

Religious Processes in Uzbekistan

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Религиозные процессы в Узбекистане

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Abstract: Religious policy in the Republic of Uzbekistan is based on the principle of the secular state. During the reforms in Uzbekistan, the necessary conditions have been created for the practical solution of issues related to the legal regulation of freedom of religion, the opportunity to make one's religious or secular choice, and to improve the culture of interethnic communication based on tolerance. Much attention is paid to the need to promote the humanistic essence of Islam, explaining that this religion calls for goodness and peace, and helps maintain stability in the region. For an in-depth study of the Islamic religion, it is planned to implement a number of large projects aimed at studying the scientific heritage of great Muslim scientists and educators.

Keywords: culture of interethnic communication, humanistic essence of Islam, tolerance, enlightenment, religious education, interethnic harmony.

Аннотация: Религиозная политика в Республике Узбекистан основывается на принципах светского характера государства. В стране созданы необходимые условия для практического решения вопросов, связанных с правовым регулированием свободы вероисповедания, возможностью сделать свой религиозный, или светский выбор, повышению культуры межнационального общения, основанного на толерантности. Большое внимание уделяется необходимости пропаганды гуманистической сути ислама, объяснению того, что он как религия призывает к добру и миру, способствует сохранению стабильности в регионе. Для глубокого изучения исламской религии предусмотрена реализация ряда крупных проектов, направленных на изучение научного наследия великих мусульманских ученых и просветителей.

Ключевые слова: культура межнационального общения, гуманистическая суть ислама, толерантность, просвещение, религиозное образование, межнациональное согласие.

In modern Uzbekistan, systemic democratic changes are taking place in all spheres of social life. In the course of reforms, the country has created the political, legal, socio-economic and scientific-educational foundations necessary for the formation of the people's self-awareness, the practical solution of issues related to the legal regulation of freedom of religion, the opportunity to make one's religious or secular choice, increasing the culture of interethnic communication, based on tolerance.

Historically, Uzbekistan was at the intersection of many cultures; since ancient times, various religions, cultural traditions and norms have existed here. Over the centuries, religious tolerance and interethnic tolerance have been developed, which has become an integral feature of the Uzbek mentality. Today, the most important achievement of the country is political stability, friendship and interethnic harmony between representatives of different nations, nationalities and faiths.

Faith has always been the spiritual core of the people; through faith, a person forms a system of life values, follows moral ideals, and actualizes his purpose and meaning. Therefore, one cannot underestimate the role of the phenomenon of faith in the field of spiritual and moral education, value-semantic integration and socialization of a person, and hinder the growth of religious consciousness.

In this regard, our state's policy towards religion is balanced: on the one hand, rejection of manifestations of religious extremism and terrorism of any kind, on the other, full support for the moral and educational essence of religion.

In the speeches of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, much attention is paid to ensuring freedom of conscience, the need to promote the humanistic essence of Islam, explaining that this religion calls for goodness and peace, and contributes to maintaining stability in the region. He emphasizes that honoring the memory and preserving the heritage of our great ancestors such as: Imam Bukhari, Imam Termezi, Imam Moturidi, Al Khorezmi, Al Fergani, Abu Ali Ibn Sina, Abu Abu Reyhan Beruni, Mirzo Ulugbek and others serves to revive national values, ensure deep disclosure of the humanistic essence and content of religion, increase the level of education and enlightenment, aimed against ignorance, against those who, using religious slogans, are trying to establish a destructive situation in the region, to use religion for selfish political purposes [1].

For an in-depth study of the Islamic religion, the implementation of a number of large projects is envisaged. This is the creation of the International Research Center of Imam Bukhari, the International Research Center of Imam Termezi, the International Research Center of Imam Moturidi, the International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan.

In the famous Tashkent Hazrati-Imam complex, construction is currently underway of a grandiose facility: the Center for Islamic Civilization, which in the future will be the largest scholarly and educational center with an exhibition hall with an area of about 16 thousand square meters. In the central hall, under a 42-meter dome, it is planned to place one of the main Islamic shrines: the Koran of Uthman (7th

century). Also, the Center will house a library with a collection of almost a million books, manuscripts, original texts and electronic copies. A specialized center for the study of rare books and manuscripts will carry out their restoration and digitization. To host large-scale events, the Center plans to open a conference hall with 550 seats. In the future, the International Islamic Academy will move here, designed to train more than 200 qualified Islamic scholars. Receiving religious education, its accessibility and compliance with international quality standards are becoming important components of the democratization of society.

State policy in the field of education is aimed at ensuring that citizens receive an education, regardless of their attitude to religion. Article 31 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan states that “Freedom of conscience is guaranteed for everyone. Everyone has the right to profess any religion or not to profess any” [2].

The Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan and Article 8 “Education system and religion” of the new edition of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On freedom of conscience and religious organizations” (adopted by the Legislative Chamber on May 4, 2021 and approved by the Senate on June 26, 2021) states that the inclusion of religious disciplines is not allowed (with the exception of religious educational institutions) into the curricula of the education system [3].

The secular education system is separated from religious associations. Accordingly, in state educational institutions, the curriculum includes the study of such disciplines as: “History of world religions”, “Fundamentals of religious studies”, “Spiritual and educational foundations of the fight against religious extremism and terrorism” in the form of special courses. The academic study of religion is aimed at mastering theoretical knowledge on the history of religion, its formation and development, influence on the spiritual, political and social life of society, educating the younger generation in the spirit of respect for the past of their country, the heritage of their ancestors, and the establishment of interethnic and interreligious harmony. The assimilation of this knowledge helps young people navigate the modern religious situation in the world and in Uzbekistan, and conduct ideological dialogue with people who have different religious values, whose way of thinking is not similar to their own system of thinking.

As for registered religious institutions that have the right to teach, in accordance with established rules, when teaching social and human sciences, they use textbooks and other educational materials intended both for secular educational institutions and their own textbooks and other teaching aids, which are prepared by the professional teaching staff of these institutions, who have extensive experience in the religious education system. For example, teachers and religious figures of the republic published more than 20 textbooks and teaching aids intended for religious education. This is a series of collections by the Mufti of Uzbekistan U. Alimov “You Asked”, containing answers to a wide range of questions on Fatwa and modern aspects of fiqh (Islamic law), “Translation of the Meanings of the Meanings of the Koran” by Sheikh A. Mansurov, the textbook “Islam and fundamentalist movements” by A. Tulepova etc.

There are 13 higher and secondary specialized Islamic educational institutions in the country. In 2018, the International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan was created on the basis of the Tashkent Islamic University. The structure of the Academy includes three faculties that train specialists in Koranic studies, Hadith studies, Islamic law, Islamic economics, finance and history. The Academy also produces specialists for secular fields: religious studies, international relations, foreign languages, pilgrimage tourism and oriental philology. Particular attention in the learning process is paid to the study of the humanistic and educational essence of Islam.

One of the large international research organizations for the study of Islam is the Imam Bukhari Center, which carries out great work aimed at studying the scientific heritage of great Muslim scientists and educators. The center is a scientific institution with an extensive electronic database (more than 130 thousand) of ancient manuscripts.

The priority areas of the center's activities are educational activities related to bringing to the public the humanistic essence of Islam, the fight against ignorance, and promoting the ideas of enlightenment, moral purity and justice. Under the guidance of scientists, economists, lawyers, and theologians, the International Center conducts advanced training courses for imams of existing mosques in the Republic.

Article 41 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan states: "Everyone has the right to education. The state guarantees free general education. School affairs are under the supervision of the state" [4]. This means that any deviations from the Basic Law are unacceptable and are prosecuted in accordance with the established procedure. According to the law, religious educational institutions can only be created by registered religious organizations; only adult citizens of Uzbekistan who have received a compulsory 11-year general education can be admitted there. The law therefore prohibits the opening of primary schools.

Unfortunately, recently the activity of some private schools has intensified, where teaching is conducted by people who do not have the appropriate education. Such "religious education" leads to negative consequences: children's rights are violated, they do not receive compulsory general secondary education, and they end up taking lessons from people who can propagate the ideas of radicalism and extremism.

Over the past few years, pilgrimage tourism has gained particular popularity. Uzbekistan has concluded an agreement with Saudi Arabia on the organization of special pilgrimage tours from Uzbekistan. According to statistics from the Committee for Religious Affairs under the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan, 12,045 pilgrims performed the Hajj in 2022. The Umrah pilgrimage is carried out in the country by representatives of the private sector in accordance with the requirements of government organizations, so it is difficult to determine the exact number of people who made the trip. In 2022, an agreement was reached between the government of Uzbekistan and the Minister of Hajj and Umrah Affairs of Saudi Arabia to increase the quota for citizens of Uzbekistan to perform Hajj to 24 thousand per year, and Umrah to 100 thousand.

Also, pilgrimage tourism to Uzbekistan has received significant development potential, thanks to those wishing to see the ancient cities of Samarkand and Bukhara, known throughout the world for their cultural, historical and religious heritage sites.

Traditionally, in Uzbekistan, much attention is paid to the issues of preserving interethnic harmony based on the peaceful existence of people of different nationalities and religious views. Today in Uzbekistan, 2,225 religious organizations belonging to 16 different faiths coexist peacefully. More than 130 nations and nationalities live on the territory of our country, and there are 138 cultural centers.

The history of Orthodox Christians begins in the 5th century, with the Nestorian movement, which, having left Constantinople, began to settle in Central Asia. Since the 19th century, Siberian Cossacks began to open Orthodox parishes in Tashkent, Jizzakh, Samarkand, Chimkent, as well as small ones in towns and villages. In 1871, a parish was established and a temple was founded at the Tashkent hospital; in 1950, it was expanded and rebuilt into the modern Assumption Cathedral, one of the largest religious sites in the country.

According to the Constitution of a secular state, Orthodox Christians on the territory of Uzbekistan are subject to the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), which is part of the Central Asian Metropolitan District of the Russian Orthodox Church. The ruling bishop of the Tashkent diocese is Metropolitan Vikenty. In general, the diocese includes 35 parishes throughout Uzbekistan, more than 50 churches and houses of worship. On the territory there are also: the male Holy Trinity Monastery of St. George (Chirchik) and the female Holy Trinity Monastery of Nicholas (Tashkent). In Tashkent there is a higher theological educational institution of the Russian Orthodox Church: a theological seminary.

As for Catholics, there are 5 parishes on the territory of Uzbekistan: the Parish of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Tashkent), the Parish of John the Baptist (Samarkand), the Parish of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Fergana), the Parish of St. Andrew the Apostle (Bukhara), the Parish of the Blessed Mary, Mother of Mercy (Urgench).

In the very center of Tashkent is the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The current Temple belongs to the Roman Catholic Apostolic Administration. The construction of the temple began in 1912 by prisoners of war and Catholic soldiers who served in the east and built this temple in their free time. The architect of the building was the Pole Ludwig Panchakiewicz.

During the Soviet period, the unfinished building of the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was used as a dormitory, hospital and coal warehouse. In 1992, it was decided to give the cathedral church to the Catholics of the city. In 2000, the temple was opened to parishioners. Sunday masses are held in four languages: English, Russian, Korean and Polish. At the temple there are 3 Franciscan priest-monks and the bishop of the Apostolic Administration of the temple in Uzbekistan, Jerzy Matsulevich.

The Protestant movement is represented in many cities of Uzbekistan. These are: the Union of Evangelical Christian Baptists of Uzbekistan, the Evangelical

Lutheran Church of Uzbekistan, Korean Baptist churches, Korean Methodist churches, Korean Presbyterian Church, Full Gospel Christian Church and others. In Tashkent there is a church subordinate to the diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. The building was built in 1896 at the expense of the Russian physician, public figure and famous philanthropist Jerome Ivanovich Krause for the Lutheran community. I.I. Krause was one of the presidents of the Church Council of the German Evangelical Lutheran community in Tashkent.

In conclusion, I would like to say that religious policy in the Republic of Uzbekistan is based on the principles of the secular nature of the state. Carrying out reforms in the sphere of implementation of religious freedoms, we understand that socio-economic stability, preservation of peace and interethnic harmony are possible only on the basis of comprehensive provision of the rights and freedoms of the individual and society as a whole.

References

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