

SOUTHEAST ASIA NGO DIRECTORY

동남아시아의 민주주의·인권·평화관련 NGO 목록

· 발 행 : 민주화운동기념사업회

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민 주 화 운 동

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SINGAPORE



Location: Southeastern Asia, islands between Malaysia and Indonesia

Area: total: 692.7 sq km ; water: 10 sq km ; land: 682.7 sq km

Population: 4,353,893 (July 2004 est.)

Population growth rate: 1.71% (2004 est.)

GDP: \$109.4 billion (2004 est.)

GDP - real growth rate: 1.1% (2004 est.)

GDP - per capita: purchasing power parity - \$23,700 (2004 est.)

Labor force: 2.2 million (2004 est.)

Unemployment rate: 4.8% (2004 est.)

Internet country code: .sg

Singapore was founded as a British trading colony in 1819. It joined the Malaysian Federation in 1963 but separated two years later and became independent. It subsequently became one of the world's most prosperous countries with strong international trading links (its port is the world's busiest in terms of tonnage handled) and with per capita GDP equal to that of the leading nations of Western Europe.

Singapore is a parliamentary republic in which politics is dominated overwhelmingly by the People's Action Party (PAP), which has been in power since the country gained autonomy from the United Kingdom in 1959. Opposition parties exist, and there are regularly contested elections. However, the PAP holds 82 of 84 elected parliamentary seats and all ministerial positions. Elections take place at regular, constitutionally mandated intervals. The judiciary is efficient and constitutionally independent; however, there is a general perception that it reflects the views of the ruling party in politically sensitive cases. Moreover, a variety of executive actions are exempt from judicial review. Government leaders used court proceedings, in particular defamation suits, against political opponents and critics.

The police are responsible for routine security within the country and for border protection, including action against illegal immigrants. Military forces are responsible for external defence. The Internal Security Department (ISD) in the Ministry of Home Affairs is authorized by the Internal Security Act (ISA) to counter perceived threats to the nation's security such as espionage, international terrorism, threats to racial and religious harmony, and subversion. The Government maintains effective control over all security activities.

Human Rights

The Government has broad powers to limit citizens' rights and to handicap political opposition, which it used in practice. In the past, the media has fully covered the Government's vigorous investigations and prosecutions of cases involving alleged police abuse. The Government continued to rely on preventive detention to deal with espionage, terrorism, organized crime, and narcotics. The authorities sometimes infringed on citizens' privacy rights. The Government continued to restrict significantly freedom of speech and freedom of the press, as well as to limit other civil and political rights. Government pressure to conform resulted in the practice of self-censorship among journalists. Government leaders continued to utilize court proceedings and defamation suits against political opponents and critics. These suits, which have consistently been decided in favor of government plaintiffs, chilled political speech and action and created a perception that the ruling party used the judicial system for political purposes.

The Penal Code mandates caning, in addition to imprisonment, as punishment for approximately 30 offenses involving the use of violence or threat of violence against a person, such as rape and robbery, and for nonviolent offenses such as vandalism, drug trafficking, and violation of immigration laws. Caning is discretionary for convictions on other charges involving the use of force, such as kidnapping or voluntarily causing grievous hurt. Women and men over age 50 or under age 16, and those determined medically unfit are exempt from punishment by caning. Although statistics for the year were not available, caning was a commonly administered punishment.

The law provides that, in most instances, arrests be carried out following the issuance of an authorized warrant; however, some laws, such as the Internal Security Act (ISA), the Criminal Law (Temporary Provisions) Act (CLA), the Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA), and the Undesirable Publications Act (UPA)--have provisions for arrest and detention without a warrant or judicial review. The ISA has been employed primarily against suspected security threats. Historically, these threats have been Communist-related; however, during the year, the ISA was employed against suspected terrorists. Opposition politicians have called for the abolition of the ISA, but the Government rejected these calls, claiming that citizens accept the act as an element of the nation's security. The CLA historically has been employed primarily against suspected organized crime and drug trafficking.

The ISA and the CLA permit preventive detention without trial for the protection of public security, safety, or the maintenance of public order. The ISA gives broad discretion to the Minister for Home Affairs to order detention without filing charges at the direction of the President, if the latter determines that a person poses a threat to national security. The initial detention may be for up to 2 years and may be renewed without limitation for additional periods up to 2 years at a time. Detainees have a right to be informed of the grounds for their detention and are entitled to counsel. However, they have no right to challenge the substantive basis for their detention through the courts. Instead, detainees may make representations to an advisory board, headed by a Supreme Court justice, which reviews each detainee's case periodically and must make a recommendation to the President within 3 months of the initial detention.

Both the ISA and the CLA contain provisions that allow for modified forms of detention such as curfews, residence limitations, requirements to report regularly to the authorities, limitations on travel, and, in the case of the ISA, restrictions on political activities and association.

Democracy

Government leaders historically have used court proceedings, in particular defamation suits, against political opponents and critics. Both this practice and consistent awards in favor of government plaintiffs raised questions about the relationship between the Government and the judiciary and led to a perception that the judiciary reflected the views of the ruling party in politically sensitive cases.

The Government has wide-ranging discretionary powers under the ISA, CLA, MDA, and UPA to conduct searches without a warrant if it determines that national security, public safety and order, or the public interest is at risk. Law enforcement agencies, including the Internal Security Department and the Corrupt Practices Investigation Board, have extensive networks for gathering information and conducting surveillance, and highly sophisticated capabilities to monitor telephone and other private conversations. No court warrants are required for such operations. It is believed that the authorities routinely monitor telephone conversations and the use of the Internet; however, there were no confirmed reports of such practices during the year. The law permits government monitoring of Internet use. It is widely believed that the authorities routinely conduct surveillance on some opposition politicians and other government critics; however, no such reports were substantiated during the year.

The Constitution provides for freedom of speech and freedom of expression but permits official restrictions on these rights, and, in practice, the Government significantly restricted freedom of speech and freedom of the press. The Government's authoritarian style fostered an atmosphere inimical to free speech and a free press. Under the ISA, the Government may restrict or place conditions on publications that incite violence, counsel disobedience to the law, have the potential to arouse tensions in the country's diverse population, or might threaten national interests, national security, or public order. While the ISA has not been invoked in recent years against political opponents of the Government, political opposition and criticism remained restricted by the Government's authority to define these powers broadly.

The Constitution provides citizens with the right to change their government peacefully. Opposition parties are free to contest elections, and the voting and vote-counting systems are fair and free from tampering; however, the Peoples Action Party, which has held power continuously and overwhelmingly for more than 3 decades, has used the Government's extensive powers to place formidable obstacles in the path of political opponents.

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Parliament may be dissolved early by presidential proclamation, which normally follows a request by the Prime Minister. Elections must be held within 3 months of Parliament's dissolution. Following the 2001 elections, the PAP held 82 of 84 elected seats; the opposition Singapore People's Party and the Workers' Party each held 1 seat. A constitutional amendment allows at least three opposition members in Parliament even if fewer than three actually were elected. Following the elections, the Government allotted a non-constituency seat to Singapore Democratic Alliance.

The PAP completely controlled key positions in and out of government, influenced the press and courts, and limited opposition political activities. Often these means were fully consistent with the law and the normal prerogatives of the Government, but the overall effect (and many argued the ultimate purpose) was to disadvantage and weaken political opposition. For example, the Government altered dramatically the boundaries of election districts only 17 days before the 2001 general election, abolishing some constituencies and adjusting the borders of many other constituencies. According to the Constitution, such changes are permitted to ensure ethnic minority representation in Parliament; each GRC candidate list must contain at least one Malay, Indian, or other ethnic minority candidate. However, these changes made it more difficult for opposition parties, all of which had very limited memberships, to fill multimember candidate lists. The PAP did not suffer from this disadvantage.

The Films Act bans political films and recorded televised programs, putting opposition parties at a disadvantage. The ban, which ostensibly was to prevent the sensationalist or emotional effect that video or film productions could have on political issues, applied to the PAP as well as to the opposition parties. Nonetheless, it had the effect of denying opposition parties, which already received far less coverage than did the PAP in the government-influenced press and media, a potential outlet for their political messages.

The threat of civil libel or slander suits, which government leaders often used against political opponents and critics and consistently won, had a stifling effect on the full expression of political opinion and disadvantaged the political opposition. Large judgments in libel suits can lead to bankruptcy, and under the law, bankrupt persons are ineligible to sit in Parliament. In the past, the Government also used parliamentary censure or the threat of censure to humiliate or intimidate opposition leaders. Government entities also used libel or slander suits, and dismissal from positions in government-related entities, to intimidate prominent opposition politicians.

Efforts by independent organizations to investigate and evaluate government human rights policies faced the same obstacles as those faced by opposition political parties. Some domestic NGOs criticized restrictions on human rights or suggested changes that would relax or remove restrictions. In 2001, two organizations that criticized the Government on human rights grounds were declared "political" organizations by the Government, but their operations were unaffected.

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AWARE

Inspired by a 1984 seminar entitled "Women's Choices, Women's Lives", AWARE 1984 ' ,

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