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Qwek Kee Chong, then aged 22, was convicted in November 1987 on four charges of armed robbery after pleading guilty at a trial where he was not defended by any lawyer. He was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment and was also ordered to be given 12 strokes of the cane on each of the four charges. On 8 April 1988, Qwek was given 48 strokes of the cane, all in one continuous session at Changi Prison. Prison sources reportedly said that it was "quite remarkable" that Qwek was able to take that much punishment. Family members said that Qwek had to be hospitalised at the Changi Prison Hospital after the caning.

In March 1991, Qwek filed a suit against the Government of Singapore claiming damages and costs for "grievous injury to (his) buttocks". Qwek also claimed damages on the ground that the number of strokes inflicted on him was twice the maximum number of 24 strokes allowed by the law. Section 228(1) of the Criminal Procedure Code states: "In no case shall the caning awarded at any one trial exceed 24 strokes in the case of an adult or 10 strokes in the case of a youthful offender".

Even when the strokes are fewer than the number inflicted on Qwek, the physical and psychological scars remain for years. A report in the 12 October 1988 issue of the *New Paper*, a Singapore publication, asks: "What actually happens in the room where the cane is master and the convict its cowering slave?" A businessman, aged 40 at the time of the report, answers the question. He describes in his own words his experience of being caned at the age of 17 when he was given 12 strokes for trying to escape from a reform centre where he had been sent for housebreaking.

"There were five of us who were to be flogged that afternoon. Each of us hoped that we would be the last. The flogging warder would have tired by then. But as it turned out, I was the first.

"Two prison warders took me to the flogging room. I found that I needed them as support later. My legs went weak when I saw the flogging warder bending the cane with both hands. He was warming up for me.

"The warder was very muscular and big-sized. He looked right through me as if I wasn't there. Another warder stripped me and strapped me to a wooden trestle by my ankles and wrists. By then I was already shivering and perspiring with fear.

"Then I heard the cane. It sounded like a plank hitting the wall. A split second later I felt it was tearing across my buttocks. I screamed and struggled like a mad animal. All I thought was that I want to run away. If I'm not tied up, one stroke could keep me running for a mile.

"And I just could not control my screams. It went on and on, one stroke, one minute. Some lashes fall on the same spot, splitting open the skin even more.

"Some prisoners urinate and even faint because of the pain. I felt giddy and went limp on the trestle at the last stroke. My bleeding buttocks throbbed with pain and felt like they were on fire.

"A few prisoners pretend to faint to escape more strokes but the warder will go on flogging to see if

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you cry out. That's because if you're conscious, you will scream.

"After we were flogged, a medical officer applied some antiseptic on the wounds. My buttocks then swelled to twice their normal size. My thighs went blue-black. I had to go without shorts for more than two weeks so that my wounds could heal. I couldn't sit or sleep on my back or bathe all this time either.

**"The pain burns in your mind long after it is over. Until now I have nightmares about it.**

**"Sometimes my friends who happen to see the scars ask me about them. It is very embarrassing. I tell them that I have had the marks since childhood."**

In 1974, the Director of Prisons, Quek Shi Lei, described the degree of force used during caning and its physical consequences.

"The officer uses the whole of his body weight and not just the strength of his arm. He holds the cane rigidly at arms length and pivots on his feet to deliver the stroke.

"The skin at the point of contact is usually split open and after three strokes the buttocks will be covered with blood."

This form of punishment was inflicted on 602 prisoners in 1987 and 616 prisoners in 1988, Foreign Minister Wong Kan Seng informed parliament in June 1989. Of the 1,218 prisoners caned during the two years, 984 were Singapore nationals and 234 were foreigners.

Caning is mandatory for crimes like attempted murder, armed robbery, rape, drug trafficking, vandalism and illegal immigration. It is an optional penalty for crimes like extortion, kidnapping and causing grievous hurt. Females, males aged over 50 and males sentenced to death cannot be caned. A caning sentence cannot be executed by instalments.

According to Section 228(3) of the Criminal Procedure Code, caning is to be inflicted with a *rattan* which should not be more than half an inch (1.27 cms.) in diameter. (A *rattan* is a type of cane made from the stem of a particular kind of palm tree.)

Section 231(1) of the Code states: "The punishment of caning shall not be inflicted unless a medical officer is present and certifies that the offender is in a fit state of health to undergo such punishment." Section 231(2) stipulates: "If during the execution of a sentence of caning a medical officer certifies that the offender is not in a fit state to undergo the remainder of the sentence the caning shall be finally stopped."

Amnesty International opposes caning which is a cruel, inhuman and degrading form of punishment prohibited by international human rights standards, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 5), the Torture Convention (Articles 2 and 3) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 7).

Amnesty International believes that the role of doctors and medical personnel during the infliction of caning conflicts with international standards of medical ethics. Article 4(b) of the United Nations'

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Principles of Medical Ethics adopted in 1982 states that it is a breach of medical ethics for doctors and other medical personnel to "certify or participate in the certification of prisoners or detainees for any form of treatment or punishment that may adversely affect their physical or mental health...or to participate in any way in the infliction of such treatment or punishment..."

Article 1 of the World Medical Association's Declaration of Tokyo adopted in 1975 states that "the doctor shall not countenance, condone or participate in the practice of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading procedures". Article 3 states that the doctor "shall not be present during any procedure" which constitutes cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

Amnesty International urges the authorities in Singapore to ensure that no further sentences of caning are carried out and to move for its abolition in law. The organisation is gravely concerned that doctors and other medical professionals who are present during caning procedures are contravening international standards of medical ethics.