**JOINT STATEMENT**

16 January 2025

## Singapore: End harassment and intimidation of Transformative Justice Collective

We, the undersigned 11 organizations, condemn in the strongest terms the latest restrictions imposed by the Singapore government on activists from the Transformative Justice Collective (TJC), a civil society group actively opposing the death penalty and advocating for human rights in the country. These orders are an undue restriction on the right to freedom of expression, create a climate of fear and have the effect of stifling debates on the human rights concerns surrounding the use of the death penalty in Singapore. The Government must immediately bring an end to the reprehensible campaign of harassment and intimidation against the human rights defenders from TJC, withdraw the direction orders and ensure the protection of the right to freedom of expression for all.

### The Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act (POFMA) orders

On 20 December 2024, the Ministry of Digital Development and Information of Singapore issued an order declaring TJC's website and social media accounts as "Declared Online Locations" (DOL(s)) under Section 32 of the Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act 2019 (POFMA). The order requires TJC to carry a notice on all their online platforms alerting viewers that the platform "had communicated multiple falsehoods, and that viewers should exercise caution when accessing it for information". It further directs that TJC not be allowed to receive any financial or other material benefit from operating the online platforms; and that individuals and companies must not provide financial support to TJC's online platforms "if they know or have

reasons to believe that by doing so, they will promote the communication of falsehoods in Singapore on these platforms."[1] These restrictions are to be in place until 20 December 2026.

The 20 December order is the latest in a series of orders issued under the POFMA against TJC in recent weeks. Out of the 27 orders that the Singapore Ministry of Home Affairs issued under the POFMA since 1 July 2024, seven have directly targeted activists from TJC or TJC itself, all relating to posts against the death penalty. An additional order issued on 9 October targeted the Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network, a regional civil society network of which TJC is a member. A further order was issued against the online publication The Online Citizen on 16 December, in relation to statements the media outlet had made critical of POFMA orders against the TJC. Additionally, the authorities issued seven Targeted Correction Directions against social media companies, including LinkedIn, META, Tik Tok and X, to request them to issue correcting posts in relation to statements made on the use of the death penalty in Singapore.

**Continued intimidation and climate of fear targeting death penalty and other criticism**

We are gravely concerned at the continued intimidation and climate of fear that the Singapore authorities have created around anti-death penalty activism and other human rights concerns through POFMA orders. Issued by the Minister for Home Affairs, the Minister for Digital Development and Information and the POFMA Office, the POFMA orders targeting those who criticize the handling of death penalty cases in Singapore have the broader effect of curtailing the right to freedom of expression and human rights activism in the country and of preventing fully informed debates on the ongoing use of the death penalty and other matters of public policy.

The latest order, in particular, will have a significant impact on the operations of TJC as it threatens the organization's ability to operate freely and carry out their human rights work safely within the country. The order on 20 December designating TJC's website and social media accounts as "Declared Online Locations" has a two-year operational period and the effect of further limiting scrutiny on the practice of the death penalty and human rights concerns in Singapore.

Scrutiny of the use of the death penalty in Singapore is already restricted due to the limited transparency that surrounds it; and other restrictions on the dissemination of information and public gatherings in Singapore. Human rights defenders should be free to discuss and advocate new human rights ideas and principles without fear of reprisals. We demand that the harassment of activists ceases at once.

**Disproportionate restrictions to the right to freedom of expression**

The authorities must act in accordance with international human rights law and standards including by upholding the right to freedom of expression for those who are critical of government policies. Restrictions to the right to freedom of expression must be clearly and narrowly defined in law and conform to the strict tests of necessity and proportionality to a

[1] Ministry of Digital Development and Information of Singapore, Operators of Transformative Justice Collective's online platforms prohibited from receiving financial benefit due to history of communicating multiple falsehoods, 20 December 2024, https://www.pofmaoffice.gov.sg/files/media-releases/pofma_pr_mddi_20Dec2024.pdf

legitimate aim.[2] POFMA orders are disproportionate to any possible perceived threat and provide the government unfettered powers to stifle criticism, in violation of the right to freedom of expression. Such orders have targeted human rights activists and other critics of the government, including members of TJC. The orders have created a widespread climate of fear around any attempt to debate or criticize any aspect of Singapore's use of the death penalty or other areas of government policy.

We call on the government of Singapore to cease the use of POFMA orders to stifle criticism of the authorities; to revoke the orders already issued against human rights defenders, civil society organizations and online platforms; and to take the necessary steps to abolish POFMA and other laws that unduly restrict the right to freedom of expression.

**This statement is co-signed by:**

Amnesty International

Australians Against Capital Punishment

Capital Punishment Justice Project

CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation

ECPM – Together Against the Death Penalty

Harm Reduction International

Human Rights Watch

International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

Julian Wagner Memorial Fund

World Coalition Against the Death Penalty

World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

[2] UN Human Rights Committee (HRC), General Comment No. 34, 12 September 2011, UN Doc. CCPR/C/GC/34, para 22.