

FORMATION OF INTER-RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE AS A FACTOR OF SOCIAL STABILITY IN UZBEKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to the disclosure of issues of interreligious tolerance as a factor of social sustainability and stable development. It pays great attention to the policy pursued in Uzbekistan in the field of interreligious relations, aimed at realizing one of the most important human rights, the right to freedom of religion. The article contains a large number of references to the legislative acts of the Republic of Uzbekistan, indicating that the state guarantees freedom of conscience and the separation of the state from religion and church. The result of the study of interreligious relations in Uzbekistan is that the further stable development of the country is largely connected with the strengthening of interreligious consensus in society.

Keywords: tolerance, religion, interreligious relations, interethnic relations, confession, Islam, Christianity, law, hadith, social stability, worldview.

INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Uzbekistan is a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional state, where the cultural and historical paradigms of East and West have met since ancient times, and on this basis the Central Asian civilization was formed.

In Central Asia, within the boundaries of modern Uzbekistan, from time immemorial, in addition to Muslims, representatives of various faiths lived together. From the first days of the Independence of the Republic, interfaith tolerance became one of the pressing problems that required an urgent solution and a humanistic approach. The President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev, in a welcoming message to the participants of the international conference “Islamic tolerance on the example of Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan,” which took place on October 18, 2017, noted the fact of expanding international cooperation in the field of strengthening intercultural and interfaith tolerance, the principles of which Tashkent has been and remains consistently committed to[1].

Tolerance cannot develop spontaneously; it includes, as noted above, many elements, one of which is the creation of a national legislative framework that meets the requirements of religious tolerance. Today, the main regulations governing this aspect of legislation are: the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2023) [2], the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations” (new edition 2021) [3] and other legislative acts. Although religion in Uzbekistan is officially separated from the state, it is not separated from society. The connections between the spiritual life of society and religious practices are quite harmonious and balanced. The state respects the religious feelings and

rights of believers, and believers, in turn, respect the laws and political practices of the state. Only with such balance is interfaith balance guaranteed[4].

Today in Uzbekistan the state does not interfere in the activities of religious denominations, but sometimes, on the contrary, tries to demonstrate a loyal attitude towards its legal representatives. The Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan reflects freedom of conscience and the inadmissibility of inculcating religious views (Article 35), the right to create and join religious organizations, equality of citizens before the law and non-state interference in the activities of religious organizations (Articles 39, 70, 72). The Constitution prohibits the creation of religious associations that promote religious hatred, as well as the creation of political parties on religious grounds (Article 71). Religious organizations and associations are separated from the state and are equal before the law. The state does not interfere in the activities of religious associations (Article 75). All citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan have the same rights and freedoms and are equal before the law, regardless of religious affiliation (Article 19). Thus, constitutional provisions on freedom of conscience require religious organizations to treat each other and the state with tolerance.

The mechanism for implementing the Constitutional norms is developed in the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations" (as amended in 2021). This law regulates relations in this area and gives a clear definition of freedom of conscience, which gives citizens the right to profess any religion or not to profess any (Article 4).

In Art. 5, Article 7 of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations" contains a provision that can be called a formula of religious tolerance for our country: The state promotes the establishment of mutual tolerance and respect between citizens professing different religions and those not professing them, between religious organizations of different faiths, does not allow religious fundamentalism and extremism, actions aimed at opposing and aggravating relations, inciting hostility between different faiths.

The state guarantees citizens the receipt of religious professional education in religious educational institutions (Article 8).

To strengthen interfaith tolerance, the provision of the Law that religious rites and ceremonies are carried out at the location of religious organizations, including in religious and prayer buildings and on the territories belonging to them, in places of burial, pilgrimage, and in case of ritual necessity - in homes of citizens at their request (Article 9).

Regulatory acts that are aimed at protecting the interests of children and youth in relation to freedom of conscience deserve special attention. These are the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On guarantees of the rights of the child" (2008) and the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers "On the protection of children from information harmful to their health" (2018). Both of these documents are of a protective nature, guaranteeing the state's protection of the interests of children. The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On State Youth Policy" (2016) notes that one of the main directions in working with youth is "raising youth in the spirit of tolerance, respect for national and universal values." In the Presidential Decree "On the strategy of action in five priority areas of development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017-2021." (2017) said that "the priority direction of the country's development is to ensure

interethnic harmony and religious tolerance.” Thus, legal political practice is focused on the consistent education in the younger generation of the principles of religious tolerance and respect for representatives of nations and nationalities living in the Republic [5,6]. That is why the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh. Mirziyoyev at the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly in In 2017, New York took initiatives to develop a Convention on the Rights of Youth and adopt a special resolution on “Education and Tolerance.”

To effectively interact and solve problems in the field of regulating relations between all religious organizations of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the state, the Committee on Religious Affairs, created by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan (1992), operates under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The work of the Committee covers over 2,225 officially registered religious organizations belonging to 16 different faiths.

The Committee for Religious Affairs carries out its activities in cooperation with other public authorities, local authorities and public organizations. The main objectives of the Committee are: implementing a unified policy in resolving religious issues in accordance with the legislation on freedom of conscience together with local authorities, as well as ensuring interaction and cooperation of government bodies with religious organizations and reflecting the interests of religious organizations. In addition, the Committee monitors the implementation of legislation on freedom of conscience and religious organizations, and pursues a policy of strengthening mutual understanding and tolerance between religious organizations and their members. The Committee organizes the establishment of connections between religious organizations within the country and abroad, organizes trips for citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan on pilgrimages to holy places abroad, sending citizens abroad to study and exchange experiences in religious schools, holding international conferences and other issues.

The Interfaith Council operates under the Committee on Religious Affairs, organized by Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated April 16, 2018 No. PP-3668 and consisting of 17 members. The Council, in addition to the Chairman of the Committee on Religious Affairs under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan (Chairman of the Council), includes the heads of 16 religious denominations operating in the territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan: Chairman of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Uzbekistan, Mufti, Metropolitan of the Tashkent and Uzbekistan Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church, Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church, priest of the Armenian Apostolic Church, Chairman of the Full Evangelical Christian Center, Chairman of the Association of Evangelical Christian Baptist Churches, Head of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Tashkent, Head of the New Apostolic Church in Tashkent, Head of the German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tashkent, Head of the Christian Church Tolos Boji, head of the Jehovah's Witnesses Church, general secretary of the Bible Society of Uzbekistan, chairman of the Tashkent Jewish community, chairman of the Tashkent city Baha'i community, priest of a Buddhist temple, chairman of the Tashkent Society for Krishna Consciousness. Thus, the decisions and recommendations developed and adopted by the Interfaith Council are an expression of the opinion of representatives of all religious faiths, that is, its tolerant expression of will.

It should be noted that the leaders of all religious denominations operating in our country are united in combating destructive ideas hidden under religious masks, as well as missionaryism, proselytism, and sectarianism. It was they who in 1995 came up with a collective proposal to revise the main provisions of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations” (1991), which by this time had partially lost its relevance. This initiative was practically implemented in 1998. In the same 1998, an interdepartmental coordination commission was created, which, together with law enforcement agencies, takes strict measures against the propaganda of terrorism and extremism, and the illegal entry of missionaries into the country for these purposes. Also, the interdepartmental commission, together with the media and official religious organizations locally, carries out extensive explanatory work among the population about the activities of illegal religious movements and groups, about the incompatibility of religion with terrorism, extremism and other criminal manifestations.

As for professional religious education, Uzbekistan has achieved significant results in this direction. Over the years of independence, a full-fledged system of religious education has been formed in Uzbekistan, which includes the International Scientific Center for the Study and Research of Islam (1995), the Tashkent Islamic Institute (1999), 10 secondary specialized Islamic educational institutions (madrassas). In 2018, the Tashkent Islamic University was transformed into the International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan. Thus, graduates of secondary specialized educational institutions and the Tashkent Islamic Institute had the opportunity to continue religious education at the academic level. Along with Uzbek youth, citizens of neighboring countries also study at the Academy.

In 2008, on the basis of the Center for the Study of Hadith, the International Research Center named after Imam Al-Bukhari was created in Samarkand. One of the main activities of the Center is the organization of advanced training courses for imams of existing mosques in the Republic. Classes here are conducted by prominent government and public figures, learned economists, lawyers, historians, political scientists, and famous religious figures. The Imam Al-Bukhari Center actively cooperates with the world's leading educational centers and universities, for example the University of Oxford.

President of Uzbekistan Sh.M. Mirziyoyev emphasized that we must demonstrate to the world the humane essence of Islam. To achieve this goal, the first steps have already been taken, and in 2017 it was decided to create a Center for Islamic Civilization under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The center is located on the territory of the famous Hastimom complex in Tashkent. It houses a research center, a laboratory for data digitization and restoration work, and a storage fund for museum exhibits and rare manuscripts. It also includes a museum with an exhibition hall of approximately 15,000 square meters. It displays various exhibits in thematic order - the cultural heritage of the Islamic world. The latest technologies are used to display them. In the center of the museum, under a 50-meter dome, is the Mushaf of Usman - the greatest treasure of the Islamic world. The Center's library stores more than 100,000 manuscripts with their digital copies, and various modern periodicals. The center owns the largest database of domestic and foreign ancient manuscripts, lithographs, historical documents, and modern religious and educational literature. The Center has four departments: the science

department, the museums and exhibits department, the public relations department and the international department.

The scientific department operating at the Center is engaged in the restoration of ancient manuscripts, lithographs, archaeological finds using the latest modern methods, control over their storage, digitization of data, their reproduction, study of ancient sources, deciphering texts, translation into foreign languages, standardization of terminology, compilation of dictionaries.

The Museums and Exhibits Department has over 40,000 exhibits on display. New information technologies are used to display them. The museum fund is also scientifically developed; the exhibitions represent a thematically selected collection of domestic and foreign artifacts of Islamic science, art and culture, and archaeological monuments of antiquity. Between them there are “corridors of time,” that is, the exhibits are located as they appeared in civilization. The Public Relations Department interacts with the Center with the press, civil society institutions, studies the opinions and suggestions of visitors, updates information on the Center’s official website, and studies feedback.

The International Department promotes international cooperation with UNESCO, ISESCO and other international organizations and institutions within the framework of cultural and research programs.

The Center carries out fruitful activities to convey to the wider world community the truly humanistic essence of Islam with its primordial values, which prove that Islam cannot be put on a par with violence and bloodshed.

To monitor the activities of religious and educational institutions, a Department for Work with Religious and Educational Institutions was created under the Committee on Religious Affairs, the main goals and objectives of which are aimed at ensuring the licensing of religious educational institutions in the manner prescribed by law. This Department is also in charge of the preparation of textbooks and teaching aids required for higher and secondary religious educational institutions. The department is introducing new and improved teaching methods and methods, developing modern technologies in collaboration with the Department of Education of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Uzbekistan, providing methodological assistance to students in organizing research work, and also organizing advanced training courses and certification of madrasah managers and teachers.

Indicative of the issue of receiving religious education is the fact that citizens of the republic can receive it of their choice in other countries. For example, at Al-Azhar University in the Arab Republic of Egypt, at the Russian Islamic Institute (Kazan), at the Bulgarian Islamic Academy (Tatarstan) or at the Moscow Islamic University. This fact is evidence that Uzbekistan is open in mutual contacts with other Muslim regions, which significantly expands the educational environment and facilitates the establishment of academic contacts.

The Tashkent Orthodox Theological Seminary, which was formed in 1998 on the basis of the Tashkent Theological School (1990), also operates as a religious higher educational institution in Uzbekistan. The initiator of the transformation of the Tashkent Theological School into the Tashkent Theological Seminary was Archbishop Vladimir of Tashkent and Central Asia. The duration of study at the seminary is five years. The seminary's teachers are clergy from the Tashkent and Central Asian diocese and leading secular specialists. The seminary publishes

a seminary newspaper and almanac “The Fifth Element”. In the title of the almanac, spirituality is taken as the fifth element, in addition to air, earth, water and fire.

Evidence that religious education in the Republic of Uzbekistan has risen to a qualitatively new level is also the fact that the Koran, the New Testament and 16 books of the Old Testament have been translated and published into the Uzbek language. Research is being conducted on many aspects of religious teaching, hundreds of thousands of books and brochures have been published. For example, the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Uzbekistan publishes the monthly magazine “Khidoyat” (“The Right Path”) with a total circulation of 8,000 copies and the newspaper “Islom Nuri” (“Light of Islam”), published twice a month with a total circulation of 5,000 copies. The Tashkent and Central Asian Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church publishes the quarterly magazine “East from Above” with a total circulation of 1000 copies, as well as the newspaper “Word of Life”.

Thus, in the Republic of Uzbekistan, socio-economic, political-legal and spiritual-moral foundations have been created for the implementation of the policy of interreligious tolerance, the implementation in practice of freedom of religion, as well as the harmonious coordination of secular and religious types of worldviews.

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