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**Summary prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner  
for Human Rights in accordance with paragraph 15 (c) of the  
annex to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1**

**Singapore\***

The present report is a summary of 18 stakeholders' submissions<sup>1</sup> to the universal periodic review. It follows the structure of the general guidelines adopted by the Human Rights Council. It does not contain any opinions, views or suggestions on the part of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), nor any judgement or determination in relation to specific claims. The information included herein has been systematically referenced in endnotes and, to the extent possible, the original texts have not been altered. Lack of information or focus on specific issues may be due to the absence of submissions by stakeholders regarding these particular issues. The full texts of all submissions received are available on the OHCHR website. The report has been prepared taking into consideration the four-year periodicity of the first cycle of the review.

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\* The present document was not edited before being sent to United Nations translation services.

## **I. Background and framework**

### **A. Scope of international obligations**

1. Joint Submission 1 (JS1) noted that Singapore remained on record with some of the least number of ratifications of international human rights conventions and to date had only acceded to the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) and the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC), in addition to the *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of Children in armed conflict*. JS1 also recalled that Singapore had placed many reservations on key principles of the two conventions to which it had acceded.<sup>2</sup>
2. JS1, Think Centre (TC), Organization for the Empowerment of Singaporeans (OFES) and Alliance for Reform and Democracy in Asia (ARDA) recommended that Singapore accede to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).<sup>3</sup>
3. JS1, TC and Joint Submission 4 (JS4) recommended that Singapore accede to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESR) and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (MWC).<sup>4</sup>
4. JS1 and TC also recommended that Singapore accede to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.<sup>5</sup>
5. Singapore Institute of International Affairs (SIAA) recommended that Singapore accede to and ensure implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and its Optional Protocol.<sup>6</sup> Joint Submissions 2 and 3 (JS2 and JS3) and TC made a similar recommendation.<sup>7</sup>
6. JS4 further recommended that Singapore ratify the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime; and the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol.<sup>8</sup>
7. JS4 recommended that Singapore support the proposed ILO Convention on Decent Work for Domestic Workers, supplemented by Recommendations at the International Labour Conference in 2011, with a view to ratifying the Convention upon its enactment.<sup>9</sup>

### **B. Constitutional and legislative framework**

8. Singapore Institute of International Affairs (SIIA) noted that Singapore did not have comprehensive disability legislation which would serve to move away from viewing persons with disabilities as “objects” of charity towards viewing them as “subjects” with rights, who are capable of claiming those rights and making decisions based on their free and informed consent, as well as being active members of society.<sup>10</sup>
9. JS4 recommended that Singapore enact an anti-human trafficking law that identifies victims of trafficking according to terms consistent with the Palermo Protocols, provides protection to them, further enables prosecution of human traffickers, and provides police with training and education related to trafficking.<sup>11</sup>

### **C. Institutional and human rights infrastructure**

10. TC noted that there was currently no national human rights institution and no plans on record by the Government to consider establishing such institution. TC urged the Government to establish such institution, and to consider how best to harmonise domestic legislation, policies and practices with international human rights obligations, so as to protect and promote the rights of all people in Singapore.<sup>12</sup> SIIA recommended that Singapore establish a national human rights centre to act as a focal point for discussion, research, analysis, training and capacity building; to promote human rights and to provide input to the ASEAN Inter-Governmental Commission on Human Rights as well as other ASEAN or UN-related human rights mechanisms and agencies.<sup>13</sup>

11. JS4 similarly recommended that Singapore establish an independent national human rights commission, as other ASEAN states had done, to investigate, monitor and report on human rights violation, and to provide education and information in the field of human rights.<sup>14</sup> JS1 recommended that Singapore establish an independent commission on equal opportunities to review and abolish statutory guidelines that contribute to discrimination and racial inequality.<sup>15</sup>

### **D. Policy measures**

12. JS2 noted that the Government of Singapore, as matter of practice, did not publicly announce any concrete action plans with regard to the implementation of its human rights obligation at the national level.<sup>16</sup> JS1 encouraged the Government of Singapore to engage in a more meaningful way with civil society organisations and concerned individuals in the promotion and protection of human rights; and to recognise the role which civil society can play in national and regional human rights mechanism and processes through participation, monitoring and reporting, and the formulation of recommendations.<sup>17</sup>

## **II. Promotion and protection of human rights on the ground**

### **A. Cooperation with human rights mechanisms**

13. JS1 called on the Government to continue to engage with the UN special procedures and in particular to positively respond to the invitation requests by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders and the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions.<sup>18</sup>

### **B. Implementation of international human rights obligations**

#### **1. Equality and non-discrimination**

14. JS1 noted that the principle of non-discrimination was specified in Article 12 of the Constitution, but was limited to citizens only. The Government was resistant to enact anti-discrimination legislation to address discriminatory practices in society and often preferred to adopt an educational and promotional approach. This approach was problematic insofar as persons encountering discrimination often had no administrative recourse except in respect of specified categories of discrimination listed in certain laws, such as the Employment Act.<sup>19</sup>

15. JS2 noted a lack of anti-discrimination laws that can protect disabled people and allow them to access employment and live independently.<sup>20</sup>

16. People Like Us (PLU) noted that there was no legislation forbidding discriminatory practices in employment. Prejudice against LGBT persons manifested itself in discrimination by many private sector organisations, both in recruitment and promotion. Without anti-discrimination or equal opportunity legislation there was no recourse for affected persons.<sup>21</sup>

17. Joint Submission 3 (JS3) recommended that Singapore repeal the partial immunity for marital rape that remained in force in the Penal Code; amend Article 12(2) of the Constitution, so as to bar discrimination on the grounds of gender and sexuality; implement stronger protections for pregnant women against discriminatory employment practices; offer citizenship as of right to foreign women married to Singaporean men; review the application of inheritance laws to Muslim women; and review policies that seek to discriminate or make distinctions on the basis of race, religion or language.<sup>22</sup>

## **2. Right to life, liberty and security of the person**

18. AI noted that Singapore continued to sentence people to death and to carry out executions. The death penalty was mandatory for crimes such as murder, unlawful possession of firearms and drug trafficking, which included any possession of illegal drugs over a certain weight. The Government did not provide information on the number of death sentences, executions or details about those executed. The actual number of death sentences and executions might therefore be much higher than figures occasionally published in the media.<sup>23</sup> AI stated that the imposition of the death penalty, particularly the provision for the mandatory death sentence for certain offences, violated the right to life.<sup>24</sup> In this connection, AI recommended that Singapore immediately impose a moratorium on executions, with a view to complete abolition; that it make public information about past executions and death sentences handed down by the courts; and that it review the Penal Code and the Misuse of Drugs Act, with a view to repealing all provisions on mandatory death sentencing and removing all presumption of guilt clauses.<sup>25</sup>

19. Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism (Singapore) (MARUAH) recommended that the Government review the scope of capital offences, so as to ensure that the death penalty was imposed only in the most serious of crimes; that it was not used in the context of group crimes in which the accused person had not personally intended to commit murder; that provisions for mandatory death penalty be immediately repealed; that the criminal process be reviewed to ensure that capital cases underwent the most rigorously fair pre-trial and trial process, with access to counsel immediately upon arrest, an effective system for supervision of the extraction and recording of confessions by the police, and a repeal of the use of presumptions in capital cases. The Government should also publish persuasive and objective evidence of the deterrent effect of the death penalty.<sup>26</sup>

20. Singapore Anti-Death Penalty Campaign (SADPC) also recommended adopting a more reasonable approach to drug-related problems, noting that the imposition of the mandatory death sentence was inconsistent with the criteria of absolute necessity and proportionality.<sup>27</sup> International Harm Reduction Association (IHRA) made similar recommendations regarding the death penalty.<sup>28</sup> SADPC further recommended that an independent Pardons Board be established so that clemency appeals for cases involving the death penalty could be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.<sup>29</sup>

21. AI noted that Singapore's laws provided for caning as a punishment for a broad range of offences, sometimes in addition to imprisonment.<sup>30</sup> AI recommended immediately putting a stop to caning as a form of punishment and repealing all laws providing for this punishment.<sup>31</sup> Human Rights Watch (HRW) also recommended ending the use of all forms of corporal punishment, including caning, and repealing all legislation that permits caning as a punishment for criminal offenses, and in the military, prisons, reform schools and educational institutions.<sup>32</sup>

22. Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (GIEACPC) noted that corporal punishment was lawful in the home and in schools. GIEACPC further noted that in the penal system, corporal punishment was lawful as a sentence for crime and as a disciplinary measure in penal institutions, including the Singapore Boys Home, where it was applied to boys as young as 13. In the military, the Singapore Armed Forces Act (1972) and the Singapore Armed Forces (Disciplinary Barracks) Regulations (1990) allowed for caning up to 24 strokes for a variety of offences, including for boys below the age of 18. Boys under 16 could be caned up to 10 strokes. In this context, GIEACPC noted that military service was compulsory for all males. Corporal punishment was explicitly prohibited in child-care centres, but there was no prohibition of corporal punishment in other forms of childcare.<sup>33</sup>

23. SIIA noted that laws and procedures guarding against the arbitrary deprivation of liberty were subject to significant exceptions. Persons accused of offences deemed to be prejudicial to Singapore's security or the maintenance of public order could be arrested and administratively detained without warrant or trial under the *Internal Security Act* ("ISA"). Further, the *Criminal Law (Temporary Provisions) Act* ("CLTPA") enabled the Minister of Home Affairs to indefinitely detain any person "associated with activities of a criminal nature" if the Minister was satisfied that the detention was necessary for "public safety, peace and good order."<sup>34</sup> In this regard, Function8 noted that detention without trial under the Internal Security Act was a violation of the rule of law and the basic right to a fair trial. The Act continued to be a threat to opposition parties and human rights defenders, thus effectively eliminating all forms of dissent, free speech and free association and assembly of citizens.<sup>35</sup> HRW and MARUAH expressed similar concerns in this regard.<sup>36</sup>

### 3. Administration of justice, including impunity and the rule of law

24. TC expressed the view that, with regard to the protection of human rights, the judiciary did not function as a check on the executive branch, but generally rather affirmed the principles espoused by the Government.<sup>37</sup> ARDA stated that the judiciary in Singapore was not independent when trying cases that involved government dissenters.<sup>38</sup> ARDA emphasized that the judiciary needed to be free from any influence by the executive branch or any of the State's leaders, as trials could proceed in a fair manner only if judges were not put under pressure or scrutiny by the State.<sup>39</sup> IBAHRI recommended that security of tenure should be granted to all judges; and that the practice of transferring judges between executive and judicial roles should be abolished.<sup>40</sup>

25. AI noted that the *Criminal Law (Temporary Provisions) Act* (CLTPA) allowed for detention without trial for up to 12 months, extendable indefinitely. This law had been introduced as a temporary measure during the colonial era to suppress criminal activities of secret society gangs and had been periodically renewed, most recently in February 2009. In 2010, the Government had indicated that the law was used to detain persons suspected of involvement in drug trafficking.<sup>41</sup>

### 4. Right to privacy, marriage and family life

26. JS1 noted that privacy was generally respected as a social norm, but indicated that there were no general data protection or privacy laws. Instead, there were laws such as the Computer Misuse (Amendment) Act and the Electronics Transactions Act, which gave broad powers to law enforcement agencies to conduct searches on any computer without a warrant.<sup>42</sup> TC noted that monitoring of employee phone calls, e-mails, and internet usage in the workplace was permissible and that there was no recourse on grounds of invasion of privacy for a person who lost his/her job due to the contents of his/her communications.<sup>43</sup>

27. TC noted that Singapore citizens and permanent residents were unable to enter into any form of marriage, within or outside of Singapore, with migrant workers who were on

work permits below the classes of 'S Pass' and 'Employment Pass'. This rule applied even retrospectively to migrant workers who had previously worked in Singapore.<sup>44</sup> JS4 recommended that Singapore: respect the right of all migrants to enter into marriage, including to a citizen or permanent resident of Singapore; repeal the law requiring a work permit holder to be deported on grounds of pregnancy or a diagnosis of an infectious disease such as HIV/AIDS; and enact laws to safeguard the privacy of all individuals, including migrants, and especially migrant domestic workers.<sup>45</sup>

28. Joint Submission 5 (JS5) noted that Singapore maintained criminal sanctions against sexual activity between consenting adults of the same sex and recommended that Singapore repeal relevant legal provisions.<sup>46</sup> PLU noted that, whilst there had been no known recent prosecution of consenting adults engaged in private sexual relations, men caught in intimate situations with each other in public places had been prosecuted under the Penal Code.<sup>47</sup>

## **5. Freedom of movement**

29. JS4 noted that although the *Employment of Foreign Manpower Act* and the *Passports Act* forbade an employer from holding on to a worker's identity documents, the majority of employers retained their employees' passports and work permit cards and were rarely penalized for such practices. It was common for employment agencies to instruct employers to hold these documents.<sup>48</sup>

## **6. Freedom of religion or belief, expression, association and peaceful assembly and right to participate in public and political life**

30. JS1 noted that the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act prohibited the involvement of religious groups and officials in political activity that the Government deemed to be inappropriate. New religious movements and other religious groups, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, had suffered from religious discrimination by the authorities.<sup>49</sup> JS1 recommended stronger promotion of interfaith dialogue to accommodate religious communities and protect each individual's right to believe and practice their religion. It also recommended that Singapore educate employers and support voluntary welfare organizations (VWOs) in their work to encourage employers to respect the rights of migrant workers to believe and practice their religions.<sup>50</sup>

31. Human Rights Watch (HRW) stated that although Singapore's Constitution guaranteed rights to free expression and peaceful assembly and association, these rights were severely restricted in practice. Government-dominated control of media outlets was exacerbated by an interlocking system of laws and regulations designed to curb expression of opposition views in various media, and the courts' willingness to fine and imprison alleged violators for sedition, defamation or contempt of court when official institutions or leaders were the objects of criticism.<sup>51</sup>

32. JS1 similarly noted that the Government controlled all public avenues of speech and expression through a multitude of legislative and institutional means, including statutory laws and government bodies designing and implementing administrative rules, regulations and policies that govern the expression and reproduction of any speech, writing and artistic/cultural performances in all media.<sup>52</sup>

33. AI stated that freedom to express one's views in public continued to be limited to the "Speaker's Corner", where Singaporeans – only citizens and only after prior registration with the authorities – could talk about anything except language, race, religion and politically sensitive issues. In July 2009, the police installed five CCTV cameras in the vicinity to monitor activities. Public speaking in all other outdoor areas in Singapore required a permit.<sup>53</sup> AI further noted that the Government monitored and censored the internet, movies, music and video games. In September 2008, a blogger had been jailed for

three months after criticizing, in an email and a blog post, a judge's handling of a defamation case involving opposition leaders. In August 2010, police had arrested and charged a Singaporean man for inciting violence by posting comments on his page in a social networking site.<sup>54</sup>

34. ARDA noted that all Singaporean newspapers were owned and managed by the Singapore Press Holdings. All TV and radio stations were also owned and run by the state. The Internet was also subject to state harassment, although the effectiveness of such intervention was less certain given the nature of the medium.<sup>55</sup> HRW further noted that the Media Development Authority (MDA) under the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts (MICA) had broad powers to censor broadcast media, the internet, films, music and computer games, and to sanction broadcasters for content which threatens or offends public interest or order, national harmony, or good taste and decency.<sup>56</sup>

35. International Bar Association Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI) recommended that freedom of the press be increased, that political issues impacting on the people of Singapore be reported on; that the Newspaper and Printing Presses Act be amended so as to ensure the existence of checks and balances on decisions to restrict the circulation of publications under the Act; and that the Newspaper and Printing Presses Act be amended to allow reasonable comment on the domestic politics of Singapore by foreign publications.<sup>57</sup>

36. AI noted that in 2009, Singapore had amended the *Films Act*, thus easing the 11-year ban on films promoting a politician or a political party, while at the same time introducing restrictions on political videos.<sup>58</sup> ARDA made similar observations.<sup>59</sup>

37. TC noted that defamation suits had been used successfully by both the Government and members of the ruling party against local political opponents as well as foreign news organisations that published articles or commentaries criticising the political system. As the Defamation Act provided for very substantial damages to be awarded to 'vindicate the reputation of the plaintiff', some opposition politicians had been made bankrupt as a result of defamation suits, and some foreign news publications had to make substantive reparations either due to court rulings or out of court settlements. The usage of defamation suits had effectively established a climate of fear amongst the general populace with regard to their expression of criticism on issues concerning domestic politics.<sup>60</sup>

38. AI recommended abolishing the criminal defamation law; ensuring the meaningful protection and promotion of the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly and association through legislative reform and policy changes; and ensuring, through legislative and other measures, protection of the right to freedom of expression to both citizens and non-citizens in Singapore.<sup>61</sup> ARDA similarly recommended that laws violating the right to freedoms of expression, assembly, association and movement be rectified by Parliament.<sup>62</sup>

39. JS1 stated that many arts and cultural groups experienced various forms of censorship through control of access to public funding or necessary permits, which were under the purview of the National Arts Council (funding) and the Media Development Authority (permits), both of which were under the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts. The lack of clearly defined boundaries hampered the development of local artists, especially when their works were perceived to contain political commentary or criticism. Governing authorities had also applied cuts in funding or denied performance/exhibition spaces when they believed that relevant performances or exhibitions promoted 'socially deviant' values or norms.<sup>63</sup>

40. IBAHRI drew attention to the Public Entertainments and Meetings Act (PEMA), under which permits need to be obtained for all outdoor protests and marches. Under the law, licensing officials were given discretion as to whether to refuse a permit or impose conditions.<sup>64</sup>

41. AI was concerned about provisions in the Public Order Act, which for example defined as “a procession” as few as two persons moving “substantially as a body of persons” in order to show opposition or support to somebody’s view, publicize a cause or commemorate an event, and which required that a permit be obtained for such “procession”.<sup>65</sup> AI also noted that in August 2007, the Government had rejected a permit application by the opposition Worker’s Party to celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with an outdoor event in a public park. In March 2008, on World Consumer Rights Day, the police had arrested and charged 18 activists and members of the opposition Singapore Democratic Party with illegal assembly and procession against the rising cost of living. The organizers had earlier applied for a permit, which had been rejected. In March 2010, the 18 individuals were sentenced to varying fines and short-term imprisonment.<sup>66</sup> ARDA similarly stated that the Government banned all forms of public gathering for political purposes except where its own members or organizations were involved. Gatherings of five or more persons in a public area for a common cause were considered illegal. In the last few years, several pro-democracy activists had been arrested and served time in prison for conducting protests and calling for free speech.<sup>67</sup>

42. JS3 noted that any association of 10 or more persons needed to be registered under the Societies Act, failing which it became an unlawful assembly, membership of which was a criminal offence. The Registrar of Societies had some discretion as to whether to refuse registration. There were at least two publicly documented instances where this discretion was exercised in an arbitrary and unconstitutional manner to deny the registration of the gay rights group People Like Us.<sup>68</sup>

43. Singaporeans For Democracy (SFD) noted that the current electoral system had been responsible for continuously returning the ruling People’s Action Party (PAP) over a period of 45 years in the last 10 general elections.<sup>69</sup> SFD recommended that Singapore: establish an independent election commission; abolish the Group Representation Constituencies (GRC); and bring Singapore’s electoral system in line with international best practices.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, ARDA recommended that the Elections Department be replaced by an independent Elections Commission comprised of individuals representing all political parties and civil societies, and that this body be free from all Government influence.<sup>71</sup>

## **7. Right to work and to just and favourable conditions of work**

44. According to HRW, Singapore continued to restrict workers’ rights to organize and collectively bargain in several key areas. Although the Constitution gave workers in the private sector the right to form or join trade unions, these rights were restricted in practice. Foreign workers, who comprised a significant proportion of Singapore’s workforce, were legally barred from serving as trade union officers, trustees or staff without approval by the Ministry of Manpower. Legal recognition of unions was further subject to the approval of the Registrar of Trade Unions, who could refuse or cancel registration, particularly when a union in a given occupation or industry already existed. The Trade Unions Act prohibited government employees from joining trade unions unless the President of Singapore allowed an exception. Under the Trade Union Act, rank and file union members did not have the power to vote to accept or reject collective agreements negotiated by their representatives.<sup>72</sup>

45. JS4 recommended that Singapore review the legal protection offered to migrant domestic workers and include them under the Employment Act or separate legislation providing full and equal protection with other low wage workers, so that basic workers’ rights such as a weekly day off, notice of termination of contract, annual leave, medical leave, maternity leave, and over-time pay were accorded to them. Domestic workers should also be protected under the Work Injury Compensation Act so that they would be entitled to full and equal protection like other low paid workers.<sup>73</sup>

46. JS2 recommended that Singapore prepare a more comprehensive plan to enable people with disabilities to find employment and secure their financial security.<sup>74</sup>

## 8. Right to social security and to an adequate standard of living

47. TC noted that Singapore ranked as one of the most unequal countries amongst developed economies in terms of income distribution, and that there was no systematic social safety net in the form of a minimum wage or unemployment benefits. Insofar as aid was provided at all it was rendered through a 'targeted aid' approach. The Government rejected the implementation of a minimum wage or unemployment benefits and did not consider undertaking any serious feasibility studies on the subject.<sup>75</sup>

48. JS1 stated that persons with disabilities faced challenges with regard to their integration in society as regards work, recreation and social interaction. This was also due to a lack of access to affordable modes of transportation, especially public transportation such as buses and train services. JS1 also noted that for many years there had been limited official provisions for public transport concessions instituted for persons with disabilities, many of whom, due to their low earning capacity, were not able to afford other modes of transportation, such as cars or taxis.<sup>76</sup>

49. SIIA noted that Singapore did not provide medical coverage for those with congenital disabilities, as the state-sponsored health insurance plan or '*Medishield*' specifically excluded such coverage.<sup>77</sup>

50. JS3 recommended that Singapore: improve access to antiretroviral treatment for people living with HIV, including by classifying ARV drugs that are on the World Health Organisation's list of essential medicines as standard drugs eligible for government subsidies. It also recommended that counselling and reasonable access to treatment be provided for persons discovered as a result of mandatory testing to have HIV.<sup>78</sup>

51. JS3 also recommended that Singapore implement measures to improve social security for the elderly, including such measures as may be necessary to enable them to live with dignity; that it proactively sanction, including by way of blacklisting from government contracts, employers who take undue advantage of or otherwise exploit vulnerable workers, including elderly workers and casual workers; that it expand the scope of Public Assistance to provide a more adequate level of payments and to extend assistance to more needy recipients; that it review the existing "Many Helping Hands" framework, with a view towards ensuring dignity for individuals in need of help; and that it further expand the stock of public rental flats and review the eligibility requirements to ensure that all Singaporeans who require housing can obtain it, regardless of their home ownership history.<sup>79</sup>

52. IHRA recommended that Singapore adopt and scale up proven, evidence-based interventions to reduce the harms associated with injecting drug use.<sup>80</sup>

## 9. Right to education and to participate in the cultural life of the community

53. JS2 noted that the Compulsory Education Act (CEA) excluded children with disabilities, and that it was not known how many children remained at home.<sup>81</sup>

54. JS2 also noted that the Government had in recent years built 55 schools that were completely accessible to children with physical disabilities. Overall, one out of eight schools was fitted with full facilities for easy access to pupils with physical disabilities. In these schools, special equipment was provided for children with sensory disabilities, and resource teachers and special needs officers were deployed.<sup>82</sup> JS2 and TC indicated that not all special education schools catering to children with disabilities were under the full purview of the Ministry of Education (MOE). There were 20 of such schools run by non-

state welfare service providers, also known as Voluntary Welfare Organisations (VWOs), with only partial funding from MOE.<sup>83</sup>

55. JS1 noted limitations on the freedom of cultural expression and performance rights. The state should recognise culture as a social good in its own right and not an appendage to the economy. Access to and expression of cultures should be recognised as a social right for all, with the freedom for everyone to explore and examine their heritage through dialogue and public discussion, without fear of reprisal from the enforcement agencies.<sup>84</sup>

#### **10. Minorities and indigenous peoples**

56. JS1 indicated that Article 152 of the Constitution recognised the special position of Malays as the indigenous people of Singapore, as well as the Government's responsibility to protect and promote their interest. However, noting that the reality often fell short of this commitment, JS1 urged Singapore to reaffirm its commitment to the Malays by way of implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. JS1 stated that, with regard to the institutions of ethnic self-help groups, the Government should leave the leadership of such associations to the people. Parliamentarians and government officials should not crowd the leadership as this would go against the spirit of self-help. State control of intra-community groups would also work against the freedom of choice within the ethnic groups.<sup>85</sup>

#### **11. Migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers**

57. While welcoming recent measures to offer better protection for migrants, including increased compulsory hospitalisation insurance coverage for migrant workers and better protection of employment rights, AI noted that many migrant workers still faced difficulty in seeking redress, including due to an inflexible work pass system that allowed easy termination of employment. AI further noted that the Government still did not provide basic protection for foreign domestic workers, including with regard to the fixing of working hours and rest days, a minimum wage, and access to employment benefits.<sup>86</sup> AI recommended the establishment of a system with adequate funding to assist migrant workers when seeking redress for unlawful treatment, particularly in disputes with their employers over pay and working conditions. AI also recommended amendment of the Employment of Foreign Workers Act so as to include domestic workers.<sup>87</sup>

58. JS1 recommended that the Government, in recognition of the contributions and sacrifices that many migrant workers had made to the growth of Singapore, review and amend legislation governing the conditions of work, living and welfare of migrant workers, including the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act, the Employment Agencies Act and the Employment Act, with a view to setting standards that more properly respect and protect fundamental freedoms and rights. JS1 also called on the Government to fully respect and fulfil the ILO core labour, migrant workers and governance standards.<sup>88</sup>

59. JS4 recommended that Singapore: establish and implement minimum standards of accommodation for domestic workers and rigorously implement the existing regulations regarding the accommodation of migrant workers to ensure adequate and decent living conditions; provide access to basic medical care, social support and counseling to migrant workers diagnosed with a disease, especially those diagnosed with HIV/AIDS; provide treatment on a right to health basis; review laws and regulations that call for immediate and automatic deportation of a migrant worker on health grounds; ensure migrant workers have easy access to comprehensive and affordable health services at costs not higher than local workers; and ensure that foreign spouses of Singaporeans and their children have access to affordable health care, financial assistance and education.<sup>89</sup>

60. JS4 also recommended that Singapore fully implement and enforce the regulations that prohibit employers from holding on to the passports and work permits of migrant workers. It also recommended that repatriation companies and employment agencies be prosecuted for wrongful confinement and forced repatriation of migrant workers.<sup>90</sup>

61. JS4 further recommended that Singapore ensure that migrant workers wishing to pursue a claim against their employer or agency have access to legal aid and translation services. It also recommended that Singapore repeal work permit regulations which required migrant workers in certain sectors to obtain permission from their employers to change employer, and which often required workers to repatriate on cancellation of their employment.<sup>91</sup>

## 12. Human rights and counter-terrorism

62. AI noted that the *Internal Security Act (ISA)*, initially intended to prevent subversion and suppress organized violence in Singapore, had recently been used to detain people suspected to have links to armed Islamist organizations. AI further noted that this Act allowed for “preventive detention” of persons for up to two years without charge or trial. Detention orders were renewable indefinitely.<sup>92</sup> ARDA stated that the Internal Security Act, which was being used against alleged terrorists, gave the Government unchecked powers to detain citizens arbitrarily and indefinitely.<sup>93</sup> Function8 recommended the abolition of the Internal Security Act.<sup>94</sup>

## III. Achievements, best practices, challenges and constraints

63. SIIA noted that Singaporean laws guaranteed basic economic and social rights, such as affordable education and public housing, as well as a high standard of medical care for all its citizens.<sup>95</sup>

64. JS3 observed that, while the majority of Singaporeans were well provided for from an economic perspective, communities such as the disabled, lower-income persons, people living with HIV and migrant workers continued to face difficulties. JS3 indicated that welfare-based and goodwill-oriented policies provided limited and often inadequate protection. It expressed the belief that a rights-based approach to policy-making would be essential in establishing a more level playing field in the long run.<sup>96</sup>

## IV. Key national priorities, initiatives and commitments

N/A

## V. Capacity-building and technical assistance

N/A

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The stakeholders listed below have contributed information for this summary; the full texts of all original submissions are available at: [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org). (One asterisk denotes a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council).

*Civil society*

AI

Amnesty International\*, London (UK)

ARDA	Alliance for Reform and Democracy in Asia
GIEACPC	Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children,
Function8	Function8, Singapore
HRW	Human Rights Watch*, New York (USA)
IBAHRI	International Bar Association Human Rights Institute, London (UK)
IHRA	International Harm Reduction Association, London (UK)
JS1	Joint Submission submitted by: Think Centre (TC), Singaporeans for Democracy (SFD), Singapore Anti Death Penalty Campaign (SADPC), Humanitarian Organisation for Migration Economics (HOME), and other independent civil society members, (Singapore).
JS2	Joint Submission submitted by: Challenged People's Alliance and Network (CAN) and Deaf and Hard-of Hearing Federation (DHHF), (Singapore)
JS3	Joint Submission submitted by: AWARE, Challenged People's Alliance and Network (CAN!), Deaf and Hard of Hearing Federation, Humanitarian Organization for Migration Economics, MARUAH (Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism, Singapore), People Like Us; Singaporeans for Democracy, and Transient Workers Count Too.
JS4	Joint Submission submitted by: Solidarity for Migrant Workers (SMW), a coalition of HOME (Singapore), TWC2 (Singapore), and Migrant Voices (Singapore).
JS5	Joint Submission submitted by: ARC International, Geneva (Switzerland), ILGA (International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association), Brussels (Belgium), and ILGA-Europe. *, Brussels (Belgium)
MARUAH	Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism (Singapore)
OFES	Organization for the Empowerment of Singaporeans (Singapore)
PLU	People Like Us (Singapore)
SADPC	Singapore Anti-Death Penalty Campaign (Singapore)
SFD	Singaporeans for Democracy (Singapore)
SIIA	Singapore Institute of International Affairs (Singapore)
TC	Think Centre (Singapore).

<sup>2</sup> JS1, para. 7.

<sup>3</sup> JS1, para. 79; TC, paras. 36–37; OFES, para 33; ARDA, para. 35.

<sup>4</sup> JS1, para. 79; TC, paras. 36–37, JS4, p. 8, recommendation 2.

<sup>5</sup> JS1, para. 79; TC, paras. 36–37.

<sup>6</sup> SIIA, para 19.

<sup>7</sup> JS2, p. 5; JS3, para. 22; TC, paras. 36–37.

<sup>8</sup> JS4, p. 8, recommendation 2.

<sup>9</sup> JS4, p. 9, recommendation 4.

<sup>10</sup> SIIA, para. 19.

<sup>11</sup> JS4, p. 8, recommendation 3.

<sup>12</sup> TC, paras. 9 and 42. See also JS1, para. 12.

<sup>13</sup> SIIA, para. 20.

<sup>14</sup> JS4, p. 8, recommendation 1.

<sup>15</sup> JS1, para. 45.

<sup>16</sup> JS2, para. 12.

<sup>17</sup> JS1, para. 78.

<sup>18</sup> JS1, para. 78.

<sup>19</sup> JS1, para. 44.

<sup>20</sup> JS2, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> PLU, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> JS3, para. 28.

<sup>23</sup> AI, p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> AI, p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> AI, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> MARUAH, para 8.

<sup>27</sup> SADPC, p. 3.

- 28 IHRA, p. 5.  
29 SADPC, p. 3.  
30 AI, p. 3.  
31 AI, p. 5.  
32 HRW, p. 5.  
33 GIEACPC, paras. 1.1.–1.6.  
34 SIIA, para. 7.  
35 Function8, p. 3.  
36 HRW, p. 4 and MARUAH, paras. 9–14.  
37 TC, para. 20.  
38 ARDA, para. 20.  
39 ARDA, para. 37.  
40 IBAHRI, p. 5.  
41 AI, p. 1.  
42 JS1, para. 47.  
43 TC, para. 26.  
44 TC, para. 27.  
45 JS4, Recommendations 8–10, p. 9.  
46 JS5, pp. 1–2.  
47 PLU, p. 2.  
48 JS4, para. 24.  
49 JS1, para. 69.  
50 JS1, para. 71.  
51 HRW, p. 1. See also TC, paras. 12–13.  
52 JS1, para. 15.  
53 AI, p. 3.  
54 AI, p. 4.  
55 ARDA, para. 25.  
56 HRW, p. 1.  
57 IBAHRI, p. 5.  
58 AI, p. 2.  
59 ARDA, para. 29.  
60 TC, para. 14.  
61 AI, p. 5.  
62 ARDA, para. 35.  
63 JS1, para. 18.  
64 IBAHRI, para. 3.2.  
65 AI, p. 2. See also ARDA, para. 6.  
66 AI, p. 4. See also ARDA, paras. 7–9 and HRW, p. 3.  
67 ARDA, para. 5.  
68 JS3, para. 13.  
69 SFD, p. 1.  
70 SFD, pp. 1–2.  
71 ARDA, para. 38.  
72 HRW, p. 4.  
73 JS4, Recommendation 15, p. 10.  
74 JS2, p. 5.  
75 TC, para. 29.  
76 JS1, para. 52.  
77 SIIA, para. 19.  
78 JS3, para. 28.  
79 JS3, para. 36.  
80 IHRA, p. 5.  
81 JS2, p. 2.  
82 JS2, p. 2.  
83 TC, para 31 and JS2, p. 2.

- <sup>84</sup> JS1, para. 60.  
<sup>85</sup> JS1, paras. 55–57.  
<sup>86</sup> AI, p. 4.  
<sup>87</sup> AI, p. 5. See also HRW, p. 5.  
<sup>88</sup> JS1, para. 67.  
<sup>89</sup> JS4, Recommendations 23–26, p. 10.  
<sup>90</sup> JS4, Recommendations 11–12, p. 9.  
<sup>91</sup> JS4, para. 36 and p. 9, recommendations 6–7.  
<sup>92</sup> AI, p. 1. See also ARDA paras. 13–16.  
<sup>93</sup> ARDA, paras. 13 and 16.  
<sup>94</sup> Function 8, p. 1.  
<sup>95</sup> SIIA, para. 3.  
<sup>96</sup> JS3, para. 2.
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