



2025/0099425/5

الوفد الدائم لدولة قطر / جنيف



**Subject: Joint Communication from Special Procedures (AL QAT 1/2025) – Response of the State of Qatar**

The Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Special Procedures Branch - Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Geneva, and has the honor to refer to the latter's note AL QAT 1/2025 dated June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2025, concerning the joint communication sent by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights; the Special Rapporteur on minority issues and the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief.

The Permanent Mission also refers to its Verbal Note No. 87651/5, dated 21 August 2025, by which a request was submitted to extend, by one additional month, the deadline for response to the aforementioned joint communication, in order to allow the relevant authorities in the State of Qatar sufficient time to review and respond comprehensively to the information and inquiries contained therein. (*copy attached for ease reference*).

In response to the above-mentioned joint communication, the Permanent Mission is pleased to attach herewith the official response received from the competent authorities in the State of Qatar, which is addressed to the respective mandate holders.

An unofficial translation of the attached letter into English is attached.

The Permanent Mission would be grateful if the Special Procedures Branch of the OHCHR could kindly confirm receipt of the attached document and send the confirmation to the following email address: [geneva@mofa.gov.qa](mailto:geneva@mofa.gov.qa)

The Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar to the United Nations Office at Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Secretariat of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Geneva, the assurances of its highest consideration.

**Enclosures:**

- The letter addressed to the respective mandate holders + attachments.
- Unofficial Translation of the letter into English

Geneva, September 18<sup>th</sup> 2025



Special Procedures Branch

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Geneva

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2025/0087651/5

الوفد الدائم لدولة قطر / جنيف



Note verbal

Ref:

The Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Special Procedures Branch of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and has the honour to refer to the letter dated 23 June 2025 (Ref: AL QAT 1/2025), concerning the Joint Communication transmitted by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, and the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief.

In this connection, the Permanent Mission would like to kindly request that the 60-day deadline specified for in the Joint Communication for submitting a response by the Government, be extended by an additional one month, in order to allow the relevant authorities in the State of Qatar to comment and provide a comprehensive reply to the information and inquiries contained in the Joint Communication.

The Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Special Procedures Branch of the OHCHR the assurances of its highest consideration.

Geneva, 21 August 2025



Special Procedures Branch  
OHCHR  
E-mail: [ohchr-registry@un.org](mailto:ohchr-registry@un.org)

AS

Working Group on Arbitrary Detention,  
Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights,  
Special Rapporteur on minority issues,  
Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief,

Excellencies,

## **I. Introduction**

1. At the outset, the State of Qatar would like to reaffirm its steadfast dedication to collaborating with United Nations mechanisms such as the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and Special Rapporteurs, reflecting its pledge to uphold supreme values and ideals, strengthen the principles of justice and the rule of law, and ensure respect for personal rights and freedoms enshrined in the Constitution and international covenants.

## **II. Legal Basis for Detention**

1. With reference to your joint communication regarding Mr. Remy Rowhani (ref. AL/QAT/1/2025), we would like to confirm that the detention measures were taken on the basis of well-founded and documented charges. A criminal case was filed against him for acts punishable under Qatar's Penal Code No. 11 of 2004, the Cybercrime Prevention Law No. 14 of 2014, and the Publications and Publishing Law No. 8 of 1979. The acts committed by the aforementioned constitute the following crimes:
  - i. "Calling upon a cult and concept that casts doubt on any of the basics or tenets of Islam." This crime is punishable under Article 259 of the aforementioned Qatari Penal Code.
  - ii. "Violating social values and principles through an information technology mean." This crime is punishable under Article 8 of the aforementioned Qatari Cybercrime Prevention Law.
  - iii. "Publishing material that calls for and promotes the adoption of destructive principles." This crime is punishable under Article 47(b) of the aforementioned Publications and Publishing Law.
2. He was therefore investigated and tried in accordance with the constitutional and legal provisions outlined in Chapter V of Part IV of the Permanent Constitution of the State of Qatar and the Criminal Procedure Code No. 23 of 2004.

## **III. Legal Procedures, Judicial Oversight, and Guaranteed Rights**

3. All legal guarantees were provided to Mr. Rowhani during the stages of investigation and trial, including the immediate and continuous access to his lawyer. Furthermore, all trial procedures were public and conducted transparently in accordance with the laws applicable in the State.
4. With reference to the right of access to a lawyer, we would like to confirm that no decisions were issued by the Public Prosecution or any other authorities in the State to prevent Mr. Rowhani from communicating with his lawyer or to prevent the lawyer from contacting him since the outset of the criminal investigations at the Public Prosecution. It is worth noting that regarding the investigations and during his interrogation on 28/04/2025, when asked whether he had a lawyer present during the

investigative procedures, he replied in the negative, and his lawyer did not appear at the Public Prosecution or the security department.

5. The preventive detention of the mentioned individual was renewed for a period of four days by the Public Prosecution on 01/05/2025, and the lawyer did not attend the Public Prosecution on the date of the detention renewal.
6. On 02/05/2025, the State Security and Combating Terrorism Prosecution received a letter from the lawyer [REDACTED], requesting to be allowed to attend the interrogation of the mentioned individual. The Public Prosecution approved the request. (Attachment No. 1) (Attachment No. 2).
7. On 05/05/2025, during the preventive detention renewal hearing before the competent criminal court, pursuant to Article 117 of the Qatari Criminal Procedure Code, the accused was contacted via video conferencing in his detention in the presence of his lawyer [REDACTED]. The accused's statements were viewed and heard, and the lawyer requested his release on any bail the court deems appropriate. The lawyer submitted a copy of the power of attorney (Attachment No. 1). The power of attorney granted to the lawyer is dated 05/01/2025 (Attachment No. 3). However, the lawyer only submitted this power of attorney to the Public Prosecution on 02/05/2025.
8. At the public hearing held on 05/05/2025, the relevant court resolved to prolong Mr. Rowhani's preventive detention by thirty days, beginning from the conclusion of his previous detention term, ensuring he is presented on schedule for the legal review of his detention order. (Attachment No. 4).
9. Regarding the claims that the lawyer did not receive the documents submitted by the Public Prosecution in the case against Mr. Rowhani, and that he was not granted the opportunity to defend Mr. Rowhani during the trial hearings, these claims are unfounded. We hereby clarify that the procedure for requesting a copy of the case file is done electronically according to the system in place or manually, with the request being either accepted or rejected. The accused's lawyer did not submit any such request to the Public Prosecution before the case file was referred to the competent court. It is noteworthy that after the referral of the lawsuit by the Public Prosecution and the initiation of the criminal case before the competent court, a request to obtain a copy of the case file is submitted to the competent court for consideration, in accordance with the provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code.
10. Mr. Rowhani was referred to the competent court on 26/05/2025. The first hearing to consider the case was held on 18/06/2025. The lawyer requested a copy of the case file, and the court granted his request, allowing him to receive a copy of the file on the same date.
11. On 18/06/2025, the court issued a ruling to maintain the preventive detention of Mr. Rowhani until the hearing on 06/08/2025. (Attachment No. 5)
12. On 06/08/2025, the trial hearing was held with the lawyer attending alongside Mr. Rowhani. The lawyer submitted a defense brief via the electronic system on the same date and requested the release of his client. The court decided to reserve judgment to the hearing on 13/08/2025 and permitted the submission of a brief within one week, while ordering to maintain the accused's preventive detention until that hearing. (Attachment No. 6)

13. On 13/08/2025, the Court of First Instance delivered its judgment in Mr. Rowhani's presence, sentencing him to five years in prison, freezing his electronic accounts, and confiscating the phones used in the offense. (Attachment No. 7)
14. Mr. Rowhani appealed the judgment against him by filing Appeal No. 2025/1552/Criminal/Appeal, exercising his rights under the Criminal Procedure Code. He may submit any additional defense before the competent appellate court. At the hearing on 10/09/2025, he appeared and appointed a new lawyer, [REDACTED]. His appeal was joined with that of the Public Prosecution as both appeals are related. The lawyer requested postponement to examine the case file and prepare submissions. The court granted the request and scheduled the hearing for 17/09/2025 to hear the appeal filed by Mr. Rowhani and the appeal filed by the Public Prosecution No. 2025/1583/Criminal/Appeal. (Attachment No. 8) (Attachment No. 9)
15. We therefore affirm that the Qatari judicial system attaches the utmost importance to the principle of judicial independence and impartiality, and ensures that laws are applied fairly and equitably to all persons, regardless of their nationality, religion, or social background. In every case, due process is guaranteed to all parties in criminal proceedings before the courts or during criminal investigations before the Public Prosecution. Foremost among these procedures is the guarantee of the right to defense and legal representation for the accused, reflecting Qatar's full respect for human rights and its commitment to providing justice for all.
16. Through the procedures to which Mr. Rowhani was subjected within the applicable legal framework in the State, we would like to emphasize that all guarantees of a fair trial were ensured and all his rights guaranteed by the Constitution, Qatari law, and relevant international human rights conventions were upheld, including:
  - Enabling him to appoint a lawyer to defend him.
  - Appearing before the competent Public Prosecution and competent judge within the legal time limits.
  - Being informed of the charges against him and their penalties.
  - Being given sufficient opportunity to present his defense and legal requests, and to confront the evidence.
  - Refer him for trial before a competent court that is completely independent and impartial.
  - Allow him visits and communications during his preventive detention.
17. Accordingly, the State of Qatar reaffirms that the arrest, interrogation, and trial of Mr. Rowhani were in accordance with the laws in force and were subject to the supervision of the competent judicial authority, which contradicts Mr. Rowhani's claims and the observations of the Working Group.

#### **IV. Mr. Rowhani's Previous Conviction**

18. With regard to the claims concerning the conviction of Mr. Rowhani in a previous case for acts that were not criminal under Qatari law at the time they were committed, we would like to note the following:
19. On 10/02/2021, Mr. Rowhani was summoned to the Anti-Money Laundering and Financial Crimes Division of the Economic and Electronic Crimes Department of the Public Security Directorate at the Ministry of Interior. During the summons, Mr. Rowhani stated that he had been collecting donations since 2012 and that he was still

collecting and transferring donations. Mr. Rowhani pledged to appear whenever requested until a ruling is made on the charge against him. (Attachment No. 10) (Attachment No. 11)

20. Accordingly, the Public Prosecution referred Mr. Rowhani to the competent criminal court on charges of collecting donations without obtaining the necessary authorization from the competent authorities, which is a violation of Article 4 of Law No. 15 of 2014 on the Regulation of Charitable Activities, which states that “No private charitable association or institution, or any other entity or individual, may collect donations except with the permission of the Council.”
21. After the accused was legally summoned to appear before the competent criminal court, the court sentenced Mr. Rowhani in absentia to six months' imprisonment and a fine of 100,000 riyals on 29/04/2021, on charges of collecting donations without obtaining the necessary authorization from the competent authorities, in violation of Article 4 of Law No. 15 of 2014 on the Regulation of Charitable Activities. Article 42 of the same law stipulates that “the punishment shall be imprisonment for a period not exceeding three years and a fine not exceeding 100,000 riyals, or one of these two penalties.” Among the documents on which the court based its ruling was a confession by Mr. Rowhani that he had been collecting and transferring funds since 2012 to date. (Attachment No. 12) (Attachment No. 13) (Attachment No. 14)
22. Mr. Rowhani appealed the court's ruling on 29/04/2021. On 30/06/2021, the court ruled to amend the contested ruling by reducing the sentence and limiting the accused's imprisonment to one month and a fine of 50,000 riyals. (Attachment No. 15)
23. The mentioned individual filed an appeal against the ruling issued against him, and the appeal was registered under No. 400690/2021. The court considered the appeal filed by Mr. Rowhani and issued its ruling on 02/09/2021, upholding the appealed ruling. (Attachment No. 16)
24. Mr. Rowhani exercised his right under the Criminal Procedure Code and appealed to the Court of Cassation against the ruling of the Court of Appeal against him, and the appeal was registered under No. 948 of 2021. On 30/05/2022, the Court of Cassation ruled that the appeal was inadmissible. The court considered Mr. Rowhani's defense that the charges against him occurred before the Regulation of Charitable Activities Law was promulgated and decided the following: "It is evident from the contested judgment that the conviction of the appellant relied on his confession in the arrest report and its corroborating documents, contrary to the appellant's claim. The Court may rely on the accused's confession at any stage of the proceedings, even if he recants thereafter, and any claims he may make in this regard are inadmissible. It was clear from the appellant's confession in the arrest report that he began collecting donations in 2012 and continued to collect donations annually until the date of his arrest. Therefore, his argument that the acts took place before the law under which he was tried was enacted is unfounded." (Attachment No. 17)
25. Based on the final criminal judgment issued against him, Mr. Rowhani was arrested by the Sentences Enforcement Administration of the Ministry of Interior on 23/12/2024, where he spent three days in the relevant security department. The necessary procedures were taken by contacting the Public Prosecution, represented by the Sentences and Checks Enforcement Department, to issue a restriction of liberty order, in order to refer him to the Penal and Correctional Institutions Department.

26. On 26/12/2024, the aforementioned individual felt an emergency health condition, and an ambulance was called to transport him immediately to the ER at Hamad General Hospital, where his health condition required careful and continuous care to maintain his safety due to his illnesses. He was admitted to the hospital and received medical care at Hamad General Hospital until 08/01/2025, i.e., for a period of two weeks.
27. Mr. Rowhani was referred to the Penal and Correctional Institutions Department on 08/01/2025, and was placed in one of the institution's wards to serve his sentence of one month's imprisonment and a fine of fifty thousand riyals. He was released on 24/01/2025, after serving his sentence and paying the fine. It should be noted that Mr. Rowhani enjoyed all the rights and privileges granted to him in accordance with relevant international standards and Law No. 3 of 2009 on the Regulation of Penal and Correctional Institutions, in line with the regulations and procedures in force within the institution. During that period, Mr. Rowhani made three phone calls to his family and received the necessary health care. It should be noted that he did not receive any family visits during his imprisonment, despite being granted the right to receive visitors.

**V. Legal Basis for Deportation**

28. With regard to Mr. Wahid Bahji, we would like to confirm that the measures taken against him were based on national security considerations and were a result of his transgressions and violations of the laws of the State and his infringement upon the freedoms guaranteed to him by the State. Nevertheless, the State did not take any measures that would restrict his freedom, but rather requested him to leave the country in accordance with the laws in force in the State, based on Article 25 of Law No. 21 of 2015 Regulating the Entry, Exit and Residence of Expatriates, which stipulates that “the Minister may issue an order for the deportation of any expatriate who proves that his presence in the State threatens its security or safety at home or abroad or harms the national economy, public health or public morals.” It should be noted that the aforementioned Article 25 is consistent with Article 13 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which stipulates that “An alien lawfully in the territory of a State Party to the present Covenant may be expelled therefrom only in pursuance of a decision reached in accordance with law and shall, except where compelling reasons of national security otherwise require, be allowed [...]”.

**VI. Respect for Freedom of Religion and Belief**

29. The State of Qatar reiterates its commitment to respecting the fundamental rights and freedoms as set out in its Constitution and laws, including the right to practice religious rites within the framework established by law. It affirms that the regulation of these freedoms does not infringe upon them but serves to guarantee equilibrium between exercising rights and upholding public order. The State of Qatar likewise acknowledges the essential importance of freedom of religion and belief as one of the pillars of human rights, and remains eager to provide an environment that permits religious practices to be exercised fully and freely, on condition they occur within the legal framework and with respect for public order.
30. Article 50 of the Constitution provides that “Freedom to practice religious rites shall be guaranteed to all persons in accordance with the law and the requirements of the maintenance of public order and morality.” Likewise, the State underlines its full adherence to Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which stipulates that “Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.” Of particular note is paragraph three of the same Article, which provides

that “Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.” Accordingly, since national law organizes the freedom to express religion or belief compatibly with the Covenant, the investigation into Mr. Rowhani was not on account of his religion or convictions, but rather on account of criminal conduct and misuse of his guaranteed religious freedom, in violation of the law.

31. We also note in this regard that there is no discrimination in the State of Qatar between religions, religious communities, minorities, or others in its registration systems or civil registry, as there is no registration or classification system related to religions, religious communities, or minorities in the State of Qatar. Therefore, allegations of systematic measures by the State against the Baha'i community are incorrect, as there is no official policy or actual practice adopted by the State that targets this community or infringes on the rights of its followers. The State is committed to the principles of the rule of law and non-discrimination, and guarantees the fundamental rights and freedoms of all citizens without exception, including freedom of belief and the right to equal treatment before the law.

## **VII. Compliance with International Law**

32. The State of Qatar is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which it acceded to in 2018. The State submitted its initial report under Article 40 of the Covenant in August 2019, outlining the measures it had taken to give effect to the rights recognized in the Covenant and the progress achieved in the enjoyment of those rights. The State is also in the process of studying and following up on the recommendations adopted in March 2022 by the Human Rights Committee, after the Committee's consideration and discussion of Qatar's report during its 3837th and 3838th meetings, held on 28 February and 1 March 2022.
33. The State of Qatar has implemented its obligations under paragraph three of Article 2 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which provides that each State Party undertakes “to ensure that any person whose rights or freedoms as herein recognized are violated shall have an effective remedy, notwithstanding that the violation has been committed by persons acting in an official capacity,” and “to ensure that any person claiming such a remedy shall have his right thereto determined by competent judicial, administrative or legislative authorities, or by any other competent authority provided for by the legal system of the State, and to develop the possibilities of judicial remedy.” The State applied these provisions in relation to the case of Mr. Rowhani, as he was granted access to a competent judicial authority and enabled to mount a defense against the charges brought against him.
34. These measures are undertaken in compliance with the provisions of the State's Constitution. Article 35 stipulates that “all persons shall be equal before the law and there shall be no discrimination of whatsoever on grounds of sex, race, language, or religion.” Article 36 further states that “personal freedom shall be guaranteed and no person may be arrested, detained, searched, neither may his freedom of residence nor the mobility thereof be restricted save under the provisions of the law. No person shall be subjected to torture, or any degrading treatment; and torture shall be considered as a crime punishable by law.”
35. We also affirm that the laws and judicial procedures of the State of Qatar are consistent with Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, regarding

investigation, preventive detention, trial, and the right to be assisted by legal counsel for one's defense. All judicial procedures were carried out in accordance with this Article, including paragraph 3 of Article 14. These provisions were applied by ensuring that Mr. Rowhani was granted all necessary guarantees to defend his rights, including the appointment of a lawyer.

### **VIII. Conclusion**

36. The State of Qatar affirms that all detention procedures are carried out in accordance with national laws and international instruments. The State applies judicial procedures with transparency, ensuring every individual's right to legal counsel and to challenge the legality of detention before the courts. Freedom of expression is likewise guaranteed under the Qatari Constitution and international law, and any limitations on such rights are applied solely within the framework of protecting public order, public morals, and the rights of others, in line with international standards. On this basis, the State rejects any attempt to link legal actions taken against individuals to their religious affiliations or social backgrounds, as such measures are undertaken solely due to criminal acts and abuses of the freedoms guaranteed to them under the Constitution and applicable laws. Judicial decisions are taken on the basis of respect for public order and application of the law without discrimination, and all measures related to residence, deportation, or prosecution are implemented exclusively within the framework of national law consistent with international norms and treaties, unaffected by religious affiliation, in line with the State's approach based on equality and non-discrimination.
37. The State reiterates its full adherence to its obligations under international human rights law, along with its determination to effectively implement national laws and relevant international treaties. It emphasizes its steadfast respect for human rights and freedom of religion or belief, and its continued dedication to strengthening and protecting human rights. The State also values the contribution of the Working Group and Special Rapporteurs in supporting the principles and respect of human rights, in accordance with Qatar's foreign policy that rests upon the rule of law and the realization of justice.
38. Lastly, the State of Qatar attaches particular importance to engaging positively with inquiries raised in this context, in a manner that reflects its approach based on transparency and international cooperation.