

UZBEKISTAN - A LAND OF TOLERANCE

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Abstract: The state of Uzbekistan is pursuing a policy aimed at strengthening interethnic harmony and religious tolerance. This article provides an analytical review of the law "On Approval of the Concept of State Policy in the Religious Sphere and Ensuring Freedom of Conscience of Citizens in the Republic of Uzbekistan," adopted on February 25, 2025, which aims to strengthen the principles of religious tolerance.

Keywords: Uzbekistan, Religious tolerance, nationality, representatives of different religions, concept.

Uzbekistan has historically been a land of tolerance, where representatives of various nationalities and religions have lived in peace and harmony. The traditions of tolerance that have developed over centuries in this land continue to hold their significance today. According to official data, Uzbekistan is home to representatives of over 130 nationalities and ethnic groups, including 16 religious denominations. As stipulated in Article 4 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan¹, the Republic of Uzbekistan ensures respect for the languages, customs, and traditions of all nationalities and ethnic groups residing within its territory and creates conditions for their development. Throughout history, various civilizations have intersected in the territory of Uzbekistan. This factor has laid the foundation for mutual dialogue and tolerance between different cultures and religions.

It is indeed noteworthy that teaching in 7 languages in state educational institutions, broadcasting television and radio programs in 12 languages, and publishing newspapers and magazines in more than 10 languages are further aspects of tolerance. On February 5, 2021, the Senate of the Oliy Majlis approved the law "On the Establishment of the Day of Friendship of Peoples"², and on February 10, 2021, the President of Uzbekistan signed this document. By the decree of the Cabinet of Ministers dated June 1, 2021, the "Friendship of Peoples" badge was established. It was determined that the badge would be awarded to employees of local and foreign state bodies, non-governmental non-profit organizations, business entities, representatives of the social sphere and the media, and compatriots abroad who have made a worthy contribution to strengthening the environment of interethnic friendship and harmony. The Constitution of Uzbekistan guarantees religious freedom. Here, representatives of various religions live confidently in their beliefs. In Uzbekistan, 147 national cultural centers of various nationalities, as well as 38 friendship societies, operate. They contribute to the preservation and development of their national traditions, as well as to cultural exchange with other nations.

The state of Uzbekistan is pursuing a policy aimed at strengthening interethnic harmony and religious tolerance. The laws, programs, and concepts adopted in this area serve to further

¹ <https://lex.uz/docs/6445145>

² On the establishment of the Day of Friendship of Peoples // Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. LRU-672 of February 10, 2021.

strengthen the values of tolerance. In particular, it is no exaggeration to say that the entry into force of the law "On Approval of the Concept of State Policy in the Religious Sphere and Ensuring Freedom of Conscience of Citizens in the Republic of Uzbekistan," adopted on February 25, 2025, laid the foundation for raising the development of our country to an even higher level³.

The introduction of rules specific to a particular religion into social relations, questioning the equality of women's and men's rights, the lack of deep understanding of the essence of secular statehood by some public servants, the spread of ideas and views aimed at undermining the development, solidarity, and stability of society, contradicting the law, denying social norms, national and universal values, and restricting the rights to use medical services, scientific and cultural achievements are observed in society today, and this concept can be recognized as a timely adopted law to counter this situation.

The concept states, "Religious values have served to shape the culture, lifestyle, customs, and morality of the people of Uzbekistan and to pass them on from generation to generation. Religious beliefs and religious tolerance, the true humanitarian essence of religions, are among the spiritual and moral foundations of society, serving to unite and consolidate the people of Uzbekistan, and are a source of age-old values that strengthen mutual respect and kindness in families."

This Concept, consisting of 7 chapters and 41 articles, can be said to serve to protect the minds of citizens, especially young people, from various destructive ideas such as radicalism and extremism, along with ensuring religious tolerance and interethnic harmony in society. Its 3rd chapter outlines the purpose, main tasks, and principles of state policy in the religious sphere in Uzbekistan. According to it, the purpose of the state policy in the religious sphere in the Republic of Uzbekistan is to create equal conditions for the exercise of citizens' rights to freedom of conscience, to promote the establishment of mutual compromise and respect between religious organizations of various religions, to strengthen interfaith harmony, and to ensure religious tolerance and secularism in society. This concept is aimed not only at ensuring freedom of conscience of citizens and ensuring state policy in the religious sphere, but also covers areas such as education, medicine, and culture.

A secular approach in education implies that the educational process, its organization, and the provision of educational services are based on scientific knowledge and logical thinking, free from religious dogmas and beliefs. It aims to develop in students respect for the diversity of views, national and universal values, and their contribution to social development. This includes preventing restrictions on compulsory education on any grounds, developing the scientific and intellectual potential of young people, respecting national values and norms of social morality, maintaining religious neutrality in the education system, preventing the forced imposition of religious views, and more.

The main tasks of the state policy in the religious sphere in the Republic of Uzbekistan are defined as follows: ensuring the freedom and equality of citizens before the law, regardless of gender, race, nationality, language, religion, beliefs, social origin, social status, and taking measures to prevent discrimination against constitutional rights and freedoms, strengthening the

³ On the Approval of the Concept of State Policy in the Religious Sphere and Ensuring Freedom of Conscience of Citizens in the Republic of Uzbekistan // Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. LRU-1037 of February 25, 2025.
<https://lex.uz/docs/7404923>

unity and solidarity of the multinational and multi-confessional people of Uzbekistan, the spirit of respect for their customs, creating equal conditions for their development, implementing consistent measures to strengthen the active civic position of citizens in establishing religious tolerance and legality in society, creating conditions for citizens to exercise their constitutional rights to freedom of conscience, regardless of their attitude to religion, without allowing the forced imposition of religious views.

Harmony in interethnic and interfaith relations is a source of spiritual wealth for peoples, positively influencing the political and socio-economic development of states. In a period of intense international relations, the problem of cultural, intellectual, and spiritual unity of humanity requires a practical solution. Dialogue between representatives of different cultures and religions is one of the ways to achieve consensus and mutual trust.

Chapter 5 discusses ensuring harmony between the interests of society as a whole and freedom of conscience in a secular state.

It is emphasized that public interests in a secular state include the realization of personal, political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights and freedoms of every person, established by the Constitution and laws, on the basis of equality and justice, ensuring equal rights, opportunities, and protection of every person in accordance with the law, creating a social environment in which every person is valued, respected, and their opinion is taken into account, implementing social justice aimed at the proportional distribution of material goods and opportunities, eliminating systemic inequalities, and adequately satisfying the basic needs of all persons (education, healthcare, security, and economic opportunities), fostering a spirit of solidarity and tolerance, peaceful coexistence and cooperation among social groups with different views and perspectives, establishing dialogue, mutual understanding, and cooperation between them, as well as creating a stable and harmonious environment that prevents the emergence of misconceptions and hostility towards each other.

In accordance with the principle of legality, state policy in the religious sphere is carried out in accordance with the Constitution and legislative acts. It is noted that the compliance of decisions made by state bodies and their officials with the Constitution and legislative acts is ensured.

The principle of the separation of religion from the state provides for rules according to which religious organizations and state bodies do not interfere in each other's activities, the state does not assign any state functions to religious organizations, and does not allow religious organizations to perform state functions.

Secularism in the field of medicine consists in forming a healthcare system, providing medical services, and medical culture based on scientific research, evidence-based medicine, medical ethics, and the priority of citizens' rights to health protection.

Medical practice involves the use of only clinically and scientifically proven treatment methods, preventing obstacles to medical intervention based on religious beliefs, and forming in citizens the understanding that non-scientific treatment methods cannot replace modern medical technologies.

The secular approach in the field of culture consists in developing society in accordance with the principles of humanism, respect for the natural environment, national and universal cultural heritage. This is manifested in supporting traditions, literary and musical arts, choreography, theater, cinema, and other forms of artistic creativity.

Secularism in regulating marital relations means the legal regulation of marriage based on civil and family law. This includes state registration of marriage before conducting religious

ceremonies, strict adherence to the principle of voluntary consent to marriage, restricting the promotion of cohabitation with two or more wives or two or more husbands, and supporting traditional marital relations in accordance with national values and legislation.

Secularism in the formation of norms of social morality and behavior implies the reasonable behavior of a person in relations with other people and society, regardless of their personal beliefs, based on the ideas of humanism, national and secular values, while respecting the rights and freedoms of others, including the right to freedom of conscience.

In general, this document emphasizes that our religious values are very important for our society, they serve to shape the culture, lifestyle, customs, and morality of the people of Uzbekistan. Religious beliefs and religious tolerance serve to unite and consolidate the people of Uzbekistan. The Concept reveals guarantees of the right to freedom of conscience, goals, tasks, principles and priority directions of state policy in the religious sphere, as well as mechanisms for their implementation.

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