



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

London SW1A 2AH

*From the Secretary of State*

31 May 2013

National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United Kingdom  
27 Rutland Gate  
LONDON  
SW7 1PD

Dear Leaders of the UK's Faith Communities, and the Baha'i Community of the UK,

Thank you for your open letter about the incarceration of the seven Baha'i leaders by Iran, which was presented to Minister for the Middle East and North Africa, Alistair Burt on 14 May by a delegation of faith leaders led by His Grace Bishop Angaelos.

As you will know, I very much share the concerns in your letter. I have made clear many times that I do not believe that there is any justification for the arrest and imprisonment of the seven Baha'i leaders. That they have remained in prison for five years on baseless charges following an unfair trial is a terrible reflection of how the Iranian regime chooses to treat its religious minorities. The UK fully supports the call for their immediate release, and will continue to work with the international community to highlight Iran's violations of the right to freedom of religion or belief as well as of its other international obligations. In this context, we strongly support the work of the UN Special Rapporteur and urge Iran to allow him access to Iran to further his important work.

I commend the Baha'i Community of the UK for this cross-faith initiative to highlight the plight of their seven community leaders and the wider persecution of the Baha'is in Iran. I should like to thank the many signatories for giving such strong support. Through this kind of co-operation, you underline your common resolve to defend the rights of all to freedom of religion or belief, whatever their faith or belief, in Iran or elsewhere. This is something which I wholeheartedly support.

**WILLIAM HAGUE**