



THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPLE OF RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN ENSURING PEACE IN OUR COUNTRY

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Annotation: This article examines the historical roots of religious tolerance and reflects on the reforms being implemented in the field of religious tolerance in Uzbekistan today.

Keywords: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, religious tolerance, shrine.

Introduction.

The greatest wealth we have achieved during the years of independence is the peaceful and tranquil life of our people. The strengthening of such noble qualities as mutual respect, kindness, and tolerance in our society, the principle of living in harmony with national and universal values, is widely recognized by the world community.

Representatives of more than one hundred and thirty nations and nationalities live in our country as one family. As a result of the joint, cooperative, and harmonious coexistence of representatives of such numerous nations and nationalities, each of them is spiritually and culturally enriched, and under the influence of mutual relations, the lifestyle of our multinational people continues to rise. Also, all conditions have been created for ensuring their constitutional rights and freedoms, legitimate interests, obtaining education, acquiring a profession according to their interests and abilities, and working. At the same time, the preservation, further development, and enrichment of the national traditions and values of various nations and nationalities are under the constant attention of our state.

During the years of independence, hundreds of mosques, churches, synagogues, and houses of worship were built and renovated in our republic. Among them are the "Islom ota" mosque in Tashkent, the "Hazrati Imam" complex, mosques in regional centers, Russian Orthodox churches in Tashkent, as well as the Buddhist temple, the Armenian Apostolic Church in Samarkand, the shrines "Sultan Vays Bobo" and "Muhammad Narymdzhani" in the Republic of Karakalpakstan, the "Panteylemon" church, and others. Along with the monuments to Amir Temur, Mirzo Ulugbek, Alisher Navoi, Berdakh, and Ajiniyaz, monuments to Nizami Ganjavi, Shota Rustaveli, A. Pushkin, and Taras Shevchenko grace our streets and squares. All this is a manifestation of interfaith tolerance and interethnic harmony.

Main Part.

In Central Asia, since ancient times, attention and respect have been paid to ethnic and religious diversity. "For millennia," writes the First President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, "Central Asia has been a center where diverse religions, cultures, and lifestyles intersect and coexist peacefully. Religious tolerance has always served as a kind of shield against enmity on religious grounds. It has paved the way for the coexistence of different beliefs in one time and place, the formation of cooperation and solidarity between their bearers."

The fact that representatives of Judaism, Christianity, and Buddhism live in our country is another example of Uzbek tolerance, ethnic, cultural, and religious tolerance inherent in our



people. In particular, one of the representatives of the Jewish community, R. Bernsman, speaking about this, noted that the first synagogue in Bukhara was built as early as the 8th century, and conditions were created at that time for the free worship of representatives of this religion, along with representatives of other religions, and wrote that "Jewishness, persecuted in medieval Europe and the Byzantine Empire, had the same rights as other religions in Central Asia"[1].

Historical sources state that until the 10th century, there were even Christian churches and settlements in the territories of Samarkand, Khorezm, and Tashkent. Even the great thinker Abu Rayhan Beruni (973-1056) noted that even during his lifetime, there were Christian priests in Merv with the title of Orthodox Metropolitan. In the 11th-12th centuries, the Nestorian Metropolitan was openly active in Samarkand. At that time, Nestorianism was widespread among the Turkic peoples. Also, by the middle of the 10th century, the Christian church in Urgut had developed to such an extent that the Arab geographer Ibn Hawqal described it as a large monastery (church) with land ownership and various forms of private property[2]. According to the testimony of the Castilian ambassador who visited Timur's court at the beginning of the 15th century, Timur gathered representatives of various religions in Samarkand and showed them favor. According to other sources, one of Timur's sons, Miranshah, was appointed responsible for meeting the needs of the Christians and was also responsible for existing relations with all Christian countries. We can cite many such examples from our history.

However, during the Soviet era, in order to transform people of all nationalities into a single Soviet people, an informal struggle was waged against national consciousness, folk traditions, and spiritual values. As a result, the traditional culture of the Uzbek people was also cut off from its "roots." Based on the principle that "religion is an opium for the people," atheistic propaganda against religion was resolutely launched. Such world-renowned theologians of Central Asia, revered by the people as at-Termizi, Imam al-Bukhari, Ahmad Yassavi, Bahauddin Naqshband, and Khoja Ahror, were condemned and classified as "medieval ignorance."

Thanks to independence, along with all spheres of public life, the path has been opened for fundamental changes in the attitude towards religion and believers. We have every reason to say so. Firstly, today there are all opportunities for the active participation of scholars in public life. Secondly, in the recent past, interest and aspiration to know and study religious values were assessed negatively. In contrast, sufficient conditions have been created for the preservation and development of religious customs, traditions, and values. Along with Islam, organizations belonging to 15 religious confessions operate freely in the republic. According to the Committee on Religious Affairs, currently more than 2,300 religious organizations and 16 religious denominations operate in the Republic of Uzbekistan. Of these, 2139 are Muslim organizations, 174 Christian organizations, 8 Jewish communities, 7 Baha'i societies, 1 Krishna society and 1 Buddhist temple, as well as the Interfaith Bible Society of Uzbekistan. [3] Thanks to independence, Orthodox and Protestant seminaries began operating in Tashkent for the first time in history. A vivid example of the traditions of tolerance inherent in our country and people is the first international Muslim-Christian conference held in our region under the motto "Under One Sky" in Tashkent in October 1995, the 125th anniversary celebrations of the Tashkent and Central Asian Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church in November 1996, the international conference "World Religions: On the Path to a Culture of Peace" in Tashkent in



cooperation with UNESCO in September 2000 at the initiative of the First President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov, the scientific-practical conference "Interfaith Dialogue - Fundamentals of Stability" held at the National Human Rights Center of the Republic of Uzbekistan on May 24, 2002, the international conference "Uzbekistan's Contribution to the Development of Islamic Civilization" held in Tashkent and Samarkand on August 14-15, 2007, in connection with the declaration of Tashkent as the Capital of Islamic Culture by the International Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), the conference "Interfaith Dialogue and Religious Tolerance - Guarantee of Social Stability" held on November 16, 2016, in cooperation with the Committee on Religious Affairs under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan is recognized by the world community as a true historical heir to religious tolerance. Indeed, in this land, religious tolerance has been and continues to be an important factor in ensuring that people of different faiths living in this land strive towards the highest goal - the prosperity of the country.

As is known, Uzbekistan has entered a new stage of its development since 2016. During this period, along with all other areas, large-scale reforms were carried out to ensure religious tolerance and strengthen its legal foundations. In particular, regulatory legal acts in this area have been improved, and large-scale work on religious education has been carried out. As a result, significant achievements were made. At the same time, there are some aspects that need to be implemented, therefore, the analysis of the results of measures aimed at ensuring religious tolerance is one of the urgent scientific issues.

The Action Strategy on five priority areas of development of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2017-2021 has been adopted. In this document, special attention was paid to ensuring interethnic harmony and religious tolerance, developing an environment of security, stability, and good neighborliness around us, and strengthening our country's international prestige [4]. The government has also carried out a number of measures to resolve these issues at the international level. In particular, based on the initiative put forward by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh.Mirziyoyev at the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly in September 2017, a special resolution entitled "Enlightenment and Religious Tolerance" was adopted at the plenary session of the highest body of this organization on December 12, 2018. The draft document, developed by Uzbekistan, was unanimously supported by all UN member states [5].

By this time, raising the activities of the religious and educational sphere to a new level became a requirement of the time. For this reason, a number of measures have been taken to further improve the activities of this sphere. In particular, on April 16, 2018, the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Measures for the Fundamental Improvement of Activities in the Religious and Educational Sphere" was published. This Decree is aimed at ensuring the continuity of the religious education system in Uzbekistan and covers the processes from primary to higher and subsequent religious education.

In addition, appropriate work was carried out to improve the activities of the Committee on Religious Affairs. In particular, on April 16, 2018, the Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Measures to Improve the Activities of the Committee for Religious Affairs under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan" was adopted. In accordance with this Resolution, a new composition of the Council for Religious Affairs, which is a public advisory body operating under the Committee, has been approved. The



Council's composition was expanded from 9 to 17 members - representatives of religious confessions operating in Uzbekistan [6].

During this period, the organization of Quran recitation competitions was also established. In particular, in January-April 2018, an open Quran recitation competition consisting of several stages (district, city, region, republic) was organized at the Republican level, with more than 5,000 participants participating. At the same time, during this period, the Center of Islamic Civilization, the International Research Centers of Imam Bukhari and Imam Termizi were established, and five scientific schools specializing in the study of kalam, hadith, fiqh, the science of creed, and Sufism were opened in the regions.

In addition, approaches to implementing counter-extremism measures in the country were conceptually revised. The main attention was paid to preventive and explanatory work among the population. All efforts in this area are based on the noble idea of "Enlightenment against Ignorance." In September 2018, the procedure for exempting from criminal liability citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan who mistakenly became members of terrorist, extremist, or other prohibited organizations and groups was approved.

Taking into account the importance of ensuring guarantees of freedom of conscience and stability of the religious and educational environment in society, a lot of work has been done in this direction. In particular, on September 4, 2019, the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Additional Measures to Improve the Activities of the Religious and Educational Sphere" was published. Based on this Decree, a new system has been introduced to ensure guarantees of freedom of conscience and stability of the religious and educational environment in society. At the same time, a department for working with women was created within the Committee on Religious Affairs. This, in turn, played an important role in the effectiveness of the work being carried out in this area.

During this period, significant changes also occurred in the field of religious and educational education. In particular, the International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan was established on the basis of the Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan and Tashkent Islamic University [8]. Regional branches of the Center for Advanced Training within the Academy have been established in the Republic of Karakalpakstan, Samarkand, Namangan, and Surkhandarya regions. These events played an important role in the development of religious education.

The noble work being carried out to further develop the national traditions and values of representatives of the nation and religion, the enormous attention and care being shown, all the opportunities and conditions being created are reflected in our lives today. Undoubtedly, the high humanistic policy of preserving religious and interethnic harmony in Uzbekistan, the atmosphere of stability, mutual respect, solidarity, tolerance, kindness, mercy, and generosity in society are worthy of admiration and exemplary for many countries of the world. [9-13]

Conclusion.

In conclusion, it should be noted that today Uzbekistan serves as an example to the whole world in terms of religious tolerance and interfaith dialogue. Citizens living in our republic, regardless of their religious affiliation, work together in peaceful and tranquil conditions for the prosperity of our country. Along with this, it is advisable to widely use the ideas of religious tolerance and interethnic harmony in the formation of ideological immunity in citizens, raising their feelings of national pride and honor.

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