



**THE STATUTES OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE**

**STATE LANDS ENCROACHMENTS  
ACT 1883**

**2020 REVISED EDITION**

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# State Lands Encroachments Act 1883

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An Act to prevent encroachments upon State lands.

[2 November 1883]

### **Short title**

1. This Act is the State Lands Encroachments Act 1883.

### **Information of encroachment**

2. A Magistrate's Court, upon the sworn information of the Commissioner of Lands, or of any land revenue or other public officer, charging any person with being in unlawful occupation of any State land, may issue a summons for the appearance before it of that person.

### **Removal of unlawful occupants**

3.—(1) The Magistrate's Court shall proceed in a summary way in the presence of the parties, or in case of wilful absence of any person against whom such information has been laid, then in his absence, to hear and determine the information.

(2) In any action commenced under section 2 for the removal of any person in unlawful occupation of State land, the defendant may within such time as may be prescribed by the Rules of Court for the time being in force, apply to the General Division of the High Court for the action to be transferred to the General Division of the High Court on the ground that the defendant is claiming title to the land.

*[5/2014; 40/2019]*

(3) On the hearing of any such application, the General Division of the High Court, if it is satisfied that a bona fide claim of title is raised, may make an order for the action to be transferred to the General Division of the High Court.

*[40/2019]*

### **Warrant issuable by court for dispossession**

4.—(1) The Magistrate's Court on being satisfied of the truth of the information shall issue a warrant addressed to the Commissioner of Police or to any police officer requiring him forthwith to dispossess and remove that person from the land, and on behalf of the State to take possession of the land, together with all crops growing thereon, and all buildings and other immovable property upon and affixed thereto, and all movable property found thereon.

(2) The person to whom the warrant is addressed shall forthwith carry it into execution.

(3) Such warrant shall not issue until a period of 48 hours has elapsed from the time of adjudication.

(4) The Government may forfeit any movable property which has been seized on the land pursuant to the execution of a warrant referred to in subsection (1) if such movable property has been seized after the expiry of a period of 28 days from the date of service of a written notice on the unlawful occupants of the land requiring them to vacate the land and warning them that if any movable property thereon is not so removed within 28 days of the date of service of the notice that property may be seized and forfeited to the Government.

(5) If the summons is dismissed, the Magistrate's Court may order payment by the Government to the party against whom it was issued of such sum as the Court considers to be the amount of costs fairly incurred.

### **Forms**

5. The information, summons and warrant respectively referred to in sections 2 and 4 may be in the forms A, B and C in the Schedule.

### **Demolition of unlawful buildings**

6.—(1) A Magistrate's Court, upon the sworn information of the Commissioner of Lands, or of any land revenue or other public officer, that any building has been erected or constructed upon State land without lawful authority, shall issue a summons calling upon any person interested to show cause why an order should not be made declaring the building to be State property and authorising its demolition by or under the authority of the Commissioner of Lands, or any land revenue or other public officer.

(2) That summons shall forthwith be posted or affixed by a court officer to the building referred to in the summons or as near thereto as may be practicable and no other service of the summons shall be necessary.

(3) If no bona fide application to show cause as aforesaid is made to the Magistrate's Court issuing the summons by any person interested within 3 clear days of the date on which the summons is posted or affixed to the building, then the order shall be made by the Magistrate's Court and may be enforced forthwith.

(4) If an application to show cause as aforesaid and supported by affidavit showing the grounds of the application is made to the Magistrate's Court issuing the summons by a person interested within the time provided by subsection (3), then the Magistrate's Court on being satisfied that the application is a bona fide one shall give notice of the application to the person swearing the information, shall fix a date for the hearing and determination of the information and shall give due notice thereof to the parties concerned.

(5) On the date so fixed for the hearing and determination of the information, the Magistrate's Court shall proceed in a summary way in the presence of the parties, or in case of wilful absence of any of the parties, then in his or their absence, to hear and determine the information.

(6) The jurisdiction of that Court shall be taken away by a bona fide claim of title raised by a person interested at the hearing.

(7) In this section, "building" includes any structure whatsoever.

(8) The information and summons referred to in this section may be in the forms D and E in the Schedule.

### **Penalties for trespassing**

7.—(1) Any person who —

- (a) unlawfully enters into possession of any State land, either by residing or by erecting any building or hut thereon or by clearing, enclosing or cultivating any part thereof;
- (b) unlawfully trespasses on State land by depositing, placing or throwing any article or thing whatsoever, or any waste, refuse or other thing, thereon; or

- (c) directly or indirectly abets the commission of such an act or trespass by another person,

shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$5,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months or to both, and a District Court or a Magistrate's Court shall have jurisdiction to hear and determine all proceedings under this subsection and, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the Criminal Procedure Code 2010, shall have the power to impose the full penalty or punishment provided by this subsection.

- (2) Any person who —

- (a) unlawfully enters upon any State land and cuts timber or produce thereon; or
- (b) directly or indirectly abets the commission of such an act by another person,

shall be liable for a first offence to a fine not exceeding \$200, and, for a second or subsequent offence, to a fine not exceeding \$500 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months or to both, and a Magistrate's Court shall have jurisdiction to hear and determine all proceedings under this subsection.

(3) Where an offence under subsection (1) has been committed by a company or an association or body of persons, corporate or unincorporate, any person who at the time of the commission of the offence was a director, manager, partner, secretary or other officer thereof or was purporting to act in such capacity shall also be deemed to be guilty of such offence unless he proves that the offence was committed without his consent or connivance and that he exercised all such diligence to prevent the commission of the offence as he ought to have exercised having regard to the nature of his functions in that capacity and to all the circumstances.

### **Defence relying on implied easement of support**

**7A.**—(1) In any proceedings against a person for an offence under section 7 for erecting or installing any structure in any subterranean space that is State land, or for maintaining, replacing, renewing or

restoring any such structure, it is a defence for the person charged to prove, on a balance of probabilities, that —

- (a) the person, or the company or association or body of persons of which the person is a director, manager, partner, secretary or other officer, is entitled to exercise rights under the easement of support implied under section 10 of the State Lands Act 1920;
- (b) the erection or installation of the structure, or the maintenance, replacement, renewal or restoration of the structure, as the case may be, is in accordance with section 10 of the State Lands Act 1920; and
- (c) the person, or the company or association or body of persons of which the person is a director, manager, partner, secretary or other officer, is authorised by or under the written law for the time being in force relating to planning and use of land to erect or install the structure, or to maintain, replace, renew or restore the structure, as the case may be.

[11/2015]

(2) A defence under this section is additional to any other defence available to the defendant apart from this section.

[11/2015]

### **Recovery of expenses**

**8.**—(1) The court before which any person is convicted of an offence under section 7 may order that person to pay, in addition to any fine which has been imposed for the offence, the value of any timber or other Government property cut down, destroyed or injured upon the land during any period of the unlawful occupation thereof by that person, and the expense of any survey which has become necessary for proving such unlawful occupation, or for ascertaining the extent thereof.

(2) For the purpose of ascertaining such value and expense, a certificate in writing under the hand of the Collector of Land Revenue shall be held, until the contrary is proved, to be proof that the sum

therein set down is the true amount to be recovered from that person in respect of the value and expense.

(3) Any sum ordered to be paid under this section, whatever may be the amount thereof, may be recovered in the manner provided for the recovery of fines by the Criminal Procedure Code 2010.

### **Forfeiture of abandoned land to State**

9. Subject to section 10, any land alienated or demised by or on behalf of the State which has been abandoned for 3 years or upwards by the person to whom it was alienated or demised or by any person claiming title through him, shall, notwithstanding that some person may be found in occupation thereof or of any part thereof, be forfeited to the State.

### **Procedure for resumption**

10.—(1) When any land alienated or demised by or on behalf of the Crown or the State appears to the Collector of Land Revenue to have been so abandoned for 3 years or upwards, the Collector may, with the sanction of the Minister, declare by notice in the *Gazette* and by a notice in the English, Malay, Chinese and Tamil languages posted on the land, that, unless within 6 months a claim to the land or to any interest therein, whether by long possession or otherwise, is established to the satisfaction of the Collector, it shall be deemed to have been forfeited to the State.

(2) Unless within the term of 6 months so appointed a claim to the land or any interest therein is established as in the notice provided, the land shall be deemed accordingly to have been forfeited to the State, and any grant or lease affecting the land theretofore executed, and any deed purporting to deal with the same, or any part thereof, shall be void.

(3) Whenever any land is forfeited to the State under this section, a notification to that effect shall be published in the *Gazette* and shall be posted on the land or at the police station nearest thereto.

### **Limitation**

**11.**—(1) Any land forfeited to the State under section 10 may be dealt with as seems expedient to the President.

(2) Such land shall be appraised without delay by some person or persons appointed for that purpose by the Minister, and the appraised value shall be recorded in the records of the Singapore Land Authority.

*[17/2001]*

(3) If, within 6 years from the forfeiture of the land, any person establishes a claim thereto or to any interest therein to the satisfaction of the President, he shall be entitled to receive out of the Consolidated Fund such sum, not exceeding the appraised value of that land so recorded, as the President directs.

### **State land not to be acquired by adverse possession**

**12.** No State land shall be acquired by possession or unlawful occupation and the provisions of the Limitation Act 1959 shall not apply to any action brought by the Government for the recovery of State land.

### **Penalty for depasturing on State land**

**13.** Any person who knowingly and wilfully depastures without authority in that behalf any horse or cattle on any State land, not being a common, shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$500.

### **Penalty for other trespasses on State land**

**14.** Any person who is not authorised in that behalf cuts, digs or takes from any State land any live or dead timber, or other vegetable product, or any beeswax, guano, mineral, gravel, stone, coral, shell, sand, loam, brick-earth or other product, or cuts, removes or sells any timber or produce lying or being on State land or strips or removes bark from any tree in any State land, shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$2,000.

**15.** *[Repealed by Act 15 of 2010]*

### **Forest rangers and penghulus**

**16.**—(1) The Minister may appoint a sufficient number of persons to be forest rangers and penghulus, and may define the boundaries within which the forest rangers and penghulus shall exercise the functions herein assigned to them.

(2) Every such forest ranger or penghulu shall, during his continuance in office, do all acts for preventing intrusion, encroachment and trespass on State lands, or for levying or recovering the rent or the licence fee payable in respect thereof, or in respect of the rent of any land held under any grant or lease from the Government, or for taking and recovering possession of any allotment or lands in case of forfeiture, or for such other purpose as the Minister may prescribe.

### **Forest rangers and penghulus to give information**

**17.**—(1) Any forest ranger or penghulu who wilfully or knowingly refuses or neglects to give every information within his knowledge or power immediately to the Commissioner of Lands, or to the Collector of Land Revenue, of any encroachment made by any person upon any State land, and situated in the district of that forest ranger or penghulu shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$200.

(2) Any forest ranger, penghulu or police officer who without lawful excuse neglects or refuses to do and perform any of the duties, matters and things imposed on him by this Act shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$200.

### **Arrest without warrant**

**18.** All forest rangers, penghulus and police officers within their respective jurisdictions are hereby required to arrest without warrant and take before a Magistrate any person whom they find committing any offence punishable under section 13 or 14.





THE SCHEDULE — *continued*  
FORM E  
SUMMONS AS TO  
AN UNLAWFUL BUILDING ON STATE LAND

To Wit.

In the matter of the State Lands Encroachments Act 1883.

To All Whom It May Concern

Take Notice that you are entitled to appear at  
before \_\_\_\_\_ at the hour of 10 a.m. on any day before the  
expiration of 3 clear days from the date of the posting or affixing of this Notice as  
hereinafter mentioned, to apply to show cause why an order should not be made  
declaring the building, *viz.*: [*description and situation*] (to which or by which this  
summons is posted or affixed) to be State property and authorising its demolition  
by or under the authority of the Commissioner of Lands, or any Land Revenue or  
other public officer.

Dated the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 20 \_\_\_\_ .

*Magistrate*

This summons was posted or affixed on [or near to] the building referred to  
herein this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 20 \_\_\_\_ .

*Process Server*

In case any person interested fails to appear to answer this summons, upon  
proof of posting or affixing of the same, the information and complaint will be  
heard in his absence, and such order made as to the court shall seem fit.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY  
STATE LANDS ENCROACHMENTS  
ACT 1883

This Legislative History is a service provided by the Law Revision Commission on a best-efforts basis. It is not part of the Act.

**1. Ordinance X of 1883 — The Crown Lands Ordinance, 1883**

Bill	:	G.N. No. 291/1883
First Reading	:	15 October 1883
Second Reading	:	17 October 1883
Notice of Amendments	:	26 October 1883
Third Reading	:	26 October 1883
Commencement	:	26 October 1883 (assent) 2 November 1883 (publication)

**2. Ordinance VIII of 1884 — The Boundaries Ordinance, 1884**  
(Amendments made by section 2 read with the Schedule to the above Ordinance)

Bill	:	G.N. No. 218/1884
First Reading	:	20 May 1884
Second Reading	:	3 June 1884
Select Committee Report	:	Council Paper No. 39 of 1884
Notice of Amendments	:	14 November 1884
Third Reading	:	14 November 1884
Commencement	:	14 November 1884 (section 2 read with the Schedule)

**3. Ordinance X of 1891 — An Ordinance to amend “The Crown Lands Ordinance 1883”**

Bill	:	G.N. No. 128/1891
First Reading	:	12 March 1891
Second Reading	:	15 October 1891
Third Reading	:	12 November 1891
Commencement	:	12 November 1891

**4. Ordinance 8 of 1920 — Governor's Powers Delegation Ordinance, 1920**  
(Amendments made by section 2 read with the Schedule to the above Ordinance)

Bill	:	G.N. No. 349/1920
First Reading	:	8 March 1920
Second Reading	:	12 April 1920
Notice of Amendments	:	12 April 1920
Third Reading	:	12 April 1920
Commencement	:	21 April 1920 (section 2 read with the Schedule)

**5. 1920 Revised Edition — Ordinance No. 30 (Crown Lands Encroachments)**

Operation	:	28 November 1921
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**6. Ordinance 26 of 1921 — Statute Laws (Revised Edition) Operation Ordinance, 1921**

(Amendments made by section 3(a) read with Part I of Schedule C to the above Ordinance)

Bill	:	G.N. No. 1854/1921
First and Second Readings	:	22 November 1921
Notice of Amendments	:	22 November 1921
Third Reading	:	22 November 1921
Commencement	:	28 November 1921 (section 3(a) read with Part I of Schedule C)

**7. 1926 Revised Edition — Ordinance No. 30 (Crown Lands Encroachments)**

Operation	:	1 August 1926
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**8. 1936 Revised Edition — Crown Lands Encroachments Ordinance (Chapter 114)**

Operation	:	1 September 1936
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**9. Ordinance 41 of 1936 — Statute Law (Revised Edition) Amendment Ordinance, 1936**

(Amendments made by section 2 read with item VIII of the Schedule to the above Ordinance)

Bill	:	G.N. No. 3285/1936
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First and Second Readings	:	7 December 1936
Notice of Amendments	:	7 December 1936
Third Reading	:	7 December 1936
Commencement	:	30 December 1936 (section 2 read with item VIII of the Schedule)

**10. Ordinance 28 of 1937 — Crown Lands Encroachments (Amendment) Ordinance, 1937**

Bill	:	G.N. No. 1597/1937
First Reading	:	14 June 1937
Second Reading	:	30 August 1937
Notice of Amendments	:	30 August 1937
Third Reading	:	25 October 1937
Commencement	:	18 November 1937

**11. Ordinance 17 of 1953 — Crown Lands Encroachments (Amendment) Ordinance, 1953**

Bill	:	11/1953
First Reading	:	21 April 1953
Second Reading	:	19 May 1953
Notice of Amendments	:	19 May 1953
Third Reading	:	19 May 1953
Commencement	:	4 June 1953

**12. Ordinance 37 of 1952 — Law Revision (Penalties Amendment) Ordinance, 1952**

(Amendments made by section 2 read with item 34 of the Schedule to the above Ordinance)

Bill	:	32/1952
First Reading	:	16 September 1952
Second and Third Readings	:	14 October 1952
Commencement	:	30 April 1955 (section 2 read with item 34 of the Schedule)

**13. 1955 Revised Edition — Crown Lands Encroachments Ordinance (Chapter 245)**

Operation	:	1 July 1956
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**14. G.N. No. S 223/1959 — Singapore Constitution (Modification of Laws) Order, 1959**

Commencement : 3 June 1959

**15. G.N. No. S (N.S.) 178/1959 — Singapore Constitution (Modification of Laws) (No. 4) Order, 1959**

Commencement : 20 November 1959

**16. G.N. No. S (N.S.) 179/1959 — Singapore Constitution (Modification of Laws) (No. 5) Order, 1959**

Commencement : 20 November 1959

**17. Ordinance 72 of 1959 — Transfer of Powers (No. 2) Ordinance, 1959**  
(Amendments made by section 2 read with the First Schedule to the above Ordinance)

Bill : 31/1959

First Reading : 22 September 1959

Second Reading : 11 November 1959

Notice of Amendments : 11 November 1959

Third Reading : 11 November 1959

Commencement : 20 November 1959 (section 2 read with the First Schedule)

**18. G.N. Sp. No. S 47/1963 — State Laws (Modification) (No. 3) Order, 1963**

Commencement : 16 September 1963

*Note: The Crown Lands Encroachments Ordinance was renamed as the State Lands Encroachments Ordinance by this Order.*

**19. 1970 Revised Edition — State Lands Encroachments Act (Chapter 286)**

Operation : 31 August 1971

**20. Act 23 of 1974 — State Lands Encroachments (Amendment) Act, 1974**

Bill : 30/1974

First Reading : 23 October 1974

Second and Third Readings : 6 November 1974

Commencement : 21 December 1974

**21. 1985 Revised Edition — State Lands Encroachments Act (Chapter 315)**

Operation : 30 March 1987

**22. Act 17 of 2001 — Singapore Land Authority Act 2001**

(Amendments made by section 38(1) read with item (16) of the Fourth Schedule to the above Act)

Bill	:	17/2001
First Reading	:	5 March 2001
Second and Third Readings	:	19 April 2001
Commencement	:	1 June 2001 (section 38(1) read with item (16) of the Fourth Schedule)

**23. Act 15 of 2010 — Criminal Procedure Code 2010**

(Amendments made by section 430 read with item 101 of the Sixth Schedule to the above Act)

Bill	:	11/2010
First Reading	:	26 April 2010
Second Reading	:	18 May 2010
Third Reading	:	19 May 2010
Commencement	:	2 January 2011 (section 430 read with item 101 of the Sixth Schedule)

**24. Act 5 of 2014 — Subordinate Courts (Amendment) Act 2014**

(Amendments made by section 11(9) read with item 23 of the Schedule to the above Act)

Bill	:	26/2013
First Reading	:	11 November 2013
Second and Third Readings	:	21 January 2014
Commencement	:	7 March 2014 (section 11(9) read with item 23 of the Schedule)

**25. Act 11 of 2015 — State Lands (Amendment) Act 2015**

(Amendments made by section 6 of the above Act)

Bill	:	6/2015
First Reading	:	12 February 2015
Second and Third Readings	:	13 March 2015
Commencement	:	8 May 2015 (section 6)

**26. Act 40 of 2019 — Supreme Court of Judicature (Amendment) Act 2019**  
(Amendments made by section 28(1) read with item 154 of the Schedule to the above Act)

Bill	:	32/2019
First Reading	:	7 October 2019
Second Reading	:	5 November 2019
Notice of Amendments	:	5 November 2019
Third Reading	:	5 November 2019
Commencement	:	2 January 2021 (section 28(1) read with item 154 of the Schedule)

Abbreviations

C.P.	Council Paper
G.N. No. S (N.S.)	Government Notification Number Singapore (New Series)
G.N. No.	Government Notification Number
G.N. No. S	Government Notification Number Singapore
G.N. Sp. No. S	Government Notification Special Number Singapore
L.A.	Legislative Assembly
L.N.	Legal Notification (Federal/Malaysian Subsidiary Legislation)
M. Act	Malayan Act/Malaysia Act
M. Ordinance	Malayan Ordinance
Parl.	Parliament
S.S.G.G. (E) No.	Straits Settlements Government Gazette (Extraordinary) Number
S.S.G.G. No.	Straits Settlements Government Gazette Number