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LEGAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN UZBEKISTAN

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Annotation: This article examines the legal foundations for the protection of human rights in the Republic of Uzbekistan. It analyzes the constitutional framework, national legislation, judicial reforms, and international legal commitments that ensure the protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms. Special attention is given to the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, legislative reforms implemented in recent years, and Uzbekistan's cooperation with international human rights organizations. The study concludes that continuous legal reforms have strengthened the country's human rights protection system while identifying areas for further improvement in accordance with international standards.

Keywords: human rights, Constitution of Uzbekistan, legal protection, constitutional law, international law, judicial reform, rule of law, Ombudsman, human dignity, human rights institutions.

Introduction. Human rights are recognized as universal values that ensure the dignity, freedom, and equality of every individual. The protection of these rights forms the basis of democratic governance and the rule of law. Every modern state has the responsibility to establish effective legal mechanisms for safeguarding the rights and freedoms of its citizens.

Since gaining independence in 1991, the Republic of Uzbekistan has undertaken significant legal and institutional reforms aimed at strengthening the protection of human rights. The adoption of the Constitution, judicial reforms, and accession to international human rights treaties have established a comprehensive legal framework consistent with internationally recognized standards.

The adoption of the new Constitution of Uzbekistan through the national referendum in 2023 further strengthened constitutional guarantees by emphasizing that human dignity, rights, and freedoms constitute the highest value of the state. These reforms demonstrate Uzbekistan's commitment to building a democratic society governed by the rule of law.

The purpose of this study is to examine the legal foundations for the protection of human rights in Uzbekistan by analyzing constitutional provisions, national legislation, institutional mechanisms, and international legal obligations.

Analysis of literature. Human rights have been extensively studied by legal scholars, political scientists, and international organizations. The theoretical foundations of human rights are reflected in the works of legal philosophers such as John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Ronald Dworkin, who emphasized natural rights, equality, and justice.

Internationally, the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) established the foundation for modern human rights law. This document was followed by legally binding treaties such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which provide comprehensive standards for protecting fundamental freedoms.

Within Uzbekistan, legal scholars have examined constitutional reforms, judicial independence, and institutional mechanisms protecting human rights. Research has particularly focused on the modernization of national legislation, strengthening judicial guarantees, expanding citizens'

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constitutional rights, and increasing the role of the Authorized Person of the Oliy Majlis for Human Rights (Ombudsman).

Recent studies also emphasize the significance of the National Human Rights Strategy of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2020), which introduced systematic measures for improving legislation, legal education, judicial practice, and cooperation with international organizations.

Although considerable research has addressed legal reforms in Uzbekistan, further analysis remains necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of constitutional guarantees and their implementation within national legal practice.

Research discussion. The Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan serves as the primary legal source guaranteeing human rights and freedoms. The Constitution declares that human life, dignity, honor, liberty, and other inalienable rights constitute the highest values of society and the state.

The Constitution guarantees fundamental rights, including:

- the right to life;
- equality before the law;
- freedom of speech and expression;
- freedom of conscience and religion;
- the right to education;
- the right to healthcare;
- the right to work;
- the right to private property;
- judicial protection of rights and freedoms.

The constitutional principle that "human dignity is inviolable" has become one of the central pillars of Uzbekistan's legal reforms.

In addition to constitutional guarantees, numerous legislative acts regulate specific areas of human rights protection.

Important legal instruments include:

- Civil Code;
- Criminal Code;
- Labor Code;
- Family Code;
- Law "On Courts";
- Law "On the Ombudsman";
- Law "On Guarantees of the Rights of the Child";
- Law "On Gender Equality";
- Law "On Combating Human Trafficking";
- Law "On Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities."

These laws establish mechanisms for protecting civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights while providing legal remedies against violations.

An independent judiciary is essential for effective human rights protection.

In recent years, Uzbekistan has implemented comprehensive judicial reforms designed to strengthen judicial independence and increase public confidence in the legal system. Key reforms include:

- strengthening judicial independence;
- expanding access to legal aid;
- increasing transparency of court proceedings;
- introducing digital justice systems;

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- enhancing procedural guarantees for defendants;
- strengthening the presumption of innocence.

The establishment of administrative courts has also improved legal protection against unlawful actions of public authorities.

The Authorized Person of the Oliy Majlis for Human Rights (Ombudsman) plays a significant role in protecting citizens against violations of their constitutional rights.

The Ombudsman:

- investigates complaints from citizens;
- monitors compliance with human rights legislation;
- conducts inspections of detention facilities;
- cooperates with government agencies;
- promotes legal awareness among the population.

The institution contributes to improving accountability and transparency within public administration.

Uzbekistan actively participates in the international human rights system.

The country is a party to numerous international treaties, including:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;
- Convention against Torture;
- Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Ratification of these international instruments requires Uzbekistan to harmonize national legislation with universally accepted human rights standards.

Regular reporting to United Nations treaty bodies also promotes continuous improvement of domestic legislation.

The constitutional reforms adopted in 2023 significantly expanded legal guarantees for citizens.

Major reforms include:

- strengthening the constitutional principle of human dignity;
- expanding social rights;
- increasing guarantees for vulnerable groups;
- reinforcing judicial independence;
- strengthening environmental rights;
- enhancing constitutional review mechanisms.

These amendments reflect international best practices and demonstrate Uzbekistan's commitment to democratic development.

Despite considerable progress, several challenges remain.

These include:

- improving practical implementation of legislation;
- increasing public legal awareness;
- strengthening legal aid services;
- enhancing judicial efficiency;
- expanding protection of digital rights and personal data;
- improving human rights education.

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Continued cooperation with international organizations and civil society institutions will further strengthen the national human rights system.

Comparative overview of legal foundations

Legal Foundation	Purpose
Constitution	Guarantees fundamental rights and freedoms
National Legislation	Regulates protection of specific rights
Independent Judiciary	Ensures judicial protection of rights
Ombudsman Institution	Reviews citizens' complaints and monitors compliance
International Treaties	Align national law with global standards
Human Rights Strategy	Guides long-term legal reforms

Although challenges remain in ensuring the effective implementation of legal guarantees, continued legislative reform, judicial modernization, and cooperation with international human rights institutions provide a solid basis for strengthening the protection of human rights in Uzbekistan. Future efforts should focus on enhancing legal awareness, improving institutional effectiveness, and ensuring full compliance with international human rights standards.

Conclusion. The legal foundations for the protection of human rights in Uzbekistan have undergone significant development since independence. The Constitution provides comprehensive guarantees for fundamental rights and freedoms, while national legislation establishes practical mechanisms for their implementation. Judicial reforms, the strengthening of the Ombudsman institution, and accession to international human rights treaties demonstrate Uzbekistan's commitment to democratic governance and the rule of law. The constitutional amendments adopted in 2023 further reinforced the principle that human dignity is the highest value of the state.

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