

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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## **Singapore: President must repeal 'cruel' mandatory imposition of death penalty**

Amnesty International urges the President of Singapore S. R. Nathan to reconsider Yong Vui Kong's clemency petition and commute his mandatory death sentence immediately. Yong Vui Kong, a 21 year old, is scheduled to be hanged on 11 December 2009.

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.

A mandatory death sentence imposes the ultimate cruel, inhumane and degrading punishment without any possibility of taking into account the circumstances of the person charged, or the circumstances around the particular offence. The court is not given discretion to sentence the person convicted to an alternative punishment.

Yong Vui Kong, a Malaysian citizen, was arrested in June 2007 by officers from the Central Narcotics Bureau. He was charged with trafficking 42.27 grams of heroin and, as provided by the Misuse of Drugs Act, automatically received a mandatory death sentence in January 2009.

International human rights standards prohibit mandatory death sentencing even for the most serious crimes on the grounds that it constitutes an arbitrary deprivation of life and a violation of the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. Article 9(1) of the Singaporean Constitution states that "No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty save in accordance with law".

A constitutional appeal challenging the mandatory imposition of a death sentence on Yong Vui Kong, as provided for in the Misuse of Drugs Act, is due to be considered on 8 December by the Court of Appeals. As such, his case would be referred back to the trial judge for reconsideration. On 1 December the President of Singapore rejected Yong Vui Kong's petition for clemency. The Court of Appeals has already rejected an earlier appeal against his death sentence in November. Yong Vui Kong received a stay of execution from the Singapore Court of Appeals on 3 December.

Amnesty International calls on the President of Singapore S.R. Nathan to commute all death sentences which have been imposed, and immediately introduce a moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

Public Document

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