

**QUESTIONS POSED BY TIMOTHY COOPER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
WORLDRIGHTS, TO SINGAPORE'S VICE PRIME MINISTER,  
MR. S JAYAKUMAR  
AT THE INTERNATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION  
OCTOBER 19, 2007, SINGAPORE**

First, I'd like to applaud the International Bar Association for hosting this conference on the Rule of Law and, most particularly, for making it open to the public. It was the right thing to do. However, I'd like to take exception to Mr. Pombo's curious statement that Singapore has an "outstanding judiciary because it is the sense of the international human rights community that Singapore uses its courts to silence political dissident, that Singapore is use the courts to rule by law but that it is not a system of the rule of law.

In this regard, I have three mutually re-enforcing question for Mr. Jayakumar, the Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore.

- 1) Singapore courts use summary judgments in defamation suits against political opponents of the government, so defendants can't examine witnesses; and unlike in the United Kingdom, there are no jury trials. **How is this fair?**
- 2) There are NO cases under Singapore law where political defendants have successfully defended themselves in libel cases brought by government officials. **How can that be explained?**
- 3) Moreover, in the recent past the Singapore Law Society has been very vocal in objecting to Queens Council being tapped by political defendants to defend themselves in libel cases. As you know, QC's are experts in the area of "qualified privilege" essential to a defendant's defense. Whereas, the Prime Minister, who has initiated more than a dozen of these cases, gets Senior Council--the best council. **How does this create a level playing field?**

Finally, none of the above questions address the issue of why permits are routinely denied political opponents to allow for 1) freedom of assembly; 2) freedom of speech; and 3) freedom of protest. **Why are these rights denied political opponents?**