life and quality of life for the majority of law-abiding citizens and residents, unlike the situation in many cities in the US, where people, including children, are injured, maimed or killed by criminals at an alarming rate. We believe that prevention is better than cure and that the interests and concern of the victim are more important than those of the criminals.”

AI is not aware of there having been any change in the SMA position since this interview in 1999.

The World Medical Association (of which the SMA is not a member) has a position against the doctor playing any role in an execution. Some national associations (such as the British Medical Association) are opposed to the death penalty per se.

The role of doctors in the death penalty in Singapore is not known. However, it is very likely that one or more doctors will examine the body of the hanged man or woman to determine if or when the prisoner’s heart has stopped beating. In the those cases where one or

² Singapore Medical Journal 1999; Vol 40(04). Dr Tan was writing in response to criticism from foreign medical associations of the SMA position regarding a caning sentence imposed on a young US citizen, Michael Fay in 1999.

more organs have been taken from the executed prisoner for transplantation purposes it is virtually certain that doctors have been an integral part of the execution process. Amnesty International is calling on the Singapore Medical Association to make clear any involvement in executions beyond certifying the death of the prisoner is unethical. It is further urging the SMA to support AI's call for a moratorium on executions pending moves to abolish the punishment.

Threats to a fair trial

AI is gravely concerned that presumptions of guilt contained in a series of clauses in the Misuse of Drugs Act and the Arms Offences Act, (which provide for the mandatory death penalty for specific crimes) erode the right to a fair trial and are contrary to the universally guaranteed right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty³. Such clauses have led to the executions of people who have been found to have been in the possession of fairly small amounts of drugs such as cannabis, the use of which is treated as a minor offence in some countries, or is not even criminalized.

The UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions has expressed concern about the presumption of guilt in Singapore law and has urged the government to amend the Misuse of Drugs Act in order to bring it in line with international standards.⁴

Official secrecy

Official information about the use of the death penalty in Singapore is shrouded in secrecy. Some executions, but by no means all, are reported in the press. The government does not normally publish statistics about death sentences or executions, however on rare occasions it has made information about executions available to journalists or in response to a parliamentary question. From this information AI has been able to compile statistics of executions. The organization has written to the Singapore authorities requesting official statistics but has received no response.

In September 2003, in an interview with the BBC, Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong was questioned about the number of people executed in 2003. He stated that he believed it was "*in the region of about 70 to 80*". When asked why he did not know the precise number he said, "*I've got more important things to worry about.*"⁵ Two days later he retracted his statement, saying that the death penalty had in fact been carried out on ten occasions so far during the year.⁶

Amnesty International recorded at least four death sentences passed in 2003 but the true figure is likely to be higher. They include Yen May Woen, a 36-year-old woman hairdresser sentenced to death for possession of 30 grams of heroin, and Ismail Abdul Rahman, aged 37, sentenced to death for killing a former colleague. It is not known how many prisoners are currently awaiting execution.

Lack of public debate

There is virtually no public debate about the death penalty in Singapore. Controls imposed by the government on the press and civil society organizations curb freedom of expression and are an obstacle to the independent monitoring of human rights, including the death penalty.

³ See, for example, article 11 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence.

⁴ UN document no: E/CN.4/1997/60/Add.1 ("The Special Rapporteur wishes to reiterate his call on the Government of Singapore to change its Drug Act so as to bring it into line with international standards. The Special Rapporteur considers that the Misuse of Drug Act, which partially shifts the burden of proof to the accused, does not provide sufficient guarantees for the presumption of innocence and may lead to violations of the right to life when the crime of drug trafficking carries a mandatory death sentence." Para. 438)

⁵ BBC HARDtalk interview with Goh Chok Tong, televised on 23 September 2003.

⁶ AFP, 25 September 2003.

Despite such restrictions, there have been some attempts at raising public awareness about death penalty issues in Singapore. For example, the non-governmental organization the Think Centre has published its concerns on its website and in October 2003 it urged the government to impose a moratorium on executions.⁷ In July 2001 then parliamentarian and prominent human rights campaigner, J.B. Jeyaretnam, called for a parliamentary debate about the case of a drug user who was facing execution, urging the Cabinet to consider various aspects of the case during examination of his clemency appeal. J.B. Jeyaretnam was given just a few minutes to speak before his arguments were rebutted by the Minister of State for Law and Home Affairs. No further discussion took place about the case, or about the death penalty in general, and the execution went ahead two months later.⁸

The government's stance

The Singapore authorities have been criticized by both the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU) for their use of the death penalty. The EU has expressed particular concern about Singapore's use of the mandatory death penalty and high executions rates.⁹

The Government of Singapore has consistently argued that the use of the death penalty is not a question of human rights. It has vigorously defended its stance that executions have been effective in deterring crime, particularly drug trafficking. In a letter addressed to the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and circulated in 2001 at the 57th session of the Commission on Human Rights, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Singapore to the UN stated: “...*the death penalty is primarily a criminal justice issue, and therefore is a question for the sovereign jurisdiction of each country. [...] the right to life is not the only right, and [...] it is the duty of societies and governments to decide how to balance competing rights against each other.*”¹⁰

In 2002 the Government of Singapore criticized the work of the Special Rapporteur, claiming she had “*repeatedly exceeded her mandate and degraded the credibility of her office*” after she expressed concern about the case of two men facing execution for drug trafficking.¹¹

Singapore signed a statement disassociating itself from a UN resolution adopted in April 2003 calling for the establishment of moratoria on executions pending complete abolition and stating that the abolition of the death penalty contributes to the progressive development of human rights.¹²

Claiming that the death penalty has been effective in controlling the trade in illicit drugs, the Singapore authorities reported an overall decline in the number of drug users arrested between 1994 and 2001.¹³ However, despite the use of the death penalty and high execution rates, drug addiction continues to be a problem, particularly among the poorly educated, impoverished, unemployed and young people from broken homes. According to the website of the Singapore Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB), a total of 3,393 drug users were arrested in 2002. The number of new drug users increased by 16% compared to the figures for 2001. The CNB announced that it had seized 63 kilograms of heroin and 34 kilograms of cannabis during 2002, and also reported a significant increase in the use of methamphetamine. This is despite the fact that the scope of the death penalty was increased in 1998 to introduce a mandatory death sentence for importing, exporting, or trafficking in more than 250 grams of the methamphetamine.

⁷ See <http://www.thinkcentre.org>

⁸ See case of Zulfikar Bin Mustaffah, page 6.

⁹ European Union Annual Report on Human Rights, 2002, page 87. Member states of the EU resolved in a 1998 policy paper on capital punishment to “*work towards universal abolition of the death penalty.*”

¹⁰ UN document: E/CN.4/2001/153

¹¹ UN document: E/CN.4/2003/3/Add.1.

¹² Commission on Human Rights Resolution 2003/67 of 24 April 2003.

¹³ See “Singapore Drug Situation 2002”, <http://www.cnb.gov.sg/report/index.asp?page=244>

Conditions on death row

Executions are carried out by hanging and take place at Changi Prison on Friday mornings at dawn. Relatives are allowed to collect the prisoner's body several hours later, once the death certificate has been issued.

Due to a lack of independent inspections of prisons it is difficult to establish the facts about conditions on death row. Relatives have informed AI that prisoners under sentence of death are kept in strict isolation in individual cells measuring approximately three square metres. The cells are thought to have walls on three sides, with bars on the remaining side. Cells are sparse, furnished only with a toilet and a mat for sleeping, but no bedding. Inmates are allowed the use of a bucket for washing. It is believed that they are not permitted to go outside for fresh air or exercise. They may receive one 20-minute visit per week in a special area where they are separated from visitors by a thick pane of glass and have to communicate via a telephone. About four days before the execution date, as a special concession, prisoners are permitted to watch television or listen to the radio and are given meals of their choice, within the prison's budget. They are also allowed extra visits from relatives but no physical contact is permitted at any time before the execution.

The authorities maintain strict controls on visitors and may refuse permission to visit to anyone who does not possess the correct papers proving their relationship with the prisoner. AI was told by one relative that the authorities had even refused her permission to bring in crayon drawings made by her young daughter. Families of convicts are normally informed of the impending execution date less than one week beforehand, causing them great anxiety and uncertainty.

"You are advised to make the necessary funeral arrangements. If you are unable to do so, cremation will be carried out by the state." Extract from a letter signed by the Superintendent of Changi Prison notifying the family of Malaysian national Vignes s/o Mourthi of his impending execution.¹⁴

Cases of prisoners executed

Executed for selling cannabis: Rozman Jusoh from Malaysia

Rozman Jusoh, a 24-year-old labourer from Malaysia, was arrested allegedly after trying to sell 1.04 kg of cannabis to an undercover officer of the Central Narcotics Bureau. In March 1995 he was acquitted of the capital offence of drug trafficking after the trial judge found him to have *"sub-normal intelligence, with an IQ of 74."* Instead he was found guilty of the lesser offence of drug possession and sentenced to a prison term. After the prosecution filed an appeal, the appeal judge sentenced him to death, stating, *"He was educationally sub-normal but that does not absolve him from his criminal deeds."*¹⁵ In an interview with Singapore's *New Paper* his mother said, *"When someone's talking to him, he would merely smile or look at you blankly. I don't know how he ever made it through to Secondary 3 in school."* She said that the family had planned to enrol him in religious classes and steer him back to the "right path" once he was released from prison. Rozman Jusoh was hanged in April 1996.

Female shop assistant executed for drug trafficking: Poon Yuen-chung from Hong Kong

Poon Yuen-chung, a shop assistant from Hong Kong, was 18-years-old when she and her 17-year-old friend, Lam Hoi-ka were arrested at Changi Airport, Singapore, after arriving from Bangkok. The two girls had gone on holiday to Bangkok after telling their parents they were going on a local camping trip. Airport officials found heroin hidden in a secret compartment in their luggage. Both girls denied any prior knowledge of the drugs and said they had been

¹⁴ The Star, 26 September 2003.

¹⁵ New Paper, 15 August 1995.

befriended by a Chinese couple in Bangkok who had taken them out to dinner and on sightseeing tours, and later bought suitcases for them. *“My sister is a simple and naïve girl who can do foolish things sometimes”*, Poon Yuen-chung’s sister later told the *Sunday Morning Post*, a Hong Kong newspaper. Despite appeals for clemency, Poon Yuen-chung was executed in April 1995¹⁶. Her friend Lam Hoi-ka was sentenced to life imprisonment as she was under 18 at the time of the offence.

Drug user executed: Zulfikar Bin Mustaffah

Zulfikar Bin Mustaffah, aged 32, an unemployed Singaporean, was sentenced to death in November 2000 after being arrested in possession of a package containing approximately 70 grams of heroin. He had allegedly agreed to deliver the package to a man he did not know, but claimed that he was unaware of the contents. Addicted to drugs since the age of 14, Zulfikar Bin Mustaffah dropped out of school at 15 and had spent most of his life in drug rehabilitation centres or in detention. Because Zulfikar had a drug-related criminal record it was very difficult for him to find work. During a sitting of parliament in July 2001, the then parliamentarian J.B. Jeyaretnam, called for a parliamentary debate on the case, saying, *“It is a known fact that someone who is given to drug taking over a period of time will have his mental faculties affected, his power to think carefully and to rationalise. He becomes weak-minded and particularly [...] vulnerable to people who try to use him or exploit him.”*¹⁷ Zulfikar Bin Mustaffah was hanged in September 2001.

Executed after denying involvement in a cannabis case: Thiru Selvam

Thiru Selvam, a 28-year-old Singaporean father of two young children, was arrested after a friend of his was found in possession of approximately 800 grams of cannabis. The friend reportedly told the police that the drugs belonged to Thiru Selvam. At his trial the judge is said to have told him that if he confessed he would be sentenced to 25 years in prison and 24 strokes of the cane. However Thiru Selvam reportedly refused to confess and claimed he was innocent. He was sentenced to death in September 2000, while his friend was given a 25-year prison term.

Thiru Selvam’s mother died when he was a baby. His father remarried but began drinking heavily and died when Thiru Selvam was only 16. He began using drugs when he was 14 years old and was admitted to a drug rehabilitation centre the following year. Thiru Selvam was hanged in September 2001.

Executed after an unfair trial: Vignes s/o Mourthi¹⁸ from Malaysia

Vignes s/o Mourthi, a 23-year-old Malaysian national, grew up in a poor family and received only basic education. He was arrested while carrying a plastic bag containing approximately 27 grams of heroin. At his trial he stated that he had been asked by an old family friend, Moorthy A/L Angappan, to carry the bag from Malaysia to Singapore, where he travelled every day for work. He insisted he was unaware of the bag’s contents.

Amnesty International is concerned about a number of alleged irregularities during the trial proceedings. The judge refused to adjourn the trial hearing to grant Vignes s/o Mourthi’s request to appoint a new lawyer, following his complaint that he was inadequately represented. His conviction appears to have been based largely on a written record, provided by the prosecution, of an incriminating conversation which allegedly took place between him and an officer of the Central Narcotics Bureau. Vignes s/o Mourthi denied the conversation took place. The court however deemed the evidence to be admissible despite the fact that no date had been recorded on it and neither Vignes s/o Mourthi nor his lawyer were aware of its existence before it was produced in court.

¹⁶ A second woman, Tong Ching-man, also 18-years-old, was executed on the same day in an unrelated drugs case.

¹⁷ See <http://www.thinkcentre.org/article.cfm?ArticleID=973>

¹⁸ “s/o” stands for “son of”. In Malay this is indicated as “A/L”.

Following rejection by the President of Vignes s/o Mourthi's appeal for clemency, his new lawyer, convinced of his innocence, lodged a motion for a re-trial on the grounds that there had been a miscarriage of justice and that he had not received a fair trial. Two similar motions lodged by him were rejected. On 25 September 2003, Chief Justice Yong Pung How dismissed his final appeal for a re-trial on the basis that the case could not be reopened as it had already been dealt with by the courts. He reportedly told the lawyer, "You can say he is an innocent man, but as far as the law is concerned, he has been found guilty and convicted. You better say goodbye to him, that's all you can do."¹⁹ Vignes s/o Mourthi and Moorthy A/L Angappan were hanged the following morning at dawn. In a distressing scene following the execution, distraught family members reportedly climbed onto the hearse carrying Vignes' body and pummelled his chest, trying to revive him.²⁰

Executed for killing a man during an argument: Arunprakash Vaithilingam from India

Arunprakash Vaithilingam, a 24-year-old migrant worker from Tamil Nadu, India, went to work in Singapore as a ship's electrician in 2000, sharing a cramped flat with several other migrant workers. He was sentenced to death for killing one of his room-mates, who was stabbed to death with a kitchen knife during a drunken argument. At his trial Arunprakash Vaithilingam stated that he had not intended to kill his room-mate and that initially he did not even realize he had stabbed him. He and several friends who witnessed the argument immediately rushed the wounded man to hospital but he was pronounced dead shortly afterwards. Despite eyewitness evidence, the High Court found him guilty of murder, which carries a mandatory death sentence. Appeals for clemency lodged on his behalf by the Government of India were rejected and he was hanged in October 2003

Recommendations

To the Singapore Medical Association

Please write polite letters in your own words in English or your own language to Dr Lee Pheng Soon, President of the Singapore Medical Association, using professionally-headed paper if you use this in your profession:

- Say that you are writing, as a health professional, in response to AI's report: *Singapore: The death penalty: A hidden toll of executions* (ASA 36/001/2004).
- State that while you support the right of countries to take measures to control crime you oppose the death penalty and the possible role of physicians in assisting in it.
- Express concern that Singapore is going against world trends towards restriction and abolition of capital punishment.
- Urge the Association to ensure that their members abide by internationally agreed codes of medical ethics and in particular not to participate in executions
- Urge the Association to support the introduction of a moratorium on executions pending the restriction and abolition of the punishment.
- Make reference to the World Medical Association position on doctors and capital punishment (see below) and ask if the Singapore Medical Association has a policy for its members on this subject.
- Seek a response from the Association.

World Medical Association Resolution on Physician Participation in Capital Punishment

Adopted by the 34th World Medical Assembly Lisbon, Portugal, September 28 - October 2, 1981 and amended by the 52nd WMA General Assembly in Edinburgh, Scotland

¹⁹ Straits Times, 26 September 2003.

²⁰ Straits Times, 26 September 2003.

during October 2000

RESOLVED, that it is unethical for physicians to participate in capital punishment, in any way, or during any step of the execution process.

To your national medical associations:

Write to your own professional body:

- Send a copy of AI's report and introduce yourself. Ask them to bring the report to the attention of their members;
- Urge them to consider raising the issue with the Singapore Medical Association and in particular the possibility of the SMA supporting a moratorium on the death penalty with a view to abolition of the punishment in Singapore.

To the Minister of Home Affairs:

- Say that you are writing, as a health professional, in response to AI's report: *Singapore: The death penalty: A hidden toll of executions* (ASA 36/001/2004).
- Welcome the response from the Singapore government to AI's report, and explain that you appreciate the opportunity to clarify the Government's position.
- Urge the government to provide a complete, disaggregated, annual record of all executions that have taken place from 1991 until the present day. The record should include statistics on the crimes, the nationalities, the ages and the educational and employment background of those executed.
- Express concern about the use of the mandatory death penalty, and the use of the presumption of guilt clauses in the Drugs Act and the Arms Offences Act which is contrary to the universally guaranteed right of all suspects to be considered innocent until proven guilty.
- Ask for further clarification on prison conditions, and on the system of visits of inspection by justices. What is the frequency of such visits? Are their reports made public? What findings and recommendations have they made on the issues raised in AI's report?
- Acknowledge the need of governments to combat crime and acknowledge the harm that legal and illicit drugs can cause.
- Ask for scientific evidence that shows that the use of the death penalty in Singapore is deterring murder, firearms offences and drug-trafficking more effectively than other punishments would do..
- Ask for specific information on the types of people who have been executed for drug offences, in particular how many of them have been major drug traffickers and how many were minor figures in the trade of illicit drugs.
- Urge the minister to support the introduction of a moratorium on the death penalty with a view to abolishing capital punishment in Singapore and the commutation of all pending death sentences to terms of imprisonment.
- Invite a response from the Minister.

COPIES

Please send copies of the letters you write to the SMA to Khaw Boon Wan, Acting Minister of Health and Dr Lee Suan Yew, President of the Singapore Medical Council. Include a cover letter with the following points:

- Urge them to support the introduction of a moratorium on the death penalty with a view to abolishing capital punishment in Singapore.

- Give some background about AI and its fundamental opposition to the death penalty as a violation of the most fundamental human right – the right to life. (If you wish you may refer also to other abolitionist arguments such as the risk of executing the innocent and the irreversibility of the punishment; the cruelty of the death penalty; the suffering imposed on a prisoner's family; the use of the death penalty to persuade the public that action is being taken to deal with crime rather than developing truly effective measures to control crime or to dealing with social problems which may give rise to crime).
- Invite a response from them.

Please send copies of the letters you write to the Minister of Home Affairs to Goh Chok Tong, Prime Minister. Include a cover letter:

- Urging him to introduce a moratorium on the death penalty with a view to abolishing capital punishment in Singapore;
- Invite a response from him.

You may also send copies of the letters you write to the Minister of Home Affairs to the relevant person in your home government concerned with foreign affairs and to representatives of the government of Singapore in your country. In all cases urge them to support a moratorium on the death penalty in Singapore with a view to abolition and invite a response.

Publicity

Please consult your section office before carrying out any publicity.

You may alert the health professional media in your country to AI's report, or write for the general press.

Addresses

The Honourable Goh Chok Tong
 Prime Minister
 Office of the Prime Minister
 Istana Annexe
 Singapore 238823
 Email: goh_chok@pmo.gov.sg
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Wong Kan Seng
 Minister of Home Affairs
 New Phoenix Park 28,
 Irrawaddy Road
 Singapore 329560
 Fax: + 65 6734 4420
 Email: Wong_Kan_Seng@mha.gov.sg
Dear Minister

Dr Lee Pheng Soon
 President
 Singapore Medical Association
 2 College Road
 Level 2, Alumni Medical Centre

Singapore 169850
Fax: + 65 6224 7827
E-mail: membership@sma.org.sg
Mark e-mail subject line: For President
Salutation: Dear Mr Lee

Khaw Boon Wan
Acting Minister for Health
Ministry of Health
16 College Road
College of Medicine Bldg.
Singapore 169854
Email: moh_info@moh.gov.sg
Mark e-mail subject line: For Minister of Health
Salutation: Dear Minister

Prof. Shanmughan Jayakumar
Minister of Law
100 High Street
The Treasury #08-02
Singapore 179434
Salutation: Dear Minister

Dr Lee Suan Yew
President, Singapore Medical Council
Ministry of Health
Email: moh_smc@moh.gov.sg
Mark subject line: For Singapore Medical Council
Dear Dr Lee

If you receive no reply within two months of dispatch of your letter, please send a follow-up letter seeking a response, referring to your previous letter(s). Please check with the medical team at the International Secretariat before resending letters.

Please send any replies received to the medical team at AI: medical@amnesty.org).

Thank you for any actions you are able to organise.

Appendix 1- Singapore Government Press Release

**Media Relations Division, Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts,
MITA Building, 140 Hill Street, 2nd Storey, Singapore 179369
Tel: 6837-9666**

COMMENTS BY MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS SPOKESMAN

I have read the news reports about Amnesty International's criticisms of Singapore's use of the death penalty. The government will issue a detailed rebuttal in due course.

Amnesty International's allegations are really absurd. For example, I do not know what Amnesty International means when it says that the execution rate in Singapore is "shrouded in secrecy".

It is widely recognised that Singapore has one of the most fair and transparent legal systems in the world. All trials involving capital cases are tried in an open court and reported in the

press. Even appeals heard by the Court of Appeal are held in an open court. Hence, all judicial decisions involving the death penalty are open to public scrutiny. All accused persons are also properly represented by lawyers. If the accused person is unable to afford a lawyer, the state will appoint him one, from a panel of private lawyers. Furthermore, no person is executed until all avenues of appeal for clemency have been exhausted.

Amnesty International is obviously trying to drum up a campaign against the death penalty. The proper way to change the law is through the constitutional route. If a person wants to advocate a particular stand, he should campaign on the basis of his platform and get the people of Singapore to vote him into Parliament. But he won't find much support here. Most Singaporeans know that our tough but fair system of criminal justice makes Singapore one of the safest places in the world to live and to work in.

MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS- 16 JANUARY 2004