

## **Statement on the Execution of Lingkesvaran Rajendaren in Singapore**

The Commonwealth Lawyers Association (“CLA”) is concerned by the execution of Lingkesvaran Rajendaren (“Lingkesvaran”) in Singapore on 11 February 2026.

Lingkesvaran was convicted of trafficking diamorphine and was sentenced to death on 15 October 2018. His appeal was dismissed by the Court of Appeal on 27 March 2019. Following the dismissal of his appeal, Lingkesvaran made eight post-appeal applications without success. His petitions to the President of Singapore for clemency were also refused.

Lingkesvaran’s execution was carried out despite a pending civil suit, filed on 9 February 2026, alleging wrongful acts done, neglect and/or default committed by public officers within the Singapore Prison Service in breach of the Prisons Act 1933 and the Prisons Regulations. An application for a stay of execution pending the resolution of the civil suit was rejected by the Court of Appeal in a detailed grounds of decision in [2026] SGCA 4 which outlined why the pending civil suit was an “*abuse of process filed for the sole purpose of delaying the Applicant’s impending execution*”. The Court of Appeal was satisfied that the pending civil suit for permission to make a post-appeal application in a capital case did not have a reasonable prospect of success and there was not exceptional circumstance warranting the grant of stay of execution. The execution proceeded on 11 February 2026.

Since resuming executions in 2022 following a two-year pause during the COVID-19 pandemic, Singapore has carried out executions at an escalating rate: 11 executions in 2022, 5 in 2023, 9 in 2024, 17 in 2025, and 4 executions already as of mid-February 2026 (including Lingkesvaran). The 17 executions carried out in 2025 represent the highest annual figure in over twenty years. The trajectory of these numbers reflects an unmistakable intensification of Singapore’s use of the death penalty, overwhelmingly for drug-related offences. As a reflection of its society’s views, surveys in recent years among Singapore residents show a strong and increased public support for the death penalty, particularly for drug trafficking and serious crimes such as murder.

### **The CLA reiterates that:**

- Under Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), a sentence of death “may be imposed only for the most serious crimes”.
- The UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions has noted that the imposition of the mandatory death penalty is contrary to international human rights law, as judges are deprived of the ability to consider mitigating circumstances of the convicted person, and, critically, that the death penalty should not be imposed for drug-related crimes as such offences do not meet the threshold of “the most serious crimes”.
- The UN Human Rights Committee’s General Comment No. 36 on the right to life reinforces that drug-related offences can never serve as the basis for the imposition of the death penalty.

- Over 170 countries worldwide have abolished the death penalty in law or practice, reflecting a global trend toward abolition.
- While Singapore is not party to the ICCPR, customary international law principles regarding the protection of fundamental human rights apply universally.
- Lingkesvaran was one of four individuals who filed a constitutional challenge against the legal presumptions of guilt under Singapore's Misuse of Drugs Act 1973 that had been relied upon in their convictions. These presumptions, which reverse the burden of proof onto the accused, raise serious concerns regarding the right to be presumed innocent and other core fair trial guarantees under international human rights law. The challenge was ultimately dismissed.

**The CLA further notes that:**

- Under Article 22P(1) of the Constitution of Singapore, the President has a power of clemency, pardon or reprieve of any offender.
- In August 2025, Singapore's Cabinet advised the President to grant clemency for the first time in 27 years, demonstrating that clemency remains a viable constitutional mechanism under Article 22P(1) of the Constitution of Singapore.
- The power of clemency serves as a crucial safeguard against irreversible miscarriages of justice.

Noting all the above and cognisant of the international rules and obligations applicable to all nations and the above-mentioned provisions of the Constitution of Singapore, the CLA emphasises that human rights obligations transcend borders, particularly within the Commonwealth family of nations, and accordingly:

- Condemns the execution of Lingkesvaran and the alarming pace of executions in Singapore;
- Calls on the Government of Singapore to impose an immediate moratorium on executions and to adhere to international human rights standards and obligations;
- Calls upon the President of Singapore to exercise the clemency powers under Article 22P(1) of the Constitution in respect of all persons currently on death row, with the aim of commuting their death sentences;
- Urges the Government of Singapore to ensure that all individuals facing the death penalty have meaningful access to justice, including the right to have pending legal proceedings heard and resolved before any execution is carried out;
- Urges all Commonwealth nations to reaffirm their commitment to the protection of the right to life and to work toward the universal abolition of the death penalty.

**25<sup>th</sup> February 2026**

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