

Document #2048753

AI – Amnesty International

Amnesty International Report 2020/21; The State of the World's Human Rights; Singapore 2020

The rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly were further curtailed, including via the use of a “fake news” law.

Background

In July, the People’s Action Party retained power in general elections with a reduced majority. The country was placed under strict lockdown from April to June, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Freedom of expression

Throughout the year, directives under the Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act (POFMA) – a so-called “fake news” law – were issued against government critics. In January, authorities claimed it was a “coincidence” that the first cases under POFMA involved political opponents. In February, Facebook expressed concerns over being forced to block a news site page under POFMA.¹ Independent media outlets, including The Online Citizen (TOC) and New Naratif, were repeatedly hit with POFMA orders. In September, the Court of Appeal reserved judgement on the first legal challenges to POFMA.

Migrant workers

In April over 300,000 migrant workers were quarantined in overcrowded dormitories due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Almost all of Singapore’s cases of infection were among migrant workers. Heavy restrictions on their movement remained at the end of the year. In September the acquittal of a domestic worker accused of theft from her employer drew attention to access to justice and inequality for migrant workers.

Human rights defenders

In March, police investigated human rights lawyer M Ravi and TOC editor Terry Xu for contempt of court under the Administration of Justice (Protection) Act. The investigation followed the publication of articles on TOC’s website regarding Mohan Rajangam, a Singaporean who challenged his extradition to Malaysia in 2015.

Also in March, the Court of Appeal upheld the conviction of human rights defender Jolovan Wham for a Facebook post allegedly “scandalising the judiciary” in 2018. Wham served one week in jail.² In August, Wham spent 10 days in jail for organizing a 2016 event at which Hong Kong activist Joshua Wong spoke. In September, media outlet New Naratif and editor PJ Thum faced police investigation for the publication of paid advertisements on Facebook during the July elections. In November, Jolovan Wham was charged with “illegal assembly” after posing on his own for a photo with a smiley face earlier in the year.³

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people

Laws continued to discriminate against LGBTI people. A constitutional challenge to the law criminalizing consensual sexual relations between men was dismissed by the High Court.

Death penalty

Death sentences continued to be imposed, including for drug trafficking. In May, during the COVID-19 pandemic, a man was sentenced to death in a hearing held online, sparking international attention.⁴

-
1. [Singapore: Social media companies forced to cooperate with abusive fake news law \(News story, 19 February\)](#)
 2. [Singapore: Drop investigations under abusive contempt of court law \(Public statement, 25 March\)](#)
 3. [Singapore: Drop charges against peaceful activist \(Public statement, 27 November\)](#)

4. [Singapore: Man sentenced to death on Zoom call \(News story, 20 May\)](#)

ecoi.net summary:

Report on the human rights situation

covering 2020
© Amnesty International

Country:

Singapore

Source:

[AI – Amnesty International](#)

Original link:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/asia-and-the-pacific/singapore/report-singapore/>

Document type:

Periodical Report

Language:

English

Published:

7 April 2021

Document ID:

2048753

Austrian Red Cross
Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum
Research and Documentation (ACCORD)

Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041 Wien
T (Telefon) +43 1 589 00 583
F (Fax) +43 1 589 00 589
info@ecoi.net

Contact
Imprint & Disclaimer
F.A.Q.
Data Protection Notice

ecoi.net is run by the Austrian Red Cross (department ACCORD) in cooperation with Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration. ecoi.net is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and Caritas Austria. ecoi.net is supported by ECRE & UNHCR.

