



Emergency committee for human rights
in Singapore _____

UPDATE NO.7

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SINGAPORE HUMAN RIGHTS ALERT

Government Clamps Down With More Arrests. International Protest Gathers Strength.

SECURITY POLICE MAKE SECOND SWEEP

Early this morning the Singapore Government arrested and detained more community leaders. According to the 7 p.m. Singapore news, the following were detained:

1. Ms TANG Fong Har, 32, LLB (Hons), lawyer, volunteer adviser to the Catholic Centre for Foreign Workers, involved in Criminal Legal Aid Scheme of Law Society of Singapore, formerly involved in Third Stage Drama Group, gave evidence in Parliamentary Select Committee on Legal Profession Act amendments last year contradicting the Prime Minister. Married to Peter Png in January.
2. Mr CHEW Kheng Chuan, 30, BA(Hons), Harvard University & London School of Economics. Managing Director, WORD-MAKER Design & Typesetting Services which typeset THE CATHOLIC NEWS and Christian Conference of Asia publications. Married to Dr Chia Kwok Ying.
3. Ms FAN Wang Peng, student and Acting President, Singapore Polytechnic Students' Union.
4. Ms CHNG Suan Tze, 38, Master's degree in Linguistics from UK, lecturer in English, Singapore Polytechnic, playwright of local plays, involved in Third Stage Drama Group.
5. Mr Ronnie NG, student, Honorary General Secretary, Singapore Polytechnic Students' Union.
6. Mr Noor Affandi SHAHID, student leader, Singapore Polytechnic.

A FEW RELEASED

Of the 16 detained on 21 May, 4 have been released today on the expiry of the 30 day limit by which a detention order must be served or the detainees released. Those released are:

1. Ms TANG Lay Lee
2. Ms NG Bee Leng
3. Ms MAH Lee Lin
4. Ms Jenny CHIN (Malaysian citizen), her Singaporean husband, Kenneth TSANG, remains in prison.

The first three have probably been released for medical reasons since all have received medical attention while in detention. Malaysian journalist Ms Jenny CHIN may have been released to quieten the strong protest from Malaysia over the detentions. However, Malaysian engineer Mr CHIA Boon Thye remains in prison.

Although released all former detainees have their civil rights suspended and are heavily restricted in their employment, place of residence and association with organisations, groups or persons. It is the Singapore equivalent of the South African banning order.

DETENTION ORDERS SERVED

The 6 p.m. news tonight in Singapore announced that detention orders had been served on the other detainees arrested on May 21 as follows:

Detention without trial for one year: Mr William YAP Hon Ngian, Mr Kenneth TSANG Chi Seng, Mr CHIA Boon Tai, Mr TAY Hong Seng, Ms TEO Soh Lung, Ms Teresa LIM Li Kok, Ms WONG Souk Yee, Ms LOW Yit Leng, Mr TAN Tee Seng, Mr Kevin Desmond DE SOUZA, Ms CHUNG Lai Mei.

Detention without trial for two years: Mr Vincent CHENG Kim Chuan.

These detention orders can be renewed forever by the government. Their issuance does not mean an end to interrogation.

INTERROGATION WORSENS

One detainee was interrogated for 50 hours non-stop on her arrest, given 30 minutes break, then interrogated for a further 72 hours without a break. It seems all detainees were subjected to similar or worse treatment. There are also reports that they were kept in very small cells like telephone boxes so that they could not lie down. They have also been forced individually to

write over 100 page statements taking in events and people stretching back as far as ten years ago, implicating others in the so-called "Marxist conspiracy".

Interrogation is reported to have lessened in intensity about June 9 when Vincent Cheng's "confession" was screened on TV. However, it has since intensified.

PUBLIC UNCONVINCED

The Singapore public were impressed by Vincent Cheng's warm and reasonable manner in his "confession" and were not very convinced by the staged performance. Thus it has been necessary for the Prime Minister's son, Trade and Industry Minister Brigadier-General Lee Hsien Loong, to state on TV that, despite his meek and mild exterior, Vincent Cheng is a dangerous wolf in sheep's clothing.

FROM HOPE TO DESPAIR

Detainees' families were given hope by the government in that they were told that it was likely their loved ones would be released if they did not make a protest. Today they have learned the cruelty of the government's trick since most of the detainees have been held and more taken in.

LETTER TO POPE

The families have expressed their sense of abandonment by the Catholic Church after the Archbishop of Singapore, Gregory Yong, gave his support to the Government and prohibited prayers for the detainees from being said in his parish churches. He has further instructed the families that they should not attend the same church together.

In a letter to Pope John Paul II expressing their grief and sense of injustice, the families say, "Holy Father, every moment, every heartbeat, we are praying that God will protect His servants who have been detained... But it is difficult to be strong, for we feel like sheep whose shepherd has left them and we do not know which way to turn."

ECUMENICAL SPLIT

It is reported that the Anglican Church in Singapore has threatened to withdraw from the National Council of Churches in Singapore if it raises the issue of the detentions.

ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS MEET

The detentions have been raised informally at a meeting of ASEAN foreign ministers and related countries in Singapore during the past few days. Under pressure from more than ten congressmen, US Secretary of State Schultz mentioned the detentions. Under pressure from LAWASIA in Sydney, Australian Foreign Minister

Bill Hayden broached the matter with Singapore's Dhanabalan. He was told that some would be released and that Mr Lee Kuan Yew would be making a statement soon.

RESOLUTION PASSED BY EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

A strong resolution calling on the Singapore Government to release the detainees immediately and to examine their cases in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The resolution was passed on 17 June and notes that "the only 'crimes' committed by these 16 people were to seek to defend and assist victims of the economic crisis, to defend individual liberties and the right of association and to further participation by ordinary citizens in political and social life, rights and freedoms which are guaranteed...".

AUSTRALIAN CHURCH SPEAKS OUT

Catholic Bishop George Pell delivered a strong sermon against arbitrary detention of church workers to a congregation of about 500 at a mass at St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne, on 18 June held to show solidarity with the Singapore detainees. The issue has received front page coverage in the major Catholic newspapers in Australia.

The Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne, the Most Rev David Penman, has also made a public appeal for the release of the detainees.

SINGAPORE PRIEST IN NEW ZEALAND

Father Edgar D'Souza who resigned under pressure from his job as editor of Singapore's THE CATHOLIC NEWS, is on a solidarity visit in NZ after visiting Australia. He is speaking to church leaders, Catholic and ecumenical organisations, the media, politicians and government officials. A mass was held at a chapel of Christchurch Cathedral last night at which Fr D'Souza gave a testimony to the work of the detainees. The congregation prayed in the knowledge that detention orders were due to be issued the next day.

This morning in Wellington, more than 60 Christians held a prayer vigil outside the residence of the Singapore High Commissioner to protest the detentions.

KYOTO PRESS CONFERENCE

On June 16 the newly formed Kansai Emergency Committee on Human Rights in Singapore held a press conference which was addressed by Professor Takenaka Masao, Prof of Theology at Doshisha University and ex-chairperson of the Christian Conference of Asia Urban Rural Mission. Other prominent lawyers and community leaders addressed the conference which stated that the Singapore Government's charges against the detainees were "ridiculous and

cynical slanders". It further noted that the Government was "using threats, intimidation and violence to extract forced "confessions" from the detainees". It urgently called upon women's groups, Christian organisations, business and the Japanese public to act against the detentions and the Singapore Government.

MEDIA COVERAGE

Extensive treatment of the detentions continues worldwide. When the Washington Post and Newsday in the USA published articles, the Singapore Ambassador in Washington invited the staff of a human rights agency there to lunch. In New Zealand, Wellington's major daily, THE DOMINION, carried a feature article entitled "Lee Stifles Singapore's Dissenters". On Monday 15 June the same paper carried an Open Letter from 47 top legal academics condemning the action of the Singapore Government and calling for due legal process.

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