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**STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE
FOR THE 52ND SESSION OF THE
UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW**

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Introduction

1. The European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ) is a non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights around the world. The ECLJ also holds Special Consultative status before the United Nations Economic and Social Council. This report discusses the status of human rights in the Republic of Singapore (Singapore) for the 52nd session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

Background

2. Singapore is a city-state located on the tip of the Malay Peninsula and has a population of approximately 6.1 million people.¹ Approximately 31.1% of the population identifies as Buddhist, 18.9% as Christian, 15.6% as Muslim, 8.8% as Taoist, 5% as Hindu, and 20% as belonging to no religion.²

3. Singapore's last review was held on May 12, 2021.³ As a result of the review, Singapore received 324 recommendations, 210 of which it accepted.⁴ It was recommended by Nicaragua, and supported by Singapore, that the government "[c]ontinue promoting the inclusion of all racial and religious groups."⁵ In our last report on Singapore, we expressed concern over laws that could be used to target Christians for sharing their beliefs. Additionally, while no recommendations were made regarding abortion,⁶ Singapore sadly allows for abortion on demand up until the 24th week of gestation.⁷

Legal Framework

Restrictions on Religious Speech

4. Under Article 15 of the Constitution of Singapore, "[e]very person has the right to profess and practise his religion and to propagate it."⁸ However, it also states that "[t]his Article

¹ Thomas R. Leinbach et. al., *Singapore*, BRITANNICA (Oct. 5, 2025), <https://www.britannica.com/place/Singapore>.

² *Id.*

³ *Universal Periodic Review – Singapore*, OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/sg-index>.

⁴ *Infographic – Singapore*, OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/Infographics-SINGAPORE.pdf>.

⁵ OHCHR, UPR of Singapore (3rd Cycle – 38th Session) Thematic List of Recommendations 6, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/UPR38_Singapore_Thematic_List_of_Recommendations.docx.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Abortion Frequently Asked Questions*, SENG'S OG PRACTICE, <https://www.pregnancytermination.com.sg/abortion-singapore-faq/#:~:text=an%20abortion%20confidential%3F-,Is%20abortion%20legal%20in%20Singapore%3F,fetus%20has%20a%20severe%20abnormality> (last visited Oct. 8, 2025).

⁸ CONSTITUTION OF SINGAPORE 1963 art. 15, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Singapore_2016.

does not authorise any act contrary to any general law relating to public order, public health or morality.”⁹

5. Article 8 of the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act gives the government the authority to target religious leaders for “causing feelings of enmity, hatred, ill-will or hostility between different religious groups.”¹⁰

6. Although Singapore is not a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR),¹¹ it is a party to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and has an obligation to uphold the rights enshrined in it.¹² Under Article 18 of the UDHR:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.¹³

Abortion

7. Under Article 9 of the Constitution of Singapore, “[n]o person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty save in accordance with law.”¹⁴ However, the right to life is not guaranteed for preborn babies.¹⁵ Under Article 4 of the Termination of Pregnancy Act 1974:

(1) No treatment to terminate pregnancy may be carried out –

(a) if the pregnancy is of more than 24 weeks’ duration, unless the treatment is immediately necessary to save the life or to prevent grave permanent injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman;¹⁶

8. Even though Singapore is not a party to the ICCPR, Singapore is responsible for upholding pro-life principles enshrined in other international instruments it is a party to. Singapore is also a party to the UN Charter, the UDHR, and the 1994 Cairo Conference on Population and Development.¹⁷

Restrictions on Religious Speech

9. We remain concerned about provisions in Singapore’s Religious Harmony Act that prohibit actions that could cause “feelings of enmity, hatred, ill-will or hostility between different religious groups.” While thankfully we have not seen action against Christians for violating this provision, we remain concerned that it violates one’s right to practice and share his faith.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ MAINTENANCE OF RELIGIOUS HARMONY ACT 1990, art. 8, <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Act/MRHA1990?ProvIds=P13-#pr8->.

¹¹ *Ratification Status for Singapore*, OHCHR, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=157&Lang=EN.

¹² *Id.*

¹³ G.A. Res. 217 (III) A, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, art. 18 (Dec. 10, 1948).

¹⁴ CONSTITUTION OF SINGAPORE 1963 art. 9, *supra* note 8.

¹⁵ See TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY ACT 1974 art. 4, <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Act/Tpa1974>.

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ *Ratification Status for Singapore*, *supra* note 11.

10. Christianity, like many other religions, calls upon its adherents to share their faith with others. Under the vague provisions of the Religious Harmony Act, it is not hard to picture a scenario in which a Christian could violate the law by talking about his faith. Claiming the truth of Jesus could be interpreted under this provision as “causing feelings of enmity, hatred, ill-will or hostility between different religious groups.”

11. Christians, and other religious groups, have the right to openly profess and share their religion, which could potentially lead to the followers of other religions getting offended. Again, the UDHR enshrines the right for everyone to either “in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”¹⁸ This includes the right for Christians to share their belief that Christianity is the one true religion.

Abortion

12. Every year, approximately 6,600 preborn babies are aborted in Singapore.¹⁹ This means that, since Singapore’s last UPR, approximately 26,400 preborn babies were killed because of Singapore’s extreme abortion laws that allow preborn babies to be killed for any reason up until the 24th week of gestation. This legislation is extreme even among U.N. Member States that allow for abortion. In fact, a majority of U.N. Member States agree that abortion is not healthcare and have either prohibited abortion altogether or only permit it in cases to save the life or health of the mother.²⁰ Even out of the sixty-nine countries that have varying gestational limits for on-demand abortion, forty-nine of them have a gestational limit of twelve weeks or less.²¹

13. In Singapore, approximately 17.1% of pregnancies end in abortion.²² Among married women, the main reason they seek to have an abortion is because they feel that they already have too many children or are worried about not being able to afford another child.²³ Among unmarried women, they often have an abortion because they are not ready to start a family and are concerned that their status as a single woman will make it hard to care for the child.²⁴ None of these reasons justifies the killing of a preborn baby. Individuals should consider these factors before conceiving a child. While many proponents advocate that abortion is healthcare and is necessary for family planning, this is not the case. Abortion is a procedure that kills a healthy preborn baby for no reason. Family planning involves planning how many children one wants and when one wants them. It should in no way involve killing innocent preborn babies. This very point was noted in the 1994 Cairo Conference on Population and Development, that U.N. Member States have an affirmative commitment to “reduce the recourse to abortion” and to take “appropriate steps to help women avoid abortion, which in no case should be promoted as a method of family planning.”²⁵

¹⁸ G.A. Res. 217 (III) A, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, art. 18 (Dec. 10, 1948).

¹⁹ *Letter of the Week: Deeper Societal Reflection, Action Needed on Impact of Abortion*, THE STRAIT TIMES (Dec. 2, 2023), <https://www.straittimes.com/opinion/forum/letter-of-the-week-deeper-societal-reflection-action-needed-on-impact-of-abortion>.

²⁰ See *The World’s Abortion Laws*, CTR. FOR REPROD. RTS. (June 9, 2023), https://reproductiverights.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/WALM_2023-v3-Updated_12-20-23.pdf.

²¹ *Id.*

²² *Letter of the Week: Deeper Societal Reflection, Action Needed on Impact of Abortion*, *supra* note 19.

²³ Stephen Padilla, *What are the Top Reasons for Having an Abortion*, MIMS (May 12, 2023), <https://www.mims.com/malaysia/news-updates/topic/what-are-the-top-reasons-for-having-an-abortion-among-singaporean-women->.

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ Rep’ of the Int’l Conf. on Population & Dev., ¶ 8.25, U.N. Doc. A/CONF/F.171/Rev. 1 (Sept, 5-13, 1994).

14. It is troubling that no recommendations were made during Singapore's last UPR regarding its extreme laws on abortion. Everyone can agree that women deserve access to healthcare. However, abortion is not healthcare, it is a procedure that kills a healthy preborn baby and can seriously impact the health of the mother. Every year, more than five million women around the world are hospitalized because of abortion related complications.²⁶ The World Health Organization's Abortion Care Guidelines also note that abortion can result in infections and hemorrhage.²⁷ This is especially alarming given that a study found that hemorrhage and infection were associated with a majority of abortion-related deaths in the United States of America between 1998 and 2010.²⁸ Additionally, a New Zealand study found that women who have had an abortion experienced higher rates of suicidal behavior, depression, substance abuse, and other mental health problems.²⁹ It is extremely worrisome that Singapore permits a procedure that both fosters disdain for human life and harms the lives of mothers. Any procedure that results in this much damage and causes this much pain cannot be construed as healthcare. Women deserve access to actual healthcare that will help both them and their preborn babies.

15. Additionally, there is no such thing as an international right to abortion. Not even one international human rights instrument grants the right to take the life of another human being. Instead, all fundamental human rights instruments repeatedly affirm the right to life and recognize the inherent dignity of every human being. The UDHR states that "[e]veryone has the right to life"³⁰ and requires the "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family [as] the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world."³¹ Similarly, the United Nations Charter states that "the peoples of the United Nations [are] determined . . . to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person."³² Singapore's law on abortion contravenes all of these international human rights instruments by allowing preborn babies to be needlessly killed for any reason.

Recommendations

16. We urge Singapore to reform its law that restricts the ability of its citizens to openly profess their faith, if it could be viewed as offending adherents of other religions. Singapore has an obligation under the UDHR to protect the right of everyone to practice their religion according to the tenets of their faith.

²⁶ Lisa B. Haddad & Nawal M Nour, *Unsafe Abortion: Unnecessary Maternal Mortality*, NAT'L LIBR. OF MED. (2009), <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC2709326/>.

²⁷ *Abortion Care Guideline*, WORLD HEALTH ORG., <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/349316/9789240039483-eng.pdf?sequence=1>.

²⁸ Suzanne Zane et. al., *Abortion Related Mortality in the United States 1998-2010*, NAT'L LIBR. OF MED. (2015),

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4554338/#:~:text=A%20majority%20of%20abortion%2Drelated,pregnancy%20threatened%20the%20woman's%20life>.

²⁹ David C. Reardon, *New Zealand on Mental Health Problems May Force Doctors to Refuse Abortions*, RACHEL'S VINEYARD MINISTRIES (2006), <https://www.rachelsvineyard.org/PDF/Articles/New%20Zealand%20Study%20on%20Mental%20Health%20-%20David%20Reardon.pdf>.

³⁰ G.A. Res. 217 (III) A, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, art. 3 (Dec. 10, 1948).

³¹ *Id.* pmbl.

³² U.N. Charter pmbl.

17. Additionally, we ask that Singapore reform its extreme law on abortion and enact policy that protects the lives of preborn babies and their mothers. The right to life has been well established in numerous international instruments, and Singapore must take action to protect these rights.