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CHANGES TO THE CRIMINAL LEGISLATION TO BE INTRODUCED IN THE SECOND HALF OF 2026: NECESSITY AND NEW REFORMS

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ANNOTATION
This article analyzes the substance and significance of the amendments and additions being introduced into the criminal legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the second half of 2026, as well as the legal and social necessity for their adoption. Particular attention is paid to strengthening mechanisms for combating drug-related crimes, establishing liability for organizing and maintaining illegal drug laboratories and drug dens, as well as applying alternative measures of liability for certain acts committed in territories where a special legal regime has been established. The article examines the role of the new provisions in criminal law policy, their practical significance, and potential problems that may arise in the process of law enforcement. Particular emphasis is also placed on the priority areas for improving criminal legislation, differentiating liability, preventing crime, and developing legal mechanisms that are responsive to contemporary threats. The study further provides a scientific analysis of the necessity and prospects of the amendments introduced into the Criminal Code.
Keywords: crime, legislation, corruption-related crimes, drug laboratory, drug den, special legal regime, criminal law policy.

Today, the social, economic, technological, and institutional changes taking place in society are contributing to the emergence of new forms and methods of criminal activity and increasing the need to regulate existing criminal law relations through new approaches. Therefore, improving criminal legislation should not be limited to establishing new elements of criminal offenses or strengthening liability measures; it also requires reconsidering the substance and objectives of criminal law policy, ensuring the fairness and proportionality of criminal liability, providing reliable guarantees for human rights and freedoms, and developing effective legal solutions to the problems arising in law enforcement practice.

The changes introduced into the criminal legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan to date in the second half of 2026 are of particular scientific and practical significance as a logical continuation of these needs. Each of these changes should be assessed not only in terms of establishing liability for a particular act, but also from the perspective of ensuring the

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effectiveness of criminal law measures, maintaining their proper relationship with other legal measures of influence, and developing modern mechanisms for combating crime.

In this regard, it is important to analyze the innovations introduced into criminal legislation not merely as "new provisions," but as a practical manifestation of the priority areas of the state's criminal law policy. Indeed, the quality and effectiveness of criminal legislation are determined not by the severity of punishment, but by its ability to adequately and precisely address socially dangerous acts in a timely manner, ensure the application of fair and proportionate measures of influence to offenders, and provide reliable protection of the rights and freedoms of citizens.

Accordingly, this article analyzes the changes introduced into the criminal legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan to date in the second half of 2026, the necessity of their implementation, the problems that may arise in practice, as well as legal and organizational solutions aimed at addressing these problems.

Pursuant to Law No. LRU–1155 of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated June 22, 2026, a number of amendments were introduced into the Criminal Code concerning corruption-related crimes. In recent years, the necessary conditions have been created for exercising effective and meaningful public oversight in public administration, and a system aimed at preventing corruption-related offenses has been established.

However, despite the systematic measures being taken, the continued high incidence of corruption in a number of sectors creates the need to improve the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts, ensure the inevitability of liability for committing corruption-related crimes, and foster an attitude of zero tolerance toward corruption among young people.

This Law introduces additional amendments and additions to certain legislative acts of the Republic of Uzbekistan aimed at strengthening liability and penalties for corruption-related crimes; further improving the effectiveness of the activities of the National and Territorial Councils for Combating Corruption, the Anti-Corruption Agency, compliance and internal anti-corruption control structures; establishing a specific list of corruption-related crimes; ensuring the safety of persons who report corruption; reducing corruption-related factors in public procurement; and establishing the formation of a zero-tolerance attitude toward corruption among young people as one of the main areas of state youth policy.

This Law will contribute to ensuring the inevitability of liability for corruption-related crimes and to protecting the rights and freedoms of citizens through combating corruption.

In particular, Section VIII of the Criminal Code was supplemented with a list of corruption-related crimes. Previously, a specific list of corruption-related crimes had been established only by Resolution No. 829 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated December 30, 2020, "On Approval of the Regulation on the Procedure for Encouraging Persons Who Report Corruption-Related Offenses or Otherwise Assist in Combating Corruption," which defined corruption-related crimes as follows: **corruption-related crimes** are crimes provided for in paragraph "g" of Part Two of Article 167, paragraph

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"v" of Part Three of Article 168, Articles 192^9 and 192^{10}, crimes provided for in Articles 205 and 209–214, as well as the commission, using official position, of crimes provided for in Article 243 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and crimes specified in Article 301.

The Criminal Code now contains the following wording: **corruption-related crimes** are: 1) crimes provided for in paragraph "d" of Part Three of Article 167, paragraph "g" of Part Four of Article 168, Articles 192^9 and 192^{10}, paragraph "v" of Part Two of Article 192^{11}, paragraph "v" of Part Two of Article 205, paragraph "v" of Part Two of Article 206, Part Two of Article 208, paragraph "v" of Part Two of Article 209, Articles 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 214^1 and 214^2, and paragraph "b" of Part Two of Article 301 of the Criminal Code;

2. a crime provided for in Article 243 of the Criminal Code, if such crime is committed in connection with the legalization (laundering) of proceeds obtained as a result of committing corruption-related crimes.

As can be seen, **18 types of crimes** have been included in this list.

When discussing corruption, it is appropriate to present some theoretical perspectives. As legal scholar A. Majitov has noted, "petty corruption differs little from corruption among public officials, since such practices involve a large proportion of people who are willing to offer bribes and thereby create opportunities for corruption among public officials. Therefore, prevention is an important means of preventing the development of any negative processes at their initial stages" [1].

As legal scholar Q.R. Abdurasulova has noted, there have been various methodological approaches to understanding the phenomenon of corruption. A number of its aspects, including social, political, criminological, and legal dimensions, have been examined. In particular, Plato and Aristotle regarded corruption as a political category; N. Machiavelli considered it an indicator of a general illness of the state; while C. Montesquieu assessed corruption as a dysfunctional process that causes a good political order or system to become ineffective [2].

Pursuant to Law No. LRU-1151 of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated June 11, 2026, a number of amendments were introduced into the Criminal Code. As stated in this Law, in recent years, systematic measures have been implemented in our country to combat the illicit circulation of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances or their analogues, as well as potent substances.

At the same time, the growing illicit circulation of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances or their analogues, as well as potent substances, and the resulting serious threat to public health and the gene pool of the population, have created a need to improve liability for such offenses.

Under this Law, amendments and additions have been introduced to the Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Code of Criminal Procedure, the Code of Administrative Responsibility, and certain other legislative acts. These amendments are aimed at systematizing and improving provisions establishing liability for the illicit circulation of narcotic drugs,

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psychotropic substances or their analogues, as well as potent substances; filling legal gaps in the legislation; and ensuring consistency with other legislative acts.

This Law contributes to ensuring public safety and public order, protecting public health and the gene pool of the population, and ensuring the rule of law. **Chapter XIX** has been supplemented with Articles **276^1–276^{13}**, as follows.

Article 276^1. Organizing or Maintaining an Illegal Drug Laboratory

Organizing or maintaining an **illegal drug laboratory** for the unlawful production, manufacture, or processing of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances or their analogues, or potent substances,

shall be punishable by **imprisonment for a term of five to ten years**.

The same acts, if:

a) committed repeatedly, by a dangerous recidivist, or by a person who has previously committed any of the crimes provided for in Articles 270–276 and 276^2–276^8 of this Code;

b) committed by a group of persons upon prior conspiracy,

shall be punishable by **imprisonment for a term of ten to fifteen years**.

The same acts, if:

a) committed by an organized group or in the interests of such a group;

b) committed through the organization of two or more illegal drug laboratories,

shall be punishable by **imprisonment for a term of fifteen to twenty years**.

Article 276^2. Organizing or Maintaining a Drug Den

Narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, their analogues, or potent substances, when used or distributed for the purpose of organizing or maintaining a **drug den**, shall be punishable by **imprisonment for a term of three to five years**.

The same acts, if:

a) committed by a group of persons upon prior conspiracy;

b) committed repeatedly, by a dangerous recidivist, or by a person who has previously committed any of the crimes provided for in Articles 270–276^1 and 276^3–276^8 of this Code,

shall be punishable by **imprisonment for a term of five to eight years**.

If the same acts are committed by an organized group or in the interests of such a group, they shall be punishable by **imprisonment for a term of eight to twelve years**.

The introduction of these provisions makes it possible to strike at the root of the chain of drug-related crime by identifying and holding accountable persons who establish places for the production of narcotic drugs, rather than merely detecting narcotic drugs and punishing those involved in their possession or distribution. For example, if a person is held liable for selling narcotic drugs, the new **Article 276^1** also makes it possible to independently hold accountable a person who has established a special facility for the systematic production of such substances. This makes it possible to legally target the initial stage of the **"production → storage → distribution → consumption"** chain.

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The concept of an "illegal drug laboratory" is given a legal assessment. This is a particularly important aspect. The existence of a separate provision enables law enforcement authorities to independently qualify:

- which acts constitute **the organization of an illegal drug laboratory**;
- the role of the person who organized the laboratory;
- cases involving the maintenance and use of the laboratory;
- liability where several laboratories have been established; and
- cases committed by a group of persons or an organized group.

Establishing the organization of a "drug den" as a separate criminal offense has preventive significance. Another important aspect of Article 276² is that **organizing or maintaining a special place** for the use or distribution of narcotic drugs is established as a separate criminal offense. This is of considerable practical importance.

Such places are often not merely locations where narcotic drugs are consumed; they may also create conditions for the following chain: **consumption → recruitment of new consumers → distribution → formation of a criminal environment**. Therefore, the state is able to regard such a place not merely as a "residential premises where narcotic drugs were used," but as an **element of criminal infrastructure that contributes to the expansion of crime**.

As legal scholar M. Rakhmatov has noted, "Determining measures to combat crimes involving the illicit circulation of narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances remains one of the pressing problems in our country. The main objectives are to identify the smuggling of narcotic drugs, routes for their transportation, clandestine laboratories producing them, and locations intended for the illegal storage of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors; to expose the corrupt links of the participants in such crimes within government and public administration; and to undermine the economic foundations of the drug trafficking business" [1].

At the same time, according to O. Subanov, Senior Lecturer at the Department of Legal Sciences of the Institute for Advanced Training of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Uzbekistan has currently established a legal framework for bilateral cooperation with the countries of Central Asia, South Asia, Europe and America, as well as multilateral cooperation with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre and other organizations in combating the illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. This framework is being actively implemented in practice. At present, the competent authorities of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan exchange lists of persons detained for committing crimes related to the illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in the territories of these states [2].

Thus, the introduction into the Criminal Code of provisions establishing separate criminal liability for organizing or maintaining illegal drug laboratories and drug dens not only

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strengthens the repressive mechanisms for combating drug-related crime, but also makes it possible to identify and eliminate at an early stage the criminal infrastructure that creates conditions for the production, distribution and consumption of narcotic drugs.

Pursuant to Law No. LRU-1158 of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated July 13, 2026, Part Five was added to Article 11 of the Criminal Code.

Article 11. Applicability of the Code to Persons Who Commit Crimes within the Territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan

In a **territory where a special legal regime has been established by a Constitutional Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan**, for acts involving violations of legislation on *currency valuables, customs, taxation, competition, and the circulation of crypto-assets, as well as violations of trade or service provision rules*, **measures of liability other than criminal liability may be applied in accordance with the Constitutional Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan.**

In a territory where a special legal regime has been established, rules that differ from those applicable in ordinary territories may be introduced with regard to economic activities, trade, provision of services, currency, customs, taxation, or the circulation of crypto-assets.

Therefore, rather than automatically treating every violation committed in such a territory as a criminal offense, it is necessary to create an opportunity to apply the special liability mechanisms established by the Constitutional Law. In this regard, ensuring the **"ultima ratio" principle of criminal law** is of particular importance.

One of the most important grounds for this provision is the approach that **criminal law should be used as a measure of last resort**.

If a particular act can be adequately addressed through:

- a fine;
- restriction of activities;
- revocation of a license;
- deprivation of a special right;
- a financial sanction;
- or another legal measure of influence,

it is not always necessary to impose criminal liability on the person concerned.

The essence of the provision can be expressed by the following formula:

Ordinary territory → general criminal-law regime. Territory under a special legal regime → special regime + alternative liability where necessary.

In other words, the same act does not necessarily have to produce **the same legal consequences in territories subject to different legal regimes**. This makes it possible to adapt legal regulation to the economic and legal characteristics of a particular territory.

As examples from foreign practice, it may be noted that similar special legal regimes were used in the **United Kingdom in 2016** and in **Australia in 2020**. In Uzbekistan, the

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"Regulatory Sandbox" and the **"Tashkent International Financial Centre"** may be cited as examples of special legal regimes.

In conclusion, the amendments introduced into criminal legislation in the second half of 2026 represent an important stage in adapting the country's criminal law policy to modern social relations and emerging types of threats. However, any new criminal law provision should, first and foremost, be assessed in terms of its necessity, legal certainty, practical applicability, impact on human rights, and proportionality in relation to existing legal measures of influence.

In particular, when improving criminal legislation, it is important to gradually move from an approach based on **"strengthening liability"** toward a comprehensive approach aimed at **"preventing crime, reducing social harm, and strengthening legal protection."** This is because the effectiveness of combating crime is determined not merely by the number of persons punished, but by the extent to which crimes are prevented, recidivism is reduced, victims' rights are restored, and a culture of respect for the law is established in society.

Most importantly, the principal criterion for improving criminal legislation should not be an increase in the number of new prohibitions or harsher penalties, but rather **ensuring a fair legal balance between the interests of the individual, society, and the state**. Only under such conditions can the criminal law reforms being implemented in 2026 become not merely a response to existing problems, but also a solid foundation for a stable and effective criminal law policy that anticipates future trends in crime and addresses emerging challenges.

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