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Fourth UA 89/25 Index: ASA 36/0281/2025 Singapore of September 11, 2025

## **SINGAPORE**

### **STOP THE EXECUTION OF PANNIR SELVAM PRANTHAMAN**

On September 5, 2025, the Court of Appeal rejected Pannir Selvam Pranthaman's latest appeal. This decision puts him at risk of execution for the third time.

Earlier this year, on February 19, Pannir received an eleventh-hour stay of execution. The Court had then allowed him to apply for a review of his case.

Pannir, a Malaysian national, was convicted in 2017 of importing 51.84 grams of heroin into Singapore. The trial judge found that he had only acted as a courier. However, because the prosecution did not issue a certificate of substantive assistance, the court imposed the mandatory death penalty.

Executions in Singapore are rising at an alarming pace. Since October 2024, 16 men have been hanged.

We urge the government of Singapore to commute Pannir Selvam Pranthaman's death sentence. As a critical first step, we also call for an immediate moratorium on all executions, moving towards full abolition of the death penalty.

#### **Write to the Prime Minister of Singapore urging him to:**

- Immediately intervene to stop the threat of execution against Pannir Selvam Pranthaman.
- Commute the death sentence imposed on Pannir Selvam Pranthaman.
- Establish an official moratorium on all executions as a first critical step towards abolishing the death penalty.

#### **Write to:**

Lawrence Wong  
Prime Minister of Singapore  
Office of the Prime Minister  
Orchard Road, Istana  
Singapore 238823  
Email: [pmo\\_hq@pmo.gov.sg](mailto:pmo_hq@pmo.gov.sg)  
*Salutation: Dear Prime Minister,*

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Pannir Selvam Pranthaman is a talented musician and writer from Malaysia. While on death row in Singapore, he has written poems and songs, some of which have led to collaborations with Malaysian artists.

On September 5, 2025, the Court of Appeal rejected his latest challenge. This ruling puts him at risk of execution for the third time.

Pannir was convicted on May 2, 2017, at the age of 29, for importing 51.84 grams of heroin into Singapore. He was sentenced to the mandatory death penalty. His ordinary appeal was rejected on October 18, 2018.

The trial judge found that Pannir had acted only as a courier. Under the law, this meant he met the legal definition of “courier.” However, the prosecution did not issue a certificate of substantive assistance. Without that certificate, the judge had no choice but to impose the death penalty.

Amendments to Singapore’s Misuse of Drugs Act in 2013 gave judges limited discretion. Sentencing flexibility exists only in two cases: if the accused has a significant mental or intellectual disability, or if the accused is a courier and the prosecution issues a certificate of substantive assistance.

In Pannir’s case, the lack of a certificate left the judge powerless. This effectively transferred the life-or-death decision to the prosecution, a party that is not neutral in the trial. Such practice undermines judicial independence and the principle of “equality of arms,” which guarantees that prosecution and defence have equal standing before the court.

The conviction also relied on legal presumptions. The law allows the court to assume the accused knew about the drugs unless proven otherwise. This shifts the burden of proof onto the defendant and lowers the standard of evidence in capital cases. On August 28, 2025, the Court of Appeal rejected a challenge to the constitutionality of these presumptions.

Pannir’s execution was first set for May 24, 2019. It was halted just one day before, after the Court of Appeal allowed consideration of extraordinary appeals. His execution was then scheduled a second time in February 2025, with only four days’ notice. On February 19, the night before it was due, the Court of Appeal issued a stay so that Pannir could file a Post-appeal Application in a Capital Case. That hearing was set for May 7.

International law prohibits the mandatory death penalty because it does not allow judges to consider the circumstances of a case. It also restricts the use of the death penalty to the “most serious crimes,” which means cases of intentional killing.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases, without exception. Today, 113 countries have fully abolished the death penalty, and 145 are abolitionist in law or practice. Singapore is one of a small number of states that still carry out executions—and among an even smaller group that applies the death penalty for drug-related offences.

***Please take action as soon as possible until November 30, 2025. The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.***