



The UIA Institute for the Rule of Law

STATEMENT

Paris, 11 June 2025

UIA-IROL STATEMENT ON THE DEATH PENALTY IN 2025 AND THE INCREASE IN ITS USE IN THE ESCAP REGION

The Institute for the Rule of Law of the *Union Internationale des Avocats* (UIA-IROL) expresses its deep concern at the rise in death sentences and executions in Member States of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), which runs counter to the global trend towards abolition of the death penalty.

UIA-IROL has taken note of LAWASIA's statement of concern about the rise in death sentences in the ESCAP region.¹

In its report “Death sentences and executions in 2024” published in 2025,² Amnesty International revealed that more than 1,500 executions took place in 15 countries worldwide in 2024, marking a 32% increase on the previous year. This is the highest number since the exceptional peak of 1,634 executions in 2015.

This increase is mainly attributable to three countries, which together account for 91% of executions recorded worldwide: Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran.

In addition to these recorded executions, China, Vietnam and North Korea continue to practice the death penalty in secrecy, as figures on capital punishment are classified as a state secret.

At the end of 2024, Bangladesh had around 2,000 people on death row, followed by India with 164, making these the two States with the highest number of people awaiting execution.³

UIA-IROL particularly deplores the application of the death penalty for economic or drug-related offences that do not fall into the category of “most serious crimes” as defined in article 6-2 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

In 2024, Vietnamese authorities sentenced Truong My Lan to death for his role in economic crimes in Vietnam. On 22 November 2024, the Singaporean authorities carried out the execution of Rosman bin Abdullah, convicted of drug trafficking offences on 14 September 2010 and sentenced to death as a mandatory sentence, despite calls from UN experts to halt the execution.⁴

¹ LAWASIA, The Law Association for Asia and the Pacific, “[LAWASIA Statement of concern regarding the rise of death penalty sentences in the ESCAP region](#)”, 29 April 2025.

² Amnesty International, “[Death sentences and executions in 2024](#)”, 2025.

³ *Ibidem*, page 28; Annual ; Project 39A, [Annual Statistics Report 2024](#).

⁴ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, “[Singapore must urgently halt execution of drug offender: UN experts](#)”, 20 November 2024.

Finally, UIA-IROL is closely following the case of Pannir Selvam Pranthaman, who was due to be executed on 20 February 2025 for drug trafficking and whose execution was stayed by the Singapore Court of Appeal to allow an appeal to be lodged.⁵

UIA-IROL welcomes the significant progress made by several states, notably Malaysia, where the abolition of the automatic death penalty and the subsequent sentence review process have led to a reduction of over a thousand in the number of people at risk of execution.⁶

On 20 September 2024, Taiwan's Constitutional Court ruled that the death penalty was constitutional for certain serious offences such as murder, but strictly limited its application: the decision must be taken unanimously by the judges, it cannot be imposed on people with serious mental disorders, the accused must benefit from an effective defense at every stage of the proceedings, and the Public Prosecutor's Office must justify its choices. The Taiwanese authorities must adapt the legislation within two years.⁷

UIA-IROL reaffirms its commitment to universal abolition and recalls that its application is contrary to international human rights law, in particular the right to life enshrined - inter alia - in article 6-2 of the ICCPR, and the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, a peremptory norm of international law (*jus cogens*).

UIA-IROL supports LAWASIA's statement on the resurgence of death sentences in the ESCAP region.⁸

UIA-IROL encourages ESCAP Member States and all States in general to cease applying the death penalty in all circumstances, in order to comply with human rights as recognized by international law.

More about UIA-IROL

The Institute for the Rule of Law of the Union Internationale des Avocats (UIA-IROL) promotes the Rule of Law and supports and defends, in particular, (1) lawyers, judges and human rights defenders who are harassed, threatened and/or persecuted in the exercise of their professions, (2) the independence of the legal and judicial professions, and (3) the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, especially in defense of human rights.

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⁵ Amnesty International, "[Singapore : Further information : Singapore sets execution of Malaysian man : Pannir Selvam Pranthaman](#)", 17 February 2025.

⁶ Parliament of Malaysia, Answer to Parliament, First session, Fourth term of the Fifteenth Parliament, February 2025, Question no.86. The mandatory death penalty was abolished under the Abolition of Mandatory Death Penalty Act 2023 (Act 846).

⁷ Taiwan Constitutional Court, Judgement 113-Hsien-Pan-8 (2024), delivered on 20 September 2024.

⁸ LAWASIA, The Law Association for Asia and the Pacific, "[LAWASIA Statement of concern regarding the rise of death penalty sentences in the ESCAP region](#)", 29 April 2025.