



CULTURAL RELATIONS OF THE BUKHARA JEWISH CONGRESS OF THE USA AND CANADA WITH UZBEKISTAN

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During the years of independence, many diasporas emerged, creating favorable conditions for Jewish emigration to Israel, the USA, and European countries. Bukhara Jews who moved from Uzbekistan to the USA 30, 20, 15, or 10 years ago have not only preserved their entire lifestyle and national-ethnic and religious heritage from Uzbekistan but have also created a completely different socio-economic and cultural environment. The Uzbekistan – USA Friendship Society, under the Committee for Interethnic Relations and Friendship Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, plays a key role in these processes.

Founded in May 1999, the Bukhara Jewish Congress of the USA and Canada¹ made return visits with renowned Uzbek artists Ilyos Mallayev (now deceased), Muhabbat Shamayeva, folk singer Izro Malakhov, and Rushel Rubenov, organizing charity concerts in Tashkent, Samarkand, and Bukhara. Starting from 2000, following the opening of the Uzbek Embassy in Washington, meetings with compatriots were held with the assistance of the Uzbek ambassador, along with a concert by Uzbek folk artist Munojot Yo‘lchiyeva.

The Bukhara Jewish Congress of the USA and Canada organized concerts with the "Yalla" ensemble, led by Uzbek folk artist Farrukh Zokirov, and American actors staged the play "Kelinlar Qo‘zg‘oloni" by Uzbek Hero Said Ahmad².

Every ethnic community rooted in a country must have its own media to develop and preserve its identity. Understanding this well, Bukhara Jews who immigrated to America in the early 1990s established a weekly newspaper in 2002. We spoke with Rafael Nektalov, the editor-in-chief of "Bukharian Times." The editorial office of the newspaper is located in the building of the Bukhara Jewish Congress in Queens. Rafael, originally from Samarkand, came to America in 1993.

"During the Soviet era, we couldn't move freely or express the voices of Jews. After all, antisemitism was state policy in the USSR. America helps us develop. We can freely open our schools, learn our language, have our own museum, organize our own concerts, and travel the world. There are no obstacles to this in America," says Nektalov. "Bukharian Times" is Rafael Nektalov's third project. Previously, he worked on "Most" (Bridge) and "The World of Bukhara Jews." "It was my dream to launch a weekly newspaper. 'Bukharian Times' was our first such

¹ Муртазаева Р.Х. Бухарско-еврейская диаспора Узбекистана зарубежом (на примере США)// Миллий университет тарихчиларининг Ўзбекистон илм-фани ривожига қўшган ҳиссаси. – Тошкент, 2016. – Б. 74.

² Бағрикенг Ўзбекистон диаспоралари тарихи. //жамоавий монография. – Тошкент: "TURON-IQBOL", – 2019. – Б. 36.



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publication. My heart is filled with pride that I succeeded for my beloved community," he states.

The editorial team consists of 18 people, and the newspaper is published in 10,000 copies for a community of 60,000³. Rafael Nektalov is not only a media worker but also an active member and chief organizer of the community. He provides support to communities from Central Asia as well. For example, he played a crucial role in the development of the newspaper "Vatandosh," which is published in Uzbek. Articles are published in Russian, Uzbek, Tajik, English, and Bukhara Jewish languages. "We are the only publication regularly providing information about Central Asia. We approach this region, especially Uzbekistan, with special warmth, as it is our homeland," he notes.

The Bukhara Jewish Congress of the USA and Canada initiated the "Shashmaqom Furero" event. After several correspondences, famous children's musician Turgun Alimatov participated in the "Shashmaqom Furero" festival in 2012, held at Carnegie Hall in New York.

In 2011, a scientific conference on the topic "The Role of People's Diplomacy in Uzbekistan-USA Friendship Relations" was held under the initiative of the Bukhara Jewish Congress of the USA and Canada. At the conference, speeches were made by the Congress chairman B. Kandov, Uzbek-American Friendship Society chairman Professor G. N. Akhunova, member of the Bukhara Jewish Congress of the USA and Canada, Doctor of Law Professor B. Pinhasov, and Doctor of Philosophy Professor V. M. Kandimov⁴.

In 2013, a conference titled "The Role of the Community in the Formation of Civil Society" was held in cooperation with the Bukhara Jewish Congress of the USA and Canada and the Uzbek-American Friendship Society, featuring leading scholars and community leaders from the USA and Uzbekistan⁵.

The Bukhara Jewish Congress of the USA and Canada is also keenly interested in the political processes in Uzbekistan and observes various political events. For instance, on March 19, 2015, Uzbekistan's Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov met with the leaders of the Bukhara Jewish Congress of the USA and Canada. According to reports, Boris Kandov and Neri Yushvayeva-Kavaler monitored the presidential elections in Uzbekistan.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan stated that Mr. Kamilov discussed cultural and humanitarian cooperation between Uzbekistan and America with the leaders of the Bukhara Jewish Congress of the USA and Canada⁶.

In 2018, Uzbek folk artist Muhabbat Shamayeva held a concert at the Friendship of Peoples Art Palace in Tashkent, and renowned artist Izro Malakhov participated in a maqom competition held in Shahrisabz at the end of August 2018⁷. The ties of Bukhara Jews with Uzbekistan continue to thrive, demonstrating their commitment to not forgetting their ancestors.

³ <https://blogs.voanews.com/uzbek/muhojirnoma/2016/02/16/buxoro-yahudiyarlari-nyu-yorkda-oz-nashriga-ega/>

⁴ Бағрикенг Ўзбекистон диаспоралари тарихи. //жамоавий монография. – Тошкент: "TURON-IQBOL", – 2019. – Б. 37.

⁵ That place.

⁶ https://www.bbc.com/uzbek/lotin/2015/03/150319_latin_uzbek_jews_elections

⁷ Бағрикенг Ўзбекистон диаспоралари тарихи. //жамоавий монография. – Тошкент: "TURON-IQBOL", – 2019. – Б. 37.



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The Consulate General of the USA in New York participated in the official opening ceremony of the "Mahalla USA" diaspora organization and "Turon Trade House" trade house in honor of the 29th anniversary of Uzbekistan's independence.

At the event, Uzbekistan's Permanent Representative to the UN Bahtiyor Ibragimov, the country's Consul General Kamol Ikramov, President of the Turkistan-American Association Abdulla Khoja, President of the Bukhara Jewish Congress of the USA and Canada Boris Kandov, and Chairman of the Uzbekistan Exporters Association Muxtor Umarov addressed the audience⁸.

In conclusion, it can be said that the Bukhara Jewish Congress of the USA and Canada has been one of the important organizations in the establishment and positive development of Uzbekistan-USA relations. It will undoubtedly continue to serve as a mediator in the development of future foreign relations.

⁸ <https://xs.uz/uz/post/nyu-jorkda-mahalla-usa-va-turon-trade-house-savdo-oji-ochildi>