

ESTABLISHING AN ATMOSPHERE OF RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE AND  
INTERETHNIC HARMONY IN INDEPENDENT UZBEKISTAN.

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**Abstract:** *This article examines the formation of an environment of religious tolerance and interethnic harmony in Uzbekistan during the years of independence, as well as its legal foundations.*

**Keywords:** *religious tolerance, interethnic harmony, freedom of conscience, interfaith dialogue, human rights.*

### INTRODUCTION

Historically, Uzbekistan, as a region where Eastern and Western civilizations meet, has been a center of harmony between different religions and cultures. Muslim law (fiqh) allows for certain civil rights to be granted to believers of other religions living in Muslim countries. Their property, life, religious beliefs, and certain other socio-political rights are guaranteed, and they are “dhimmis,” that is, non-religious citizens whose property, life, and other rights are entrusted to the Muslim state. The introduction of such a law and its application in countries where Islam was the dominant religion since the Middle Ages, on the one hand, served to strengthen the sense of harmony, mutual trust, and respect between citizens of different religions in the same country, and on the other hand, it created the basis for harmonizing relations between the individual and society and, as a result, ensuring an environment of socio-political stability in society. In the matter of public relations, ideas calling for religious tolerance and interethnic harmony served to strengthen interreligious reconciliation and cooperation and friendship between peoples[1].

-Literature review.

Uzbekistan has ratified the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 18 of the Declaration states that “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion”[2]. Another historic document, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, states in Article 18 that “this right includes freedom to adopt and manifest religion of one’s choice, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest one’s religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and observance.”[3] As stated in the UNESCO Declaration of Principles on Tolerance, adopted on 16 November 1995, “Tolerance, consistent with respect for human rights, does not imply tolerance of social injustice, nor does it imply renunciation of one’s own beliefs or concessions to the beliefs of others. It implies that everyone is free to profess and practice his own beliefs, and that everyone should recognize that others also have this right.”[4] These international legal standards were initially adopted on December 8, 1992, and implemented in our main Constitution - the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which was adopted in a new edition on April 30, 2023, based on the general vote of our people - a referendum, and in the national laws developed on its basis in subsequent years. This is another unique confirmation

of Uzbekistan's consistent and determined implementation of its international obligations. From the first years of independence, Uzbekistan declared itself a secular state and strengthened this through the Constitution.

The concept of secularism embodies the principle of separating religious organizations from political organizations and not making religion the basis for everything. At the same time, the state also assumes the obligation to guarantee the rights of believers. According to Article 12 of our Fundamental Law, "Social life in the Republic of Uzbekistan develops on the basis of the diversity of political institutions, ideologies and opinions. No ideology can be established as a state ideology," which reflects the idea of creating an atmosphere of tolerance based on pluralism in our society. These international legal standards were initially adopted on December 8, 1992, and were implemented in our main Constitution - the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which was adopted in a new edition on the basis of the general vote of our people - a referendum on April 30, 2023, and in national laws developed on its basis in subsequent years. This is another unique confirmation of Uzbekistan's consistent and determined implementation of its international obligations. From the first years of independence, Uzbekistan declared itself a secular state and reinforced this through the Constitution.

The concept of secularism is based on the principle of separating religious organizations from political organizations and not making religion the basis for everything. At the same time, the state also assumes the obligation to guarantee the rights of believers. According to Article 12 of our Fundamental Law, "Social life in the Republic of Uzbekistan develops on the basis of the diversity of political institutions, ideologies and opinions. No ideology can be established as the state ideology"[5], which reflects the idea of creating an atmosphere of tolerance in our society based on pluralism.

On the basis of this constitutional norm, the Law "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations"[6] was adopted in our country. Freedom of conscience and belief, guaranteed by the Constitution of Uzbekistan and national legislation, provides the necessary conditions for satisfying the religious needs of all citizens. Today, one of the most important directions of state policy in Uzbekistan is the development of a culture of tolerance and humanity, strengthening interethnic and civil harmony, and educating the younger generation in the spirit of love and loyalty to the Motherland. In 1990, the number of religious organizations in our republic was 119, of which 89 were Islamic organizations, 30 were non-Islamic, and 2 religious educational institutions were operating. In 1991, the year of independence, the number of religious organizations reached 179, of which 146 were Islamic and 33 were non-Islamic organizations. By 2012, there were 2,224 of them, including 2,049 Islamic and 175 non-Islamic organizations. As of August 1, 2018, there were 2,242 religious organizations belonging to 16 denominations in the republic, including the Office of Muslims of Uzbekistan, regional and Tashkent city offices of the Office of Muslims of Uzbekistan, the Karakalpakstan Muslim Qaziyat, 3 higher religious educational institutions - Tashkent Islamic Institute, Mir Arab Higher Madrasah, Hadith Science School, 9 madrasahs, 2,056 mosques, the Tashkent and Uzbekistan Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church, an Orthodox seminary, a Roman Catholic center, the Armenian Apostolic Church, the German Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Association of Evangelical Christian Baptist

Churches, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the Korean Protestant Church, the Center of Full Gospel Christian Churches (Five-day Pentecostals), the New Apostolic Church, Buddhism, Judaism, a Protestant seminary, a Bible society, 151 Christian churches, 8 Jewish and 1 Buddhist synagogues were operating.

Currently, the population of Uzbekistan exceeds 37 million, representing more than 130 nationalities. 94% of the population is Muslim, about 3.5% is Orthodox, and the rest belongs to other denominations. 2,239 religious organizations belonging to 16 religious denominations operate in our republic. Of these, 2,065 are Islamic, 157 are Christian organizations, 8 are Jewish, 6 are Baha'i communities, and there is one Krishna Consciousness Society and one Buddhist synagogue each. In addition, an interdenominational Bible Society also operates in the republic[7].

Conclusion. In conclusion, it is known that the land of Uzbekistan is one of the ancient cradles of Islamic science and culture. In order to comprehensively study the rich historical, scientific, and spiritual heritage of our people, to widely acquaint the world with it, and most importantly, to deeply reveal the true humanistic logic of the Islamic religion, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh.M.Mirziyoyev has put forward a number of initiatives in recent years. The motto "Enlightenment against ignorance" is embodied in these initiatives.

Religion has never been aloof from social phenomena. Moreover, it has always influenced any society in its own interests, therefore, the state's interaction with believers, including youth, is very important in ensuring religious and interfaith harmony. Today, religion in our country can serve as a means of social consolidation. The main features of the identification system are the state's cooperation with religious organizations, support for citizens taking into account modern national, cultural and religious characteristics.

Within the framework of the "Strategy of Actions on Five Priority Areas of Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2017–2021", developed at the initiative of the Head of State and approved on February 7, 2017, and its integral continuation, the "Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022–2026", effective reforms are being consistently implemented in all spheres of life in our country, including ensuring freedom of religion and belief.

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