



Regional Office for South-East Asia

PRESS STATEMENT

United Nations Human Rights Office urges the Singapore Government to consider the best interests of the child in Amos Yee court case

BANGKOK (22 JUNE 2015) - The United Nations Human Rights Office for South-East Asia (OHCHR) is concerned about the conviction of 16 year-old Amos Yee for uploading remarks and images critical of the late Lee Kuan Yew, the founding Prime-Minister of Singapore. He is due to be sentenced on 23 June 2015. Amos was remanded on 2 June for three weeks after he refused probation and is currently detained in Changi prison where, according to his lawyer, his physical and psychological status is deteriorating.

Amos was convicted on 12 May 2015 on two charges, one of wounding religious feelings under section 298 of the penal code and another for circulating obscene imagery under 292 (1) of the Penal Code. Amos had pleaded not guilty to both offences.

OHCHR understands that at the request of the prosecution, Amos is currently being assessed for his suitability for the Reformative Training Centre for a period of at least 18 months. OHCHR is concerned that the Reformative Training Centre is akin to detention and usually applied to juvenile offenders involved in serious crimes. The District Court of Singapore in a recent case involving a juvenile recognized that the Reformative Training Centre is incarcerative in nature and should be imposed cautiously.

While recognizing the Singapore authorities concern with public morality and social harmony, OHCHR is concerned that the criminal sanctions considered in this case seem disproportionate and inappropriate in terms of the international protections for freedom of expression and opinion.

While Amos himself has refused the option of probation, OHCHR appeals to the Singapore authorities to give special consideration to his juvenile status and ensure his treatment is consistent with the best interests of the child, the principle that lies at the heart of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Singapore is a party.

OHCHR urges the Government to review the conviction of Amos Yee and the prosecutors to drop the demand for sentencing him to the Reformative Training Centre. OHCHR calls for the immediate release of Amos in line with its commitment under the UN Convention on the Rights of Child. OHCHR also hopes that the judiciary will exercise its authority in the protection of human rights including the rights of the child.

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The Regional Office for South-East Asia in Bangkok represents the High Commissioner for Human Rights within South East Asia. The High Commissioner for Human Rights is the principal human rights official of the United Nations and heads the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which spearheads the United Nations' human rights efforts .

OHCHR website: <http://www.ohchr.org>

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