



Human Rights Watch
Item 6 - Adoption of the UPR on Singapore
HRC32 – 24 June 2016

Thank you Mr. President,

The major human rights issues raised in the 2016 UPR session on Singapore were a continuation of many concerns raised – and yet still unresolved – since Singapore’s first UPR review in 2011. We received very few answers from Singapore on when, if ever, they will address these concerns.

Numerous states raised Singapore’s continued use of the death penalty, and called for at least a moratorium on capital punishment. Singapore instead defended the abhorrent practice and remains out of step with the broad international consensus to abolish capital punishment as an inherently cruel and inhumane punishment. The May 2016 execution of Malaysian Jabin Kho highlighted Singapore’s indifference to these global concerns.

Many states raised Singapore’s discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people and violations of their right to privacy under penal code article 377A, which criminalizes consensual same-sex relations between men. The government did not directly address these concerns, but claimed Singaporean society considered the issue to be “too controversial.” Meanwhile, earlier this month, the minister of home affairs warned international companies to stop supporting the annual LGBT pride and solidarity festival, Pink Dot.

Singapore’s representatives again sought to deflect criticism of the government’s severe restrictions on fundamental civil and political rights, such as freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly. The government offered few commitments to address serious concerns raised about these rights.

Singapore’s record on ratifying international human rights conventions remains dismal, having only ratified three core rights conventions and one optional protocol. It has not ratified either the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights or the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Many UPR recommendations to ratify these and other major treaties fell on deaf ears. Singapore’s poor ratification record belies Singapore’s claims that it first needs to bring its national laws into conformity with the treaties. In fact, the government has taken no significant steps to advance a rights-protection agenda by reforming its laws.

Singapore has long put forward arguments about “Asian values,” promoted by the late prime minister Lee Kuan Yew, as an alternative to international human rights protections. The deep-seated violations of human rights raised by UN member states and Singapore’s lack of interest in addressing them highlights the shortcomings of this approach. Singaporeans deserve, and are entitled to, the same rights as everyone else.