



SINGAPORE

UPDATED ASSESSMENT OF R2P IMPLEMENTATION 2023



Asia-Pacific Centre for the
Responsibility to Protect



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Singapore's performance in implementing R2P remains in the mid-range of the region.

Internationally, Singapore is party to just under half of the treaties most relevant to R2P. It is a non-party to the Rome Statute, but it has criminalized some atrocity crimes in its domestic legislation due to past experiences. It generally abstains from voting on resolutions that reference R2P.

Regionally, Singapore is not a proactive carrier of R2P, advocating instead consensus-borne decisions.

Domestically, Singapore performs well in preventing atrocity crimes and their precursors, violent conflict. The country is economically well-managed, but some core rights issues remain. Citizens do not enjoy a high degree of freedom of expression. Migrants are often exploited for labour. Discrimination of the LGBTIQ+ community remains a concern, although same-sex marriage has been decriminalized.

However, the education system is strong and well-attended. SGBV is both criminalized and low. These two factors contribute to a resilient society.

Despite many human rights being enshrined in the constitution, Singapore lacks a human rights institute.

Singapore makes modest contributions to peacekeeping.

Singapore has as one of the few countries in the region made efforts to reconcile based on past, WW2-related atrocities. It is at present not prone to atrocity crimes.

Its index score has dropped with two points since 2022.

Thematic Area	Indicator	Assessment	Notes
Basic Compliance	Protection of populations from atrocity crimes.	Very Strong Unchanged	Singapore has criminalized atrocity crimes, and built a strong culture of good governance. Citizens are well-protected against atrocity crimes.
	Reduction of atrocity crime risks.	Strong Decrease	The risks of atrocity crimes occurring in Singapore remains low, due to its strong institutions and focus on social integration. However, this is not enforced by human rights institutions or domestic oversight mechanisms, just as the civic space remains small.
	Dealing with past atrocities.	Very Strong Unchanged	Singapore has largely sought to learn from its past experiences with atrocities. Tensions and dispute remain over the Japanese occupation in World War II ¹ and British colonialism, ² but there is a will to reconcile.
Policy Mechanisms	Appoint national R2P Focal Point.	Very Weak Unchanged	Singapore does not have a national R2P Focal Point. ³
	Incorporate atrocity crime risks and dynamics into conflict analysis and/or development partnerships.	Very Weak Unchanged	No new evidence could be found of Singapore incorporating atrocity crimes risks into development partnerships.
	Establish domestic mechanisms to hold the government accountable for upholding its responsibility to protect.	Very Weak Unchanged	No new evidence could be found of Singapore establishing domestic mechanisms to ensure it fulfills its responsibility to protect.
International Human Rights Obligations	Sign, ratify and implement relevant instruments of international law.	Weak Unchanged	Singapore has ratified five out of the twelve treaties most relevant to R2P. They have yet to sign or ratify the <i>Additional Protocol I</i> of the Geneva Conventions, the <i>Convention against Torture, and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment</i> [CAT], the <i>International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights</i> [ICCPR], the <i>International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights</i> [ICESCR], the <i>1951 Refugee Convention</i> and its <i>1967 Protocol</i> , and <i>The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court</i> . ⁴ Singapore has signed, but yet not ratified the <i>Arms Trade Treaty</i> [ATT]. ⁵
	Sign and ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and cooperate fully with the Court.	Very Weak Unchanged	Singapore remains a non-signatory to the <i>Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court</i> .

¹ Hambrett, Micaela, 2022. 'Questions remain 80 years on from the Valentine's Day Massacre during the Fall of Singapore'. *ABC News*, 14 February. Available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-02-14/valentines-day-massacre-during-the-fall-of-singapore-80th/100825650>; Historic War Tours, 2020. *Alexandra Hospital Massacre*, <https://www.historicwartours.com.au/blog/2020/4/18/alexandra-hospital-massacre>.

² Dziedzic, Stephen, 2020. 'Singapore's quarrel over colonialism'. *The Interpreter*, 12 February. Available at: <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/singapore-s-quarrel-over-colonialism>.

³ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2022. *Members of the Global Network of R2P Focal Points*, <https://www.globalr2p.org/resources/members-of-the-global-network-of-r2p-focal-points/>.

⁴ United Nations Treaty Bodies, n.d. *View the ratification status by country or by treaty*, https://tbinet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=157&Lang=EN; International Committee of the Red Cross, n.d. *Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I)*, 8 June 1977, https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl.nsf/States.xsp?xp_viewStates=XPages_NORMStatesParties&xp_treatySelected=470; United Nations Treaty Collection (UNTC), 2022. *2. Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*, https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetailsII.aspx?src=TREATY&mtmsg_no=V-2&chapter=5&Temp=mtmsg2&clang=en;

International Criminal Court (ICC), n.d. *The States Parties to the Rome Statute*, <https://asp.icc-cpi.int/states-parties#S>.

⁵ UNTC, 2022 8. *Arms Trade Treaty*, https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtmsg_no=XXVI-8&chapter=26.

Establish and maintain National Human Rights Institutions in accordance with the Paris Principles.	Very Weak Unchanged	Singapore does not have an independent human rights institute. There are some human rights groups in the country. Their work is closely monitored by the government. ⁶
Ensure domestic promotion and protection of human rights, focusing on the elimination of discrimination.	Fair Unchanged	Discrimination on basis of sex, race, religion and ethnicity is forbidden and these laws are generally forced. ⁷ However, the LGBTQIQ+ community experiences societal discrimination and are without opportunities to take legal action. Same-sex marriage was decriminalized this year, but the constitution was changed to prevent access to same-sex marriage. ⁸
Participate in international peer review processes, including the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the UN Human Rights Council.	Strong Unchanged	Singapore participated in its third UPR in May 2021. It received 324 recommendations and accepted 210 of them, with most recommendations relating to legal, civil and political rights, and the rights of minorities. ⁹ Singapore has, as addressed in another Indicator, reacted to the recommendations of decriminalizing same-sex marriage although it is dubious that this will have an effect given the constitutional change.
Cooperate fully with UN Human Rights mandate holders and those of relevant regional organisations.	Weak Decrease	Singapore has not provided a standing invitation to UN special procedures, and only two visits have completed reports. There is one visit with proposed dates for 24, but a large number of inactive requests and requests postponed by Singapore. ¹⁰
Ensure equal access to justice.	Fair Unchanged	Singapore has an independent judicial system, although those charged under national security legislation are not entitled to a public trial, just as those arrested on narcotic-charges are presumed guilty. In cases that go against the government, the judiciary tends to side with the government. Sentences can include death penalty as well as canning. ¹¹
Criminalise incitement to commit genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.	Strong Unchanged	Singapore has effective legislation that criminalises genocide and war crimes, informed by its historical experience of WW2-related atrocity crimes. ¹²
Take measures to counter and prevent violent extremism.	Strong Unchanged	Singapore retains a strong stance against terrorism, extremism and violence. It has programs dedicated to online radicalization, countering financing of terrorism, and has engaged border control as well. Singapore has not suffered any terrorist attacks in

⁶ U.S Department of State, 2023. *2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Singapore*, ‘Section 5. Governmental Posture Towards International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Abuses of Human Rights’

<https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/singapore/>

⁷ U.S Department of State, 2023. *2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Singapore*, ‘Section 6. Discrimination and Societal Abuses’ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/singapore/>

⁸ Amnesty International, n.d., *Human Rights in Singapore 2022*, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-east-asia-and-the-pacific/singapore/report-singapore/> ; U.S Department of State, 2023. *2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Singapore*, ‘Section 6. Discrimination and Societal Abuses’ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/singapore/>

⁹ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (UNOHCHR), 2021. *Infographic: Singapore*, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/Infographics-SINGAPORE.pdf>.

¹⁰ UNOHCHR, n.d. *View Country visits of Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council since 1998*, <https://spinternet.ohchr.org/ViewCountryVisits.aspx?visitType=all&country=SGP&Lang=en>.

¹¹ U.S Department of State, 2023. *2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Singapore*, ‘Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person’ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/singapore/> ; Amnesty International, n.d., *Human Rights in Singapore 2022*, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-east-asia-and-the-pacific/singapore/report-singapore/> ; Freedom House, n.d., *Freedom in the World 2023: Singapore*, ‘F. Rule of Law’ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/singapore/freedom-world/2023>

¹² International Criminal Court Project, 2022. *Singapore: Overview*, <https://www.aba-icc.org/country/singapore/>.

	Enact and implement laws protecting vulnerable groups, particularly in relation to sexual and gender-based violence.	Strong Unchanged	2022, and has made use of its counter-terrorist legislation. ¹³ Women and men within Singapore generally enjoy equal rights and opportunities, and thanks to awareness campaigns more gender-based crimes are being reported. The law bans rape, martial rape, and sexual harassment and is generally well-enforced. ¹⁴
	Protect individuals and groups fleeing atrocity crimes and their risk, in accordance with International Refugee Law.	Very Weak Unchanged	As mentioned in a previous Indicator, discrimination against those in the LGBTIQ+ community remains a widespread problem both in society and in legislation. Singapore remains non-signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol , and there is yet to be developed a provision in Singaporean legislation for refugees and asylum seekers. ¹⁵
Domestic Implementation	Conduct a national assessment of risk and resilience.	Very Weak Unchanged	No evidence could be found of such an assessment being conducted in Singapore.
	Cultivate and protect an active, diverse and robust civil society.	Weak Unchanged	In contrast to the very open economic system, freedom of expression is restrained. In media as well as within the academic sphere, the PAP restricts governmental critique. ¹⁶ The freedom of assembly is restricted by strict requirements for police approval, and freedom of association is restricted by requirement for government approval at ten members. ¹⁷ This limits the diversity of civil society.
	Ensure a legitimate, effective and civilian controlled security sector.	Very Strong Unchanged	Civilian authorities maintain effective control over the Singaporean security sector. ¹⁸ Singapore has in recent years been working on increased utility of technology, and remains committed to this goal. ¹⁹
	Ensure the education system reflects the ethnic, national and cultural diversity of society, and sets examples of inclusiveness.	Strong Unchanged	Singapore's educational system remains one of the best in the world, delivering consistently high standards in science, maths and reading for its students. 11-13 years of education is mandatory for all citizens. ²⁰ Indigenous Peoples educational performance has been under the national average, but the government has subsidised education to bridge the gap with some success. ²¹
	Prevent nationals committing atrocity crimes overseas.	Fair Decrease	Despite remaining outside of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court , Singapore has legislation to prosecute nationals that commit atrocity crimes. ²²

¹³ U.S Department of State, 2023. *Country Reports on Terrorism 2022: Singapore*, <https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2022/singapore#:~:text=Singapore%20founded%20and%20hosts%20the,with%20representatives%20from%20nine%20countries>.

¹⁴ U.S Department of State, 2023. *2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Singapore*, 'Section 6. Discrimination' <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/singapore/>

¹⁵ U.S Department of State, 2023. *2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Singapore*, 'Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties' <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/singapore/>

¹⁶ Freedom House, n.d., *Freedom in the World 2023: Singapore*, 'D. Freedom of Expression and Belief' <https://freedomhouse.org/country/singapore/freedom-world/2023>

¹⁷ U.S Department of State, 2023. *2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Singapore*, 'Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties' <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/singapore/>

¹⁸ U.S Department of State, 2023. *2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Singapore*, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/singapore/>

¹⁹ Singapore Ministry of Home Affairs, 2022. *Transforming the Security Industry*, <https://www.mha.gov.sg/what-we-do/security-itm>.

²⁰ Education Destination Aisa, n.d., *School Education System In Singapore*, <https://educationdestinationasia.com/essential-guide/singapore/school-education-system-in-singapore>

²¹ U.S Department of State, 2023. *2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Singapore*, 'Section 5. Discrimination and Societal Abuses' <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/singapore/>

²² International Criminal Court Project, 2022. *Singapore: Overview*, <https://www.aba-icc.org/country/singapore/>

Bilateral and Multilateral Relations	Participate in international, regional, and national discussions on the further advancement of R2P.	Fair Unchanged	Singapore is a member of the Group of Friends of the R2P and generally participates in relevant discussions via this body.
	Leverage existing mechanisms and institutions (including regional and sub-regional organisations) to encourage States to fulfil their responsibility to protect.	Fair Unchanged	<p>Singapore's voting record in the General Assembly has been to mostly abstain from resolutions that reference R2P applying to a particular situation.</p> <p>UN General Assembly Resolutions:²³</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2018: Extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions A/RES/73/172: yes. • 2018: Situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea A/RES/73/180: adopted without vote. • 2018: Situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic A/RES/73/182: abstained. • 2019: Situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea A/RES/74/166: adopted without vote. • 2019: Situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic A/RES/74/169: abstained. • 2020: Situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea A/RES/75/190: adopted without vote. • 2020: Extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions A/RES/75/189: yes. • 2020: Situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic A/RES/75/193: abstained. • 2021: Promoting a culture of peace and tolerance to safeguard religious sites A/RES/75/258: adopted without vote. • 2021: The responsibility to protect and the prevention of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity A/RES/75/277: abstained. • 2022: Extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, A/RES/77/218: yes • 2022: Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea, A/RES/77/226: adopted without a vote • 2022: Myanmar/Burma, A/RES/77/227: adopted without a vote • 2022: Syria A/RES/77/230: abstained
	Encourage and assist States to fulfil their R2P in situations of emerging and ongoing crisis, such as good offices and preventive diplomacy.	Weak Unchanged	<p>Singapore remains supportive of ASEANS five-point consensus plan regarding Myanmar. The plan starts with a call for ceasefire, and includes ASEAN as a party to facilitate dialogue.²⁴</p> <p>Despite being party to the arms embargo, UN reports have found that Singaporean trade results in weapons for the junta. Singapore argues that the imported items are dual-use. Trade that can lead to</p>

²³ GCR2P, 2023. *UN General Assembly Resolutions Referencing R2P*, <https://www.globalr2p.org/resources/un-general-assembly-resolutions-referencing-r2p-2/>. (Voting records for each resolution were accessed using the UN's Digital Library: General Assembly of the United Nations, n.d. *Voting Records*, <https://www.un.org/en/ga/documents/voting.asp>.)

²⁴ ASEAN Secretariat, 24th April 2021, *Chairmans statement on the ASEAN Leaders Meeting*, <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/Chairmans-Statement-on-ALM-Five-Point-Consensus-24-April-2021-FINAL-a-1.pdf>

			weapons, in spite of the ban, is a general trend in Southeast-Asian countries. ²⁵
	Strengthen regional and international networks for atrocity crime prevention.	Weak Unchanged	Singapore broadly supports R2P, but retains its preference for non-intervention. In ASEAN, Singapore remains a supporter of <i>The ASEAN Way</i> . ²⁶
	Strengthen the role and capacity of regional organisations.	Fair Unchanged	Singapore actively participates in a number of international organisations including ASEAN, APEC, and The Commonwealth. ²⁷ No evidence could be found that it is seeking to expand their roles.
	Support the development and work of regional human rights and other preventive capacities.	Weak Unchanged	No evidence could be found of Singapore expanding human rights and other preventive capacities, however as addressed in above Indicator, Singapore remains an active member of a number of regional organizations.
	Support atrocity prevention through development and assistance partnerships.	Very Weak Unchanged	Singapore has contributed aid towards humanitarian causes, such as the war in Ukraine, but no evidence could be found of aid intended for systemic atrocity prevention. ²⁸
United Nations, prevention, Peacekeeping, and assistance	Support the early warning and capacity building efforts of the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and R2P.	Fair Unchanged	No evidence could be found of Singapore being exceptionally supportive or dismissive of the UN Office of Genocide. Singapore's approach to R2P is generally supportive, as it is part of the Group of Friends of the R2P.
	Support the strengthening of the UN's capacity for atrocity prevention, including through the UN Human Rights system.	Strong Unchanged	Singapore has pushed for the discussion of vetoes in matters of atrocity crime, and voted for a resolution that mandates a General Assembly debate when a veto vote is cast, with the Singaporean delegate declaring it 'strengthened the role of the Assembly without weakening the role of the Security Council.' ²⁹
	Support preventive actions on atrocity crimes.	Strong Unchanged	Singapore strongly supports consensus-driven decisions in governance, and followingly favours preventive measures and diplomacy.
	Contribute to United Nations peacekeeping operations (especially those with a protection of civilians mandate).	Weak Unchanged	Singapore has previously supported peacekeeping missions with personnel, but currently has no troops deployed on UN peacekeeping missions. It is engaged in software developing program with the Department of Peacekeeping operations. ³⁰
	Develop the capacities needed to support civilian protection, including through the training of military and civilian personnel for peacekeeping.	Fair Unchanged	Singapore, as addressed in the above Indicator, contributes to peacekeeping capacities through software development, although it is uncertain at this stage if this will include a civilian element.
	Support the Kigali Principles.	Very Weak Unchanged	Singapore remains unsupportive of the Kigali Principles.

²⁵ Ewe, Koh. 2023, 'Why Southeast Asia Just Can't Seem to Cut Off Myanmar's Junta', *The Times*, 20th October. Available at: <https://time.com/6326274/asean-myanmar-junta-trade/>; Ministry of Foreign Affairs Singapore, 2023, 'Transcript of Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Vivian Balakrishnan's Oral Reply to Parliamentary and Supplementary Question on Allegations concerning Singapore in the Report of the Special Advisory Council for Myanmar', *Ministry of Foreign Affairs Singapore*, 14 February. Available at: <https://www.mfa.gov.sg/Newsroom/Press-Statements-Transcripts-and-Photos/2023/02/20230214-PQ>


²⁶ Mahaseth, Harsh, 2022, 'The Use of The ASEAN Way In Resolving Disputes', *Modern Diplomacy*, June 22nd. Available at: <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2022/06/22/the-use-of-the-asean-way-in-resolving-disputes/>

²⁷ Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023. *International Organisations*, <https://www.mfa.gov.sg/SINGAPORES-FOREIGN-POLICY/International-Organisations>.

²⁸ Begum, Shabanam, 2022, 'Singapore Red Cross to send \$2.4m to Ukraine, neighbouring countries in second tranche of aid,' *The Straits Times*, 10th March. Available at: <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/singapore-red-cross-to-send-24m-to-ukraine-neighbouring-countries-in-second-tranche-of-aid>

²⁹ United Nations Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, 26th April 2023, *General Assembly Holds First-Ever Debate on Historic Veto Resolution, Adopts Texts on Infrastructure, National Reviews, Council of Europe Cooperation*, <https://press.un.org/en/2023/ga12500.doc.htm>

³⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs Singapore, n.d., *International Peacekeeping*, [SINGAPORES-FOREIGN-POLICY/International-Issues/International-Peacekeeping](https://www.mfa.gov.sg/SINGAPORES-FOREIGN-POLICY/International-Issues/International-Peacekeeping)



Support UN Security Council veto restraint on issues relating to atrocity prevention.

Very Strong
Unchanged

Singapore is a supporter of the French/Mexican initiative on suspending veto in cases of mass atrocities,³¹ and the ACT Code of Conduct regarding Security Council action during mass atrocities.³²

³¹ GCR2P, 2023. *List of Supporters of the Political Declaration on Suspension of Veto*, <https://www.globalr2p.org/resources/list-of-supporters-of-the-political-declaration-on-suspension-of-veto/>.

³² GCR2P, 2023. *List of Signatories to the ACT Code of Conduct*, <https://www.globalr2p.org/resources/list-of-signatories-to-the-act-code-of-conduct/>.