

## THE POLICY OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN TO ENSURE INTERETHNIC HARMONY AND TOLERANCE

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### Abstract:

This article describes the legal aspects of the state policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan on the regulation of interethnic relations in the country.

In particular, a number of articles of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan regarding the provision of rights and freedoms of representatives of different nationalities and peoples living in the country were touched upon. Also, attention is paid to the laws and legislative documents adopted in this direction.

**Keywords:** Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, laws, interethnic relations, interethnic harmony, tolerance, freedom of conscience, human rights.

### Introduction

One of the priority directions of the state policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan is to ensure interethnic harmony and tolerance in the society, to strengthen the atmosphere of friendship and the feeling of a single multinational family. Also, education of young people in the spirit of love and loyalty to the Motherland, respect for national and universal values, expansion of cultural and educational relations with foreign countries are important priorities of the state policy.

Today, representatives of more than 130 nationalities live in Uzbekistan. They make full use of the equal rights and opportunities provided by the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Uzbekistan, work effectively in various socio-economic, scientific and cultural fields of the country, contribute to the prosperity of the country and are making a worthy contribution to strengthening its independence and increasing the reputation and image of the republic in the international arena<sup>1</sup>.

Multinationality of the country's population is considered as a favorable factor of socio-economic development. The reputation of Uzbekistan in the international arena is increasing due to socio-economic stability in the Republic, religious tolerance and interethnic harmony. In particular, today teaching in state educational institutions is conducted in 7 languages. Today newspapers and magazines are published in more than 10 languages and Radio and TV programs are broadcast in 12. There are more than 157

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\*Used unofficial translation of the documents.

<sup>1</sup>Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On approval of the concept of state policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the field of international relations". 15.11.2019. №DP-5876. // <https://lex.uz/docs/4597662> (unofficial translation)

cultural centers, 38 friendship societies and about 2,300 religious organizations of 16 confessions operate in Uzbekistan.

The fact that the representatives of different nationalities in Uzbekistan are living a comfortable life is evidence that their rights and interests are protected by the state. In turn, the state relies on laws adopted in the state to regulate relations in this area. Today, the country has a number of legal documents that regulate interethnic relations. In particular, according to Article 4 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the state shall ensure a respectful attitude toward the languages, customs and traditions of all nationalities and ethnic groups living on its territory, and create the conditions necessary for their development\*.

Article 8 of the Constitution stipulates that citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan, regardless of their nationality, constitute the people of Uzbekistan. The peculiar aspect of this article is that such a norm can't be observed in the Constitution of any country. According to that, citizens of Uzbekistan, regardless of their lineage, nationality, race, social background, constitute the nation of Uzbekistan.

According to Article 19 of the Constitution, all citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan shall have same rights and freedoms, and shall be equal before the law, without discrimination by sex, race, ethnicity, language, religion, social origin, and social status<sup>2</sup>.

The above-mentioned constitutional guarantees and the introduction of responsibility to ensure them, regardless of gender, race, nationality, language, religion, social origin, ensure the participation of citizens in public and state building.

In order to ensure the stability of civil peace and harmony among representatives of different nationalities in the country, a number of activities aimed at comprehensive support and further development of the activities of cultural centers and friendship societies are being carried out. In particular, the adoption of the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017 "On measures to further improve international relations and friendly ties with foreign countries" is a vivid example of this<sup>3</sup>.

In accordance with this decree, the "Committee on International Relations and Friendly Relations with Foreign Countries" was established on the basis of the Republican International Cultural Center. This committee was entrusted with the task of ensuring interethnic harmony and tolerance in the society, wide promotion of peace-loving policy, achievements and successes achieved in all spheres of the country's life, consistent implementation of the state policy of strengthening friendship with the international community, including the diaspora of compatriots abroad.

With the adoption of the "Concept of the State Policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the Field of Interethnic Relations" approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2019, the goals, principles and main directions of the state policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the field were defined and brought into a unified system.

<sup>2</sup> The Constitution of The Republic of Uzbekistan. // <https://lex.uz/docs/6451070>

<sup>3</sup> Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures to further improve international relations and friendly relations with foreign countries". 19.05.2017. №DP-5046. // <https://lex.uz/docs/3210345> (unofficial translation)

Based on the concept, the state policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the field of interethnic relations is based on principles equal rights of citizens, social justice, rule of law, mutual respect for cultural, linguistic and religious values, traditions and customs of nations and peoples, rights of citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan, including citizens living abroad<sup>4</sup>.

At the same time, based on the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2020 “On the organization of the activities of public councils for ensuring interethnic harmony, tolerance and solidarity”, in the presence of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, regions, Tashkent city and district governors were established “Public councils for ensuring international harmony, tolerance and solidarity” were established. The main tasks of these councils are as follows:

- to organize and monitor of the quarterly discussion and cooperative solution of household and socio-economic problems of the residents of the regions where representatives of different nationalities live;
- to assist in the early prevention and implementation of prophylactic measures of interethnic differences and conflicts that may arise in the society;
- to strengthen public control over the activities of state bodies responsible for the implementation of state policy in the field of interethnic relations, etc.<sup>5</sup>.

The content of the state policy in the field of interethnic relations in Uzbekistan and how it can take shape in the future can be seen in the “Uzbekistan – 2030” Strategy. In particular, the 100<sup>th</sup> goal of the strategy is to focus on the issues of strengthening the interethnic harmony in the society and developing friendly relations with foreign countries. It is planned to implement the following works within its framework:

- Conducting the “Young Reader” contest in 6 additional languages (Karakalpak, Tajik, Kazakh, Russian, Kyrgyz and Turkmen);
- doubling the number of fiction literature in schools where education is conducted in foreign languages;
- increasing the number of popular scientific articles in the field of international relations by 3 times;
- increasing the number of friendship societies to 60 and doubling the number of sister cities<sup>6</sup>.

Along with interethnic relations, Uzbekistan also has legal framework that serve to ensure harmony between religious confessions of different nationalities. In particular, according to Article 35 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, freedom of conscience shall

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<sup>4</sup> Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On approval of the concept of state policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the field of international relations”. 15.11.2019. №DP-5876. // <https://lex.uz/docs/4597662> (unofficial translation)

<sup>5</sup> The decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On the organization of the activities of public councils to ensure international harmony, tolerance and solidarity”. 17.11.2020. №723. // <https://lex.uz/en/docs/5108026> (unofficial translation)

<sup>6</sup> Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan “Uzbekistan – 2030” Strategy. 11.09.2023. DP-158. // <https://lex.uz/ru/docs/6600413> (unofficial translation)

be guaranteed to all. Everyone shall have the right to profess or not to profess any religion. Any compulsory imposition of religion shall be impermissible.

In accordance with redraft of Article 7 of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On liberty of conscience and religious organizations” adopted in 2021, the state acts as a guarantor of the peaceful coexistence of confessions. In addition, the law requires the state to promote mutual understanding and respect among citizens who confess of different religions and those who do not confess at all. It has strengthened the norm of non-allowance the actions of organizations aimed at religious fanaticism and extremism, confrontation and tension of relations, and the escalation of enmity between different confessions<sup>7</sup>.

The aforementioned legal documents and the norms aimed at regulating interethnic relations fully correspond to the norms recognized by the international law. In particular, the Republic of Uzbekistan joined the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1966<sup>8</sup>. According to this covenant, all persons are equal and have the right to equal protection by the law without any discrimination, discrimination of any kind shall be prohibited by the law. Regardless race, color, sex, language, religion, political and other beliefs, national or social origin, property status, birth (lineage) and other status, the law should guarantee equal and effective protection against discrimination. Based on this rule, any discrimination in Uzbekistan is prohibited by the Constitution and laws.

In 2020, Uzbekistan became a member of the UN Human Rights Council as a result of the fair policy conducted in Uzbekistan towards representatives of different nationalities and peoples. It should be noted here that Uzbekistan has joined more than 80 international documents on human rights, including 6 basic UN treaties and 4 optional protocols. In order to further develop the field of human rights in the country, the National Strategy of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Human Rights in 2020 was approved by the Presidential decree.

Here is Zayd al-Husain, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, noted that in today’s dangerous days of interreligious and interethnic unrest, the existing interreligious and interethnic harmony in Uzbekistan will serve as an example for other countries. The High Commissioner also highly appreciated the policy of ensuring interethnic harmony and tolerance in the country, expanding cultural and educational relations with foreign countries, and noted the created conditions for representatives of all nationalities and people to learn, work, and demonstrate their creative abilities and potential in Uzbekistan. A number of international organizations have recognized the state policy and reforms in Uzbekistan in the field of interethnic relations. In particular, the High Commissioner for National Minorities of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

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<sup>7</sup> Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan «On liberty of conscience and religious organizations», 05.07.2021. № LRU-699. // <https://lex.uz/docs/6117508> (unofficial translation)

<sup>8</sup> Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. 16 December 1966. General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI). // <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/optional-protocol-international-covenant-civil-and-political>

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K. Abdurakhmanov, during his visit to Uzbekistan, noted a great amount of work being carried out at the national and local level with the national communities in Uzbekistan on issues of interest to them<sup>9</sup>.

In general, the implementation of the above-mentioned laws and regulations is aimed at developing a comprehensive system for ensuring interethnic and interconfessional harmony, peace and stability in Uzbekistan, creating more convenient and wide opportunities for cultural centers, supporting their creative initiatives and aspirations, and improving the quality of their activities in terms of raising to a new level, further developing friendship and cultural-educational relations with foreign countries and expanding relations with compatriots abroad.

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<sup>9</sup> OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities focuses on interethnic relations and regional co-operation in visit to Uzbekistan. // <https://www.osce.org/hcnm/523377>