

Statement on the Egregious Plagiarism in the Ph.D. Thesis of Hassan Rouhani

On the 26th of June 2013, the Iranians heard of and read a report by The Telegraph, based in the United Kingdom, suggesting that Mr. Hassan Rouhani, their new President, had plagiarized parts of his Ph.D. thesis. Initially, many Persians believed that this report was a hoax in order to undermine their newly democratically elected leader. Given these circumstances, we, a group of Persian students studying at universities across the globe decided to look into the matter with the goal of providing evidence that would clear Mr. Rouhani's name from all allegations.

As you know, at the time of Mr. Rouhani's election, Glasgow Caledonian University had only published the abstract of Mr. Rouhani's Ph.D. thesis. It was based on this abstract that many had alleged plagiarism against our President. The first course of action we took was to check the plagiarism claims made based on the abstract. In other words, we inputted the abstract into a well-known and trusted plagiarism detection software called iThenticate. To our surprise, we too found that Mr. Rouhani's abstract was plagiarized in significant amounts. Realizing that the nature of abstracts sometimes causes them to have overlapping information between different academic literature, it was decided to investigate more of Mr. Rouhani's thesis to show that his work was original and not copied even if the abstract suggested otherwise. Very quickly, it was realized that obtaining Mr. Rouhani's thesis is near impossible. Glasgow Caledonian University had not officially published it nor had The Iranian Research Institute for Information, Science, and Technology (IranDoc). By unexpected means and sheer luck, we were able to obtain a full copy of Mr. Rouhani's Ph.D. thesis from IranDoc center in Tehran.

With the full thesis at hand and the ability to define a custom database within iThenticate, we analyzed Mr. Rouhani's thesis for plagiarism violations. Our custom database included academic work that was not included in iThenticate's common database. These included old books (older than 1998) originally written in English. It should be mentioned that some of these resources are and have been readily available for public use since their dates of publication and we have bought some others. Table 1 below summarizes the amount of plagiarism detected by the software when comparing Mr. Rouhani's thesis to the database.

Table 1. iThenticate results after analyzing Mr. Rouhani's full thesis.

Section	Minimum amount of plagiarism
Abstract and Introduction	39 %
Chapter 1	39 %
Chapter 2	43 %
Chapter 3	40 %
Chapter 4	82 %
Chapter 5	-
Chapter 6	-
Cumulative	41 %

It should be noted that these percentages are based on the custom database that was put together with the resources we had at hand. It is quite possible that as more resources are discovered, the percentage of plagiarism will increase. This has been a constant theme while conducting our investigation in Mr. Rouhani's thesis; as more resources were found and added to the database, the percentage of plagiarism increased greatly with each resource.

In addition to the high amounts of plagiarism found in Mr. Rouhani's thesis, it is important to also note the level of plagiarism that was conducted. The highest level of plagiarism is when a person takes a paper, book, etc. of another person and publishes it as his or her own. This kind of plagiarism is categorized as a level 10 plagiarism violation and, as mentioned, is considered to be the highest level of plagiarism (out of 10 levels). A level 9 plagiarism violation is when the author takes the work of others and publishes it word for word (verbatim). This can also be done in an intermittent fashion and is known as Mosaic Plagiarism. Not referencing sources used in academic work is a clear plagiarism violation and there is no need to discuss or explain how it's done or what the repercussions can be for the authors. However, on a different note, when an author decides to incorporate a source word for word (verbatim), the author must use quotation marks that signify a quote being used. This is so that authors do not take credit for the work already done by other scholars and authors. Simply referencing the source alone without the quotation marks does not suffice given that it's a direct copy of someone else's work.

In the case of Mr. Rouhani's thesis, he has repeatedly performed plagiarism at the 9th level from a variety of sources including, but not limited to, books authored by Ziauddin Sardar, Noel J. Coulson, the late Hamid Enayat, Wael B. Hallaq, Patrick Bannerman, Mohammad H. Kamali, William Montgomery Watt, and Ali Akbar Kalantari. The reports used to generate the table above and conclude that Mr. Rouhani is guilty of plagiarizing his Ph.D. thesis are attached to this document.

Naturally, after realizing the amount of plagiarism present in Mr. Rouhani's Ph.D. thesis, we were inclined to investigate his other "scholarly" work. In addition to the plagiarism found in his Ph.D. thesis, we found that an article Mr. Rouhani published in 2002 is guilty of more level 9 plagiarism violations. This report is also included in this document. It is worth mentioning that this article is the only other academic work authored by Mr. Rouhani that we have had access to besides his full Ph.D. thesis.

As you well know, the credibility of an academic and research institution is directly linked to the quality of research it provides society. This need and desire to remain credible are why plagiarism and copyright issues are dealt with in a harsh and unforgiving manner by universities all over the world. Traditionally, other universities have taken steps to fully revoke the degrees of their students they found to have plagiarized their academic work. They have done so for much lower levels of plagiarism than found in Mr. Rouhani's Ph.D. thesis. One of the reasons we decided to inform Glasgow Caledonian University of these violations was so that they can take appropriate action in maintaining their credibility. It is very likely that his staunch critics will leak the information provided in this document to the press ahead of Mr. Rouhani's reelection and, expectedly, there will be certain expectations from Glasgow Caledonian University.

The second reason we decided to inform Glasgow Caledonian University has to do with our Persian values. As students with a culture founded upon ethics, morals, and character not to mention a history of scholarship dating back to the Sassanid Empire, we deemed it our duty to inform Mr. Rouhani's alma mater responsible for awarding him his doctorate. We deemed this our duty even when we first set out with this investigation to prove Mr. Rouhani's innocence from the allegations of plagiarizing his Ph.D. thesis.

We hope that Glasgow Caledonian University takes advantage of our research and makes the right decision as quickly as possible.

Respectfully,
A group of Iranian students from across the World.

Website: <https://RouhaniThesis.com/>

A non-partisan crowd-sourced project to evaluate the originality of the doctoral thesis of Mr. Hassan Rouhani