

# CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL LAW

## Seminar

**16 OCTOBER 2013, WEDNESDAY, 4.00PM – 5.30PM**

**Seminar Room 4-1, Level 4, Block B, NUS Bukit Timah Campus**

**469 Bukit Timah Road, Singapore 259756**

## The British Military's Prosecution of Japanese War Crimes in Post-WWII Singapore – A Socio-Legal and Historical Study

### SPEAKER



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CHEAH Wui Ling is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Law of the National University of Singapore (NUS), where she is also a Research Fellow at the NUS Centre of International Law. She is a qualified lawyer, called to the New York Bar, and has a diploma in arbitration, from Queen Mary, University of London. She holds a LLB and LLM from the National University of Singapore, a LLM from Harvard, and a Diploma from the Academy of European Law (EUI).

Prior to entering academia, she served as a legal officer at Interpol's General Secretariat (Lyon, France) where she specialised in international criminal law and cross-border police cooperation. In 2011, she was a Visiting Professional at the International Criminal Court. She is Senior Adviser and Editor for the Forum of International Criminal and Humanitarian Law (FICHL) and Torkel Opsahl Academic EPublisher (TOAEP), respectively. Her research and publications focus on issues of international criminal law, human rights law, and criminal justice.

### ABSTRACT

This seminar forms part of a larger project that examines the significance and meaning of British-organised military trials held in Singapore after WWII (the Singapore Trials). These trials were among hundreds individually conducted by the Allied Forces pursuant to the 1943 Moscow Declaration, alongside the Tokyo and Nuremburg Trials. However, there has yet to be any comprehensive study of these trials. Their cursory examination raises a number of puzzling questions, particularly when compared to contemporary war crimes trials, or even the Nuremberg and Tokyo Trials. Why were their judgments and findings so brief, comprising one or two pages in length? How was it possible that each trial lasted only for a few days, given the complex or systematic nature of the crimes? Why was there little reference to applicable laws, and what norms, if any, regulated these trials? Were these trials a form of vengeful “justice” dealt out by victors in the aftermath of WWII? By examining trial-related archival records using a mix of interpretive and reading methods from the disciplines of sociology and history, this project addresses the following research questions: (1) What conceptions of criminality and culpability were put forward and discussed during these trials? (2) How were these conceptions articulated and constructed by the trial actors involved? (3) Why were these conceptions chosen, and how do they enhance our understanding of these trials?