



## JOINT PUBLIC STATEMENT

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# SINGAPORE: DROP ALL CRIMINAL CHARGES AGAINST GOVERNMENT CRITIC AND REPEAL REPRESSIVE FALSEHOODS ACT

The Singapore government must immediately drop all criminal charges against Jay Ish'haq Rajoo and repeal the Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act (POFMA). Rajoo is the first person to face criminal charges under the Act, an alarming escalation since the law came into force in October 2019, which underscores the law's incompatibility and disproportionate impact on the right to freedom of expression.

On 11 March 2026, Rajoo, a vocal critic of the government, was [charged](#) with three counts of communicating “false statements of fact” under Section 7 of POFMA. He was also charged with two counts of defamation against former Prime Minister and Senior Minister Lee Hsien Loong and the Minister for National Development Chee Hong Tat, and one count of “promoting feelings of ill will between different racial groups” under Sections 500 and 298(A)(a) of the Penal Code. If found guilty, he could face a fine of up to \$39,300 USD and five years imprisonment under POFMA, and further fines and up to five years in prison for defamation and “promoting feelings of ill will” under the Penal Code.

In 2023, several ministers including [the Minister for National Development](#) issued Rajoo with POFMA Correction Direction orders for posting TikTok videos raising concerns about [the use of the Central Provident Funds](#), a compulsory savings and pension plan for Singaporeans, and alleging that [the government penalized citizens that did not vote for them](#). The orders required Rajoo to publish new posts stating that the videos had contained “false statements of fact” and directing users to the government’s clarification. He posted the required correction notices. TikTok was also required to communicate correction notices to all Singapore-based users who had viewed the original posts.

In 2024, Rajoo was issued a two-year conditional warning by the police and POFMA Office for the videos, requiring him to refrain from “criminal conduct” within this period. In 2025, the Acting Minister for Culture, Community and Youth issued Rajoo with another [POFMA Correction Direction order](#) for a TikTok video that claimed the government was using public resources to develop leaders selectively of Chinese ethnicity. Rajoo again posted the required correction notice. In March 2026, the government stated that as his 2025 video breached the conditional warning, Rajoo would be [criminally charged](#) for TikTok videos he posted in 2023 and 2025 under POFMA and other laws.

## POFMA'S CORRECTION DIRECTION ORDERS

POFMA empowers ministers to issue correction direction orders requiring individuals to publish a correction notice alongside their original post, article or video. This notice directs users to a government “clarification,” so readers see the alleged falsehood and the government’s version of the “facts.” Online platforms can also receive correction direction orders. Under Section 7, individuals who communicate “false statements of fact” may face a fine of up to \$39,300 USD or imprisonment of up to five years, or both. Companies may face fines of up to \$389,530 USD. Under Section 15, individuals who fail to comply with correction direction orders may face a fine of up to \$15,600 USD and a prison term of up to 12 months. Companies who fail to comply may face fines of up to \$389,530 USD. The law gives authorities very broad powers to act against online content they disagree with, including by issuing orders and imposing fines or even prison time. Because ministers have wide discretion to decide what counts as “false,” the government can effectively determine what is deemed true or untrue in the public sphere. The law also does not provide a public interest defence for those challenging POFMA orders. In some cases, these orders have blocked independent media outlets and human rights organisations from receiving online donations needed to support their work.

Since introducing POFMA in 2019, the Singapore government has weaponized the law to suppress criticism of public officials and Singapore authorities by independent media, opposition politicians, government critics and human rights defenders. In 2025, multiple POFMA orders targeted government critics, including those speaking out about the death penalty and other issues deemed sensitive by the authorities. This pattern continued in November 2025, when the website MalaysiaNow was [blocked](#) for allegedly communicating online falsehoods and refusing to comply with POFMA

orders. It had highlighted concerns about the execution, treatment and right to fair trial of Malaysian national Pannir Selvam Pranthaman.

Many provisions under POFMA do not comply with international law and standards and its implementation has resulted in violations of serious impacts on the right to freedom of expression. Overly broad prohibitions on disseminating information, especially those based on concepts such as “false news” or “misinformation,” are incompatible with international human rights law. Any restriction on freedom of expression of false and misleading information must meet the three-part test of legality, legitimate aim and necessity and proportionality. Criminal sanctions are generally not a justifiable response to mis- and disinformation. During the Universal Periodic Review of Singapore’s human rights record in 2021, multiple states [at the UN Human Rights Council](#) called on the Singapore government to review or repeal POFMA to ensure it does not interfere with the right to freedom of expression.

Against this background of increasing repression, the undersigned organizations urge the Singapore authorities to drop all charges against Jay Ish’haq Rajoo for peaceful expression. Authorities must also end any restrictions, including through the issuance of correction directions, aimed at silencing critics rather than serving a legitimate goal. POFMA is inherently incompatible with international law and standards on the right to freedom of expression, and its clear and sustained use to target critics, independent media and opposition figures underscores the need for the Singapore government to end its selective use of the law and the urgency of repealing it entirely.

## **SIGNATORIES**

Amnesty International

CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation

FORUM-ASIA

Human Rights Watch