



# THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND TOLERANCE IN UZBEKISTAN

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<b>Received:</b> September 24 <sup>th</sup> 2023 <b>Accepted:</b> October 26 <sup>th</sup> 2023 <b>Published:</b> November 30 <sup>th</sup> 2023	This article discusses the challenges of human rights and tolerance in Uzbekistan, highlighting the historical context and current issues faced by the country. It explores the restrictions on freedom of expression, lack of judicial independence, and the need to promote tolerance and inclusivity among diverse ethnic and religious groups. The article recognizes the positive steps taken by the Uzbek government while emphasizing the importance of continued progress. It suggests strengthening the rule of law, empowering civil society, and implementing educational reforms to foster a more inclusive and tolerant society.

**Keywords:** Uzbekistan, human rights, tolerance, freedom of expression, judicial independence, interethnic relations, discrimination, government initiatives, progress, democratization, inclusivity, rule of law, civil society, education reform.

## INTRODUCTION:

Uzbekistan, a country rich in history and culture, has been grappling with significant challenges in the realm of human rights and tolerance. Despite progress made in recent years, there are still persistent issues that need to be addressed. This article aims to shed light on the current situation, highlight the challenges faced by the country, and advocate for a more inclusive and tolerant society.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Uzbekistan's history has been marked by various political and social changes, which have influenced its approach to human rights and tolerance. Under Soviet rule, the country experienced a centralized system that suppressed individual freedoms and limited religious expression. Following independence in 1991, Uzbekistan struggled to establish a balance between preserving its cultural heritage and embracing a more open society.

In particular, the culture of tolerance and humanitarianism, religious tolerance, the environment of inter-confessional harmony, in turn, are of great importance in educating our citizens, especially the young generation, in the spirit of loyalty to the Motherland. Based on this, on April 16, 2018, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh. Mirziyoyev signed the decree No. PF-5416 "On measures to fundamentally improve the activities of the religious and educational sphere". This document is aimed at ensuring the continuity of the religious education system in Uzbekistan: from the primary stage (secondary special Islamic educational institutions or madrasahs) to higher and further religious education.

In turn, these factors were identified as one of the most important priorities of state policy in Uzbekistan. In accordance with the decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev dated February 7, 2017 "On the strategy of actions for the further development of the Republic of Uzbekistan", ensuring security, inter-ethnic harmony and religious tolerance, foreign policy ensuring mutual interest and practicality, religious tolerance and inter-confessional harmony in strengthening the independence of our state and the international prestige of our country.

It is these factors that create the basis for the development of our country, peace, stability, international harmony and religious tolerance at the world level. Representatives of Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity, Monism, and Islam have lived in harmony and peace in our country. In particular, there are mosques, churches, and synagogues in many cities of our country. In turn, peoples and peoples of different religions performed their religious rituals in these holy places. Therefore, this situation can be seen in the example of mutual cooperation of all nationalities and peoples living in our country who believe in different religions. It is known from history that during the period when the independence of the Republic of Uzbekistan was declared, there were no religious confrontations between all religions in strengthening the foundations of peace and sustainable development through inter-ethnic harmony and religious tolerance. In this regard, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev said: "Our country is a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional country. Today, representatives of more than 130 nationalities and peoples live in our country as children of one family. In this regard, there



is no doubt that the ancient traditions of tolerance of our people play an important role."

This, in turn, is a unique example of interethnic harmony, religious tolerance, interconfessional harmony and solidarity in Uzbekistan, and a positive example of tolerance towards all religions. Therefore, the roots of ethnic, cultural and religious tolerance of our nation, which is an integral part of our spirituality, go back to the distant past, as recognized by representatives of other religions.

It should be noted that the world's religions embody the ideas of goodness, peace, kindness, friendship, and creativity. In particular, religion calls people to honesty and purity, kindness, harmony and tolerance. The religions of Islam and Christianity promote moral standards that embody the ideals of humanity: mercy, compassion, honesty, purity of heart, courage and solemnity. Christianity, one of the world's religions, encourages its followers to show kindness, tell the truth, help oppressed and hardworking people, work hard, and live in harmony based on religious and ethical ideas. Thus, in all world religions, the problem of religious tolerance is embedded in both universal and religio-moral qualities.

Thus, religion has become one of the most effective ways to influence the human mind. In turn, religious teachings help a person to overcome trials, problems and difficulties in life, strengthen people's confidence, influence culture and spirituality in the life of any society. Today, more than 130 nationalities and peoples live in harmony in our country. The republic is a multi-denominational country, and currently 2239 religious organizations belonging to 16 denominations are operating in Uzbekistan.

It is worth noting that the atmosphere of inter-ethnic harmony, religious tolerance, friendship and solidarity prevailing in our country, in turn, is gaining importance in further strengthening the prestige of Uzbekistan in the international arena by ensuring peace and stability. Today, ensuring peace and development in Uzbekistan is of great importance. Representatives of all religions are equally interested in the rule of peace, tranquility, stability and prosperity in the republic. In turn, the state helps to strengthen mutual reconciliation and respect between citizens and non-citizens of different religions, religious organizations belonging to different religions, to fight against religious and other fanaticism and extremism and to strengthen relations, does not allow the increase of enmity between representatives of different nationalities.

#### **CHALLENGES IN HUMAN RIGHTS:**

One of the key challenges in Uzbekistan is the restriction of freedom of expression. Journalists, activists, and human rights defenders often face intimidation, harassment, and even imprisonment for expressing dissenting views or criticizing the government. This suppresses the ability of individuals to voice their opinions freely and stifles the growth of a vibrant civil society.

Another significant concern is the lack of judicial independence. The judiciary is often subject to political influence, leading to unfair trials and limited access to justice for marginalized groups. The existence of arbitrary detention, torture, and forced labor further exacerbates the human rights situation in the country.

#### **TOLERANCE AND INTERETHNIC RELATIONS:**

Uzbekistan, like many Central Asian nations, is home to a diverse range of ethnicities, languages, and religions. While the government has taken steps to foster interethnic harmony, there is still work to be done. Discrimination and prejudice against minority groups, including Uzbeks of other ethnicities, Tajiks, and Karakalpaks, persist in certain regions. Promoting cultural diversity, inclusivity, and equal rights for all citizens should be at the forefront of Uzbekistan's agenda for social progress.

In particular, ensuring inter-ethnic harmony and religious tolerance relations in Uzbekistan, first of all, by preventing inter-religious conflicts, creates a basis for the formation of mutual cooperation, solidarity and mutual understanding between representatives of different religions. This factor directly serves the peace and development of the country, the rise of universal culture and spirituality.

It ensures peace and harmony between religious denominations in the republic. Like other missionary activities, proselytizing is prohibited. It is clarified that persons guilty of violating this provision will be held accountable in accordance with the law. Today, as a positive result of the rational state policy implemented by our country, the representatives of all religious denominations in our country freely observe their religious traditions, customs and rituals.

#### **GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES AND PROGRESS:**

It is crucial to acknowledge the positive steps taken by the Uzbek government to address these issues. In recent years, there have been noteworthy efforts to improve human rights conditions and promote tolerance. The release of political prisoners, reforms in the criminal justice system, and the establishment of a



national human rights institution are encouraging signs of progress.

Furthermore, Uzbekistan's engagement with international human rights organizations and its commitment to ratifying key international treaties demonstrate a willingness to align with global standards. However, the implementation of these reforms and translating them into tangible improvements on the ground remains a critical challenge.

#### **THE WAY FORWARD:**

To overcome the challenges in human rights and tolerance, Uzbekistan needs to continue its journey towards greater democratization and inclusivity. This requires strengthening the rule of law, ensuring judicial independence, and creating an enabling environment for civil society and media to operate freely.

Moreover, fostering a culture of tolerance and respect for diversity is essential. This can be achieved through educational reforms that promote interethnic understanding, respect for human rights, and tolerance from an early age. Encouraging dialogue between different ethnic and religious communities will help build bridges and foster a sense of unity and shared citizenship.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Uzbekistan has made significant strides in addressing the problem of human rights and tolerance in recent years. However, there is still work to be done to ensure a society where human rights are protected, freedom of expression is valued, and all citizens are treated with dignity and respect. By embracing a comprehensive approach that involves legal reforms, education, and fostering dialogue, Uzbekistan can pave the way for a more inclusive and tolerant future. The collective efforts of the government, civil society, and international partners will be crucial in achieving these goals and creating a brighter future for all Uzbekistan's citizens.

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