



Monday 8 September 2025

Dear Sir,

On 13 August 2025, Mr Remy Rowhani, a prominent Qatari Baha'i, was convicted by the Supreme Judiciary Council of the State of Qatar on blatantly false charges and sentenced to 5 years imprisonment. He is being punished for allegedly running the X and Instagram accounts of the Baha'i Community in Qatar, which authorities claim promotes a doctrine or ideology that 'casts doubt on the foundations and teachings of Islam'. His conviction on this basis amounts to a clear violation of Articles 2 (non-discrimination), 18 (freedom of religion or belief), 19 (freedom of expression), 26 (equal protection of the law) and 27 (minority rights) of the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights** (ICCPR), to which Qatar acceded in 2018.

However, in addition to these clear human rights violations, the trial itself was plainly unfair and did not meet even the most basic rights of due process and fairness, and disappointing even by Qatar's less than exemplary fair trial standards. His conviction is fundamentally flawed.

First, notwithstanding the grant of permission for Mr Rowhani's lawyer to participate in the investigation, he was not informed of this until after the investigation was complete. This meant that Mr Rowhani was interrogated without the assistance of a lawyer. Answers to questions he purportedly gave should therefore not have been used against him. Moreover, statements he allegedly made were falsely misconstrued and misrepresented. For example, it was claimed that Mr Rowhani accepted that he was running and posting on the Baha'i Community in Qatar's X and Instagram accounts whereas, in reality, all he addressed was in relation to his personal social media accounts; and it was for this reason that Mr Rowhani did not sign the papers relating to the investigation. The assistance of a lawyer would have prevented such false information being recorded against him.

Second, in addition to not having a lawyer present during interrogations, Mr Rowhani was denied the opportunity to freely communicate with his counsel in preparation for trial. He was not able to consult adequately with his lawyer and give instructions about the charges and evidence relied upon by the Prosecution. Moreover, much of the evidence against him was not provided to Mr Rowhani or his lawyer until well into the trial process.

Third, Mr Rowhani's lawyer was not permitted to cross-examine at trial any of the Prosecution witnesses relied upon against him. Instead, the Court relied on the written evidence of witnesses who failed to appear at trial. The evidence they gave was false and fundamentally misrepresented the truth.

Finally, Mr Rowhani was taken to the central prison on 19 August, enforcing the judgement before the judgment becoming final.

These procedural violations amount to a clear violation of Article 14(3)(b) and (e) (right to a fair trial) of the ICCPR. We are of the firm opinion that Mr Rowhani's trial was plainly unfair. His conviction should therefore be quashed, and he should be immediately released from prison.

Yours,

**Baroness Helena Kennedy of the Shaws, LT KC FRSE FRSA**, Director International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute

**Steven Powles KC**, Doughty Street Chambers

**Payam Akhavan**, Human Rights Chair, Massey College, University of Toronto

**Robert Kogod Goldman**, Professor of Law, Former President, International Commission of Jurists

**Claudio Grossman**, Member of the International Law Commission UN, President of the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights

**Rebecca Hamilton**, Professor of Law, American University, Washington

**Jeffrey D. Kahn**, Professor of Law and Director, Law and Government Program

**Anne Levesque**, Gordon F. Henderson Chair of Human Rights, University of Ottawa

**Quinn McKew**, Executive Director of Article19

**Juan Mendez**, Professor, Washington College of Law, former UN Special Rapporteur on Torture