

Death Penalty Facts: Singapore

‘Disneyland with the Death Penalty’

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Singapore’s executions are shrouded in secrecy. Section 216 of the Criminal Procedure Code states:

When any person is sentenced to death, the sentence shall direct that he shall be hanged by the neck till he is dead but shall not state the place where nor the time when the sentence is to be carried out.

The majority of executions are drug-related. To date, capital punishment has resulted in the deaths of over 400 people since 1991, according to an estimate by Amnesty International four years ago. The latest figures are not available as the Singaporean government keeps such information secret. However, the statistical table to the right is indicative of the annual number of executions carried out by the state. It was compiled from several sources by Amnesty International. The numbers in brackets indicate foreign nationals.

Singapore’s capital punishment trials are heard before one High Court judge. Each person sentenced to death is automatically entitled to one appeal before the Court of Appeal. The method of execution is death is by hanging at Changi Prison. Although the times and dates of executions are not disclosed pre execution, Singaporean news media usually publish a short notice post execution.

There are in all, 38 provisions in various statutes that establish capital offences. They are listed to the right.

Prisoners are kept in strict isolation on death row, and are not permitted outside for fresh air or exercise. They can receive one 20-minute visit each week from friends or family. About a month before the execution date, prisoners are permitted to watch television or listen to the radio and extra visits from relatives, and are provided with meals of their choice.

Although boasting high levels of prosperity, Singapore’s authoritarian political system has led author William Gibson to describe the city-state as ‘Disneyland with the death penalty’. With the highest per capita rate of executions in the world, its anachronistic state-sanctioned killing is a blight on an otherwise modern nation.

Year	Murder	Drugs	Firearms
1991	1	5	
1992	13	7	1
1993	5	2	
1994	21	54	1
1995	20	52	1
1996	10 (7)	40 (10)	
1997	(3)	11 (2)	1
1998	4 (1)	24 (5)	
1999	8 (2)	35 (7)	
2000	4 (2)	17 (5)	
2001		21	

Singapore: Estimated Annual Executions

Capital Offences in Singapore

Arms Offences Act
(4 capital offences)

Internal Security Act
(2 capital offences)

Kidnapping Act
(1 capital offence)

Misuse of Drugs Act
(20 capital offences)

Singapore Penal Code
(11 capital offences)