



MEDIA ADVISORY

29 January 2011

MARUAH's View of the Police Investigations into SFD Members' Sale of Death Penalty Book

MARUAH notes the statement by NGO Singaporeans for Democracy (SFD) and various media reports about the recent initiation of police investigations into three SFD members over their alleged sale of copies of the book *Once A Jolly Hangman: Singapore Justice in the Dock* at a film screening held on 14 November 2010 at the Substation. The SFD members are being investigated under Section 502 of the Penal Code, for the knowing "sale of printed or engraved substance containing defamatory matter".

Although the police commenced investigations against Mr Alan Shadrake, the author of the book, for criminal defamation in 2010, no formal charges have been instituted. It is thus troubling how an investigation can begin into the sale of printed substance containing defamatory matter if the book in question has not been found by a court of law to be defamatory. Indeed, charges have not even been brought.

MARUAH therefore calls upon the Singapore Police Force to explain why it is initiating these criminal investigations on the three SFD members in relation to the sale of the book, when the author himself has not been charged.

Furthermore, if the Government's position is that the sale of the book would be unlawful, then the proper course of action is to ban the book outright, which is a transparent action that is accountable and subject to judicial review of the courts

where appropriate, and also conforms with the rule of law.

MARUAH President Braema Mathi says: “These criminal investigations by the police carry a much heavier ‘footprint’ than contempt proceedings. In this case it is bewildering why the police are investigating sellers of the book when there is no criminal defamation charge against the author or contempt proceedings against the three members.

“MARUAH is opposed to investigations without any reasonable basis, as these will only serve to significantly chill public debate on the death penalty and detract from Singaporeans’ constitutional right to free expression. ”

For enquiries, please contact :
MARUAH Secretariat
Hp: 9003 7566
maruahsg@gmail.com

About MARUAH (Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism, Singapore)

MARUAH is a group of individuals from diverse backgrounds, who made a commitment to the process of facilitating the establishment of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission for Human Rights and are now continuing to work on human rights issues at both domestic and regional levels.

MARUAH means Dignity in Malay, Singapore’s national language. Human rights is all about maintaining, restoring and reclaiming one’s dignity at the individual, regional and international level.

MARUAH is the Singapore focal point for the Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism, a regional group with its secretariat based in Manila. The regional Working Group has national representatives from all of the founding Member States of ASEAN, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. The regional Working Group is an NGO officially recognized in the ASEAN Charter as a stakeholder in ASEAN.

More information on MARUAH can be found at www.maruah.org