

Priorities of Ensuring Religious Tolerance in Uzbekistan: Problems, Solutions and Prospects

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Abstract: Today, in New Uzbekistan, freedom of conscience is fully guaranteed for all citizens by the world community. In the last decade, a number of positive achievements were made in the field of interreligious tolerance and interethnic harmony in our country. For instance, "Enlightenment and religious tolerance" resolution is equally recognized and practiced by all UN member states and it was initiated by Uzbekistan government, moreover the adoption of the resolution "Interreligious and intercultural dialogue and cooperation in the context of combating hate speech" also prepared by Uzbekistan and also 49 states, could be evidence of our opinion. This article contains priorities, problems, achievements and proposals for ensuring religious tolerance in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Keywords: international relations and religion, the principle of "religious tolerance", the guarantee of "Freedom of Conscience", confessions, international organizations, interstate and interreligious relations, world politics and religion, modern concepts of religious tolerance.

Introduction:

The basis of any stable development leans on the harmonious and peaceful living of the members of the society, the living of the citizens of the country as a single family, regardless of the nationality and religion. For this, of course, it is acutely relevant the internal environment which is created in that country, protection from external influences, and at the same time, the current legislation reflects the consensus-based activities of all nations, peoples, and religious denominations. The following comments of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh. Mirziyoyev on this issue are noteworthy: "In our ancient and generous land, for many centuries representatives of different nationalities and peoples, cultures and religions have lived peacefully, hospitality, goodness, generosity of heart, tolerance in the literal sense of the word have always been characteristic of our people and it is the basis of his mentality".[1]

The idea of national independence: basic concepts and principles textbook mentions the long-standing existence of the concept of religious tolerance in the territories of Uzbekistan. "For centuries, the presence of mosques, churches and synagogues in our big cities, and the fact that people of different nationalities and religions have been freely practicing their religious practices, is a confirmation of this. The fact that there were no conflicts between them on a religious basis even in the most complicated and difficult periods of our history indicates that our people have accumulated great experience in religious tolerance. [2]

Doctor of History N. Mukhamedov admits: "Tolerance, a characteristic characteristic of our people from time immemorial, did not appear suddenly, it is traditional for us. If we take a brief

look at the history of religions operating in our country, we can see that the territory of modern Uzbekistan is one of the oldest countries where the first religious ideas and beliefs appeared in people. In the middle of the Stone Age, worship of various animals and the Sun, and later fetishism, animism, and sorcery (magic) spread among our ancestors. [3]

"In general, Uzbekistan, which has been the center of coexistence of peoples with different religions, cultures and lifestyles for thousands of years, is an undeniable confirmation of this. Since ancient times, representatives of Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism and other ancient religions have not only lived together here, but also complemented and enriched each other".[4]

Since the early days of independence in our country, the issue of forming a tolerant relationship between religions has been considered as a strategic task and reflected in the legislation. Atheism, alienation from values, alienation from national characteristics, which became a "heritage" of the former totalitarian system, and the question of returning to our people the characteristics that are in line with our national interests, was defined as the main task from the first days of the state's independence. In this regard, there was a need to solve the following priority issues before the state and society:

- First, to abandon the management method related to the totalitarian system, to introduce the democratic form of development in accordance with world standards in harmony with the national characteristics of the country;
- Secondly, based on the country's glorious past, statehood traditions, historical experience, creating a legal system that is modern, liberal and compatible with world standards;
- Thirdly, to create necessary conditions for equal and free functioning of all nationalities and confessions in all spheres, including multi-ethnic and multi-confessional state administration;
- Fourthly, based on the universally recognized principles of tolerance of international law, the solution of current issues such as ensuring and guaranteeing the freedom of religious belief of the country's citizens was considered as an important factor for security and development.

Freedom of belief was guaranteed in the constitution, which is considered the basic law, by the responsible state bodies, who understood the above-mentioned needs in time. Initially, based on the international norms of relations between the state and religion, they were defined as separate entities in the basic law. According to Article 75 of the updated constitution, "Religious organizations are separate from the state and equal before the law. The state does not interfere in the activities of religious associations. The state guarantees the freedom of activity of religious organizations operating in accordance with the law. [5]

In the fifth section of the Strategy of Actions adopted on the five priority directions of the development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017-2021, the priority directions in the field of ensuring security, interethnic harmony and religious tolerance were indicated. In this direction, ensuring religious tolerance was defined as one of the important priority tasks.

T. Ahmedov, Head of Department of the Institute of Strategic and Interregional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, explains the wide-scale work carried out in Uzbekistan in connection with the provision of religious tolerance as follows: "the authority to make a decision on the termination of the activity of a religious organization has been transferred from the executive power - judicial bodies to the courts, and the legal guarantees of their freedom of activity strengthened. The amount of the state duty for the registration of a religious organization has been reduced by five times, and the periodicity of reports has been shortened. From now on, religious organizations will submit reports only once a year".[6]

Main part: problems and perspectives

A number of decisions were made to improve the activities of the religious and educational sphere, according to which a new system was introduced to implement a unified state policy in this sphere, to protect the guarantees of citizens' freedom of conscience, and to form constructive and mutually respectful relations between representatives of different nationalities and peoples. In particular, the committee on international relations and friendly relations with foreign countries was established under the Cabinet of Ministers, and the activities of the committee on religious affairs were improved.

"In accordance with the decision of our President dated April 16, 2018 "On measures to improve the activities of the Committee on Religious Affairs under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan", the new composition of the Council on Confession Affairs under the Committee on Religious Affairs was approved. The composition of the council increased from 9 to 17 members - due to representatives of religious denominations operating in Uzbekistan. It is noteworthy that leaders of religious organizations with a small number of members were also included in the membership of the council. The main purpose of this council, which is considered a public consultation body, is to discuss the existing religious and social processes in Uzbekistan and to develop recommendations".[7]

Today, 2,335 religious organizations belonging to 16 denominations are officially operating in the country. 2142 of them are Islamic and 193 non-Islamic organizations. Among them are 174 Christian religious organizations, 8 Jewish, 6 Baha'i communities, 1 community of Yehova's witnesses, 1 community of Krishna Consciousness, 1 Buddhist temple and 1 Bible Society of Uzbekistan. (Information of the Committee on Religious Affairs under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated November 2022)

The concept of the state policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the field of international relations was approved by the decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan on November 15, 2019. The concept was aimed at ensuring the rights, freedoms and legal interests of people and citizens, strengthening the unity and integrity of Uzbekistan, preserving the ethnic-cultural identity of the nations and peoples living in its territory, maintaining inter-ethnic tolerance, harmony and peace in society. Second, the US Commission on International Religious Freedom removed Uzbekistan from the list of "countries of particular concern". In 2018-2019, the delegation of Uzbekistan regularly participated in Ministerial conferences on the promotion of religious freedom. Uzbekistan's achievements in the field of religious freedom were positively evaluated at these conferences.

Also, in Article 4 of the Law "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations" adopted on June 6, 2021, "Freedom of conscience is a guaranteed constitutional right of citizens to believe in any religion or not to believe in any religion."

It is not allowed to coerce a citizen in one way or another when determining his attitude towards religion, to believe in religion or not to believe in it, to participate or not to participate in prayers, religious rituals and ceremonies, to receive religious education.

It is not allowed to attract minors to religious organizations against their will, the will of their parents or legal representatives.

Only the restrictions stipulated by the law apply to the freedom to believe or believe in one's religion. [8]

As a continuation of this article, the obligations of religious organizations and associations are indicated. According to it, "To change the constitutional system of the Republic of Uzbekistan by force, to undermine its sovereignty and territorial integrity, to discriminate against the constitutional rights and freedoms of citizens, to promote war, national, racial, ethnic or religious enmity, to attack the health and morals of citizens, to violate civil harmony, it is not allowed to

use religion to spread slanderous fabrications that destabilize the situation, to cause confusion among the population, and to commit other actions against individuals, society, and the state".[9]

In our country, religion is separated from the state according to the above-mentioned legal principles. However, the life and activities of the members of the society are mixed with religious values. It is known from historical experience that religion, in the true sense, has had its place and status for centuries as a means of inviting humanity to goodness and goodness. According to E. Ibragimov, Candidate of History Sciences, "Social and political aspects of freedom of belief and religious tolerance have become important in the relations between the state and religious organizations. Because religion serves to change the way of life and increase the country's well-being by applying values such as spiritual training of the country's population and high morality, self-sacrifice, purity, loyalty to one's nation for the benefit of the Motherland and the people. He is able to bring out the most valuable and noble qualities and qualities in a person".[10] In this sense, thousands of religious organizations operating in our country today are fully responsible for ensuring a mutually tolerant environment. According to E. Ibragimov, at the same time, in Uzbekistan, there were "Uzbekistan Muslim Office, Karakalpakstan Muslim Court, higher and secondary special education institutions, Russian Orthodox Church, Diocese of Tashkent and Central Asia, Orthodox Seminary, Roman Catholic Church, Union of Evangelical Christian Baptists, Full Bible Christian Center , a Protestant seminary, a Bible society, Jewish and Bahá'í communities, the Society for Krishna Consciousness, and Buddhist temples are state-registered".[11] The mutual functioning of these confessions and organizations is seen as the main source of the environment of tolerance and political stability in our country. The study guide prepared by the authors I.Khojamurodov and Y.Yakubov contains the following points: "Political stability is one of the important factors in ensuring the peace and development of society. After all, any country tries to make wide use of factors that ensure tolerance when forming and implementing its political system. One of them is religious tolerance. Religion and its characteristic of tolerance have been one of the main factors in the development of spiritual and cultural life at all stages of the historical development of mankind. Therefore, religion has had an impact on ensuring the political stability of all countries and societies, on spiritual, cultural, and even economic development. [12]

According to U. Kushayev, Doctor of Philosophy, "Tolerance is becoming more and more important as a social value. The process of globalization and integration is leading to a rapid increase in the needs and interests of the members of the society, making them diverse and richer in terms of content. Such a situation requires coordination of the interests of all participants of social relations, regardless of religion, race, nationality, social origin, which are not always compatible with each other, because this is one of the important conditions of social stability. Therefore, it is necessary that the principles of tolerance, such as mutual understanding, attention, cooperation, constitute the priority characteristics of human morality of modern society. [13]

Ensuring religious tolerance in our country is closely related to creating equal opportunities for all religious denominations, as well as building the socio-political and religious consciousness and worldview of society members on the basis of tolerant relations. At the same time, religious tolerance can be achieved literally through the efforts of citizens, the state and community organizations based on the principles of cooperative pluralism.

In our opinion, there are the following main conditions for ensuring religious tolerance: 1) ensuring that all religious denominations in our country operate equally and uniformly; 2) guaranteeing the right of citizens to believe in one or another religion or not believe in any religion; 3) actions aimed at preventing representatives of religious confessions from openly promoting or forcing people of other religions or citizens who do not have religious beliefs to believe in their religion; 4) to prohibit by law representatives of religious denominations from criticizing, promoting a religion other than their own, and converting to their own religion in exchange for certain incentives and various means; 5) includes tasks such as explaining the

responsibility of citizens for the development of society, regardless of which religion they belong to.

It should be emphasized that it is important for the members of the society to understand that religious tolerance is a manifestation of fanaticism. Bigotry is itself a cause of enmity, and enmity is a cause of discord. Here comes the need to explain the etymological content of the concept of fanaticism. Fanaticism is derived from the Arabic word "Aqidah". According to the National Encyclopedia of Uzbekistan, "Aqeedah - requirements that are considered mandatory for believers and must be believed without doubt or discussion. The basis of Islamic beliefs is given in the Qur'an, developed and regulated on the basis of the instructions in the hadiths. In Christianity, the creed was first adopted by the Second World Council and it was called the Creed. [14]

According to the Wikipedia source, "Religious fanaticism (lat. fanaticus, angry, frenzied) is the blind adherence to religious ideals and the desire to strictly follow them in practical life, intolerance towards non-religious people and dissidents. Religious fanaticism is especially evident in religious sects. It is an extreme level of enthusiasm for religious activity, which involves creating a cult, worshiping it, and spreading it among like-minded groups. [15]

Spirituality: in the explanatory dictionary of the main concepts, "Aanaticism is one of the forms of worldview that is instilled in the hearts and minds of people on the basis of ideological pressures and raised to the level of faith. There are two forms of dogma: secular form of dogma (egoism, chauvinism, communism, Bolshevism, atheism, nationalism, etc.); religious form of belief (Wahhabism, Hizb ut-Tahrir, Hezbollah, Al-Qaeda, etc.). "Representatives of the ideological and ideological current, who perceive beliefs separated from time and space, consider them as absolute unchanging truth, and do not recognize such other views, are called fanatics." [16]

Nowadays, it is difficult to point to a region or a country that has not suffered from one or another form of religious fanaticism. Religious bigotry is a set of views, ideas and beliefs, created by a certain religious trend or sect, or created by a generation before it, aimed at derailing stable relations in society. Fanatics believe that a person is only right about himself and the dogma he believes in, and unhesitatingly accepts the orders of the leaders who guide him in this direction. When inculcating ideas, leaders act based on their weakest side, taking into account the level, mental state, and social condition of the recipient of the ideas they have created. The fanatics strongly reject the idea of tolerance. In fact, the biggest danger is their appearance. Anyone who does not follow them and has a different opinion than them is their enemy.

"Fatalists resist as much as possible the establishment of different views and attitudes that are contrary to their beliefs. It is in this process that a holistic worldview and a sense of the world are formed in the peoples. A person's character and activity are traced in a certain way. Unscientific approaches to identifying fanaticism with the concepts of fundamentalism and religious extremism are the reason. It is better to consider that these concepts have significant differences in addition to general similarities. It is right to call fanatics people who have acquired religious knowledge separately from the historical period and real social reality, and therefore do not understand and do not want to understand the original humanitarian essence of religions. However, it is necessary to keep in mind that fanaticism has a broader meaning than a purely religious content. [17]

In our opinion, a high level of fanaticism breeds religious fundamentalism, and fundamentalism breeds extremism. Implementation of extremist ideas manifests itself in terrorism. Extremism and terrorism are successive stages of a single interrelated process. It is clear that the dogmatic nature of fanaticism creates the conditions for turning into bloody conflicts over time.

Based on the direction of our research topic, it can be said that religious tolerance and religious fanaticism are mutually exclusive concepts. The dangerous side of religious fanaticism is that it

is used to manipulate people's religious consciousness and thinking. Modern political scientists recognize religious fanaticism as one of the most serious threats to the development of international relations. For this reason, ensuring an interreligious tolerant environment in the world and in our country is considered as the main way to free society members from all directions of fanaticism.

The seriousness of the matter is that it cannot be denied that there are financial forces interested in the existence, growth and spread of religious fanaticism in certain regions. According to Doctor of Philosophy U. Kushayev, "In the current situation, where the priority ideas of the teachings of world religions, which have the potential of good thoughts and actions in international and interstate relations, are being drawn into the framework of various political and geopolitical "games", tolerance is the main strategy of international, social and interpersonal relations and became the most important requirements of our time as an important component of tactics".[18]

The geographical location of Uzbekistan and its desire to take a strong position in the world community do not correspond to the interests of some political forces. In such a situation, it is natural that there will be various geopolitical influences outside our country in order to undermine internal stability. Therefore, in order to ensure a stable environment in the country's domestic and foreign policy, among many tasks, there is also the task of creating an integrated system based on the principles of religious tolerance. In this regard, first of all, it is necessary to develop tolerant relations established by the legislation. Issues of religious tolerance are reflected in the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations". According to Article 5 of the Law, "The main priorities of ensuring freedom of conscience are as follows:

1. to create equal conditions for citizens to exercise their rights to freedom of conscience, regardless of their attitude to religion, without allowing forced indoctrination of religious views;
2. strengthening peace and harmony between confessions, ensuring religious tolerance in society;
3. preserving the construction of a secular state while ensuring freedom of conscience;
4. ensuring compliance of citizens and religious organizations with the legislation on freedom of conscience and religious organizations;
5. religious ideas that threaten public order, health and morals, rights and freedoms of citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan and
6. One of the main results is to fight against the indoctrination and dissemination of the views that we mentioned above.[19]

The previous Law "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations" implemented in Uzbekistan to ensure religious tolerance. Not only experts in the field and the general public in the country, but also the international community gave a good assessment of the fact that this Law, adopted in the new version, was prepared on the basis of international democratic standards.

According to the conclusion of the Venice Commission of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights dated October 12, 2020, reforms aimed at ensuring religious tolerance in our country show that they are in the right direction. In the fifth section of the Strategy of Actions adopted on the five priority directions of the development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017-2021, the priority directions in the field of ensuring security, interethnic harmony and religious tolerance were indicated. In this direction, ensuring religious tolerance was defined as one of the important priority tasks. As its logical continuation, on January 28, 2022, Decree No. PF-60 of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On the Development

Strategy Program of New Uzbekistan for 2022-2026" was adopted. It was also determined that the issues of peace and harmony and religious tolerance between the nationalities living in our country are important factors of spiritual development.

Results and analytics

Today, 2,335 religious organizations belonging to 16 denominations are officially operating in the country. 2142 of them are Islamic and 193 non-Islamic organizations. Among them are 174 Christian religious organizations, 8 Jewish, 6 Baha'i communities, 1 community of Yehova's witnesses, 1 community of Krishna Consciousness, 1 Buddhist temple and 1 Bible Society of Uzbekistan. (Information of the Religious Affairs Committee under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated November 2022).

The conclusion contains the following points: "The OSCE welcomes Uzbekistan's efforts to amend the national legislation on freedom of religion and belief in order to bring it into line with international standards on freedom of religion and belief. There are a number of commendable provisions aimed at improving the current legislation in the country, in particular, reducing the minimum number of citizens required to establish a religious organization, canceling the ban on wearing religious clothing in public places, and requiring the adoption of a decision on the termination of a religious organization. "According to the new legislation, decisions will be made by the court, not by the administrative bodies." [20]

At the end of our research, ensuring religious tolerance in some Uzbekistan is conditioned by the following tasks:

- Firstly, as an important subject of the international community, Uzbekistan's compliance with all norms of international law will increase the country's prestige. In particular, the international principles and rules of religious tolerance are reflected in the current legislation of the country, which creates the ground for the rise of the country's position in the international arena, in the democratic index and ratings. At the same time, it serves as an important factor for stability and development in the country;
- Secondly, ensuring inter-religious tolerance in the society brings the relations between the state and the society to a higher level. It strengthens the relations of respect and tolerance of followers of one religious denomination towards members of other religions and denominations. This aspect is necessary for each religious denomination to follow its religious beliefs and to recognize the religious rights of others;
- Thirdly, since ancient times, religion has been a means of uniting people in the path of virtue and goodness, unity and tolerance. And religious intolerance has been a means of causing various conflicts and wars in all eras and all societies. For this reason, it is important to carry out a sharp struggle against representatives of any confessions that promote religious intolerance and cause national and religious differences in our country;
- Fourthly, the issue of religious tolerance in ensuring national security is one of the most important tasks in the modern world. After all, changing religious views and falsifying original sources are regularly manifested in the daily activities of religious extremist organizations. Therefore, using religious tolerance to ensure internal stability and integration of society, to protect against various threats, and to eliminate external religious influences aimed at political goals is effective.

In our opinion, one of the aspects that can hinder the provision of religious tolerance in our country is the lack of clear skills between religiosity and secularism. This, in turn, is caused by the attempt of a representative of one religious denomination to justify his right to other denominations. At this point, the thoughts of the great sage Confucius, "Be prepared that others will not accept the rule that you believe to be right" are suitable for our topic of discussion. Another reason for intolerance is ignorance. A person cannot have an intolerant attitude towards

others without knowing and understanding their values and uniqueness. In this respect, it is possible to introduce and ensure religious tolerance in societies by knowing the rules and peculiarities of different religious and confessional groups, mutual understanding and mutual respect of their value system. Only in this situation, the principles of religious tolerance, social solidarity and mutual solidarity will be established in the society. Another important aspect of ensuring religious tolerance in the society is that representatives of all religious confessions should be aware of the legislation created in the country, understand their rights and interests, and fully understand the duties and obligations assigned to them.

Conclusion

Uzbekistan, as an equal subject of the international community, conducts its domestic and foreign policy in compliance with internationally recognized rules in all areas, and determines the path of its development, is reflected in the country's national legislation. There are certain conditions for achieving internal political stability in our country. One of those conditions is to ensure national security in all directions. One of the issues that threaten the security of the state and society today is the attempt to implement missionary and proselytizing ideas carried out by various religious sects in violation of the internal legislation of the country. Propagation of the ideas of missionary and proselytism changes the ideological thinking of the members of our society and causes alienation from our national characteristics. Taking into account that the majority of the country's population adheres to the rules of Islam, there is a possibility of an unstable situation in society as a result of the origin of mutual inconsistency between religious confessions and propaganda that is not allowed by law. Another controversial aspect of the issue is that the sects of the Christian religion, which are actively engaged in missionary work, use various illegal forms of attracting citizens. The controversial part of the matter is that, according to the universally recognized rules of international law, all religious denominations are equally responsible for ensuring religious tolerance, it is incomprehensible that many international organizations have not expressed a strong opinion on missionary and proselytizing activities. In our opinion, the missionary activity of sects belonging to the Catholic and Orthodox churches of Christianity or separated from them is incompatible with the principles of interreligious tolerance.

The fact that missionary and proselytism is used not only for the purpose of promoting religion, but also for geopolitical purposes indicates that the issue is very serious. One of the main directions of ensuring security in the country is to fight against all forms of missionary activity not provided for in the legislation and achieving concrete practical results will allow to ensure national security to a certain extent.

A democratic society cannot be built without the principles of religious tolerance. Actions to encourage someone to believe in a religion or to promote irreligion in general are contrary to international democratic standards and national characteristics. Therefore, as the main directions of ensuring interreligious tolerance in Uzbekistan, it remains one of the tasks that cannot be postponed, such as the development of the ideological consciousness and thinking of the members of the society, and the formation of the ability to protect against external influences.

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