European Journal of Innovation in Nonformal Education (EJINE)
Volume 5 | Issue 5 | May-2025 ISSN: 2795-8612

Basic Principles of the Concept of State Policy in the Religious Sphere in the Republic of Uzbekistan

Saidafzal Saidkhanbalovich Saidjalolov
International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan
"Social sciences and law" department, associate professor
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in History
(+99890 036 27 44)
saidafzalsaidjalolov@gmail.com

A B S T R A C T
This article analyzes the main principles of the concept of state policy in the religious sphere in the Republic of Uzbekistan. It reveals the role of the concept in ensuring freedom of conscience in a secular state, strengthening religious tolerance, and maintaining a stable environment of interfaith harmony in society

A R T I C L E I N F O
Article history:
Received 04 April 2025

Received in revised form 05 April 2025
Accepted 28 May 2025

Keywords: freedom of conscience, secularism, state policy, religious tolerance, Uzbek legislation

Hosting by Innovatus Publishing Co. All rights reserved. © 2024

INTRODUCTION

During the years of independence, Uzbekistan has carried out great positive work in various fields, including religious and educational. Historically significant reforms in the new Uzbekistan, efforts to build the foundation of the Third Renaissance have led to great progress in the field. The first article of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, adopted on April 30, 2023, firmly established the principle of "Uzbekistan is a secular state". Over the past period, there has been a need to clarify the content of this principle. The Law "On ensuring freedom of conscience of citizens in the Republic of Uzbekistan and approving the concept of state policy in the religious sphere", adopted on February 25, 2025 under the number ZURQ-1037, was an important step towards implementing the constitutional principle. After all, the problems of a secular state and religious tolerance are gaining particular importance in the current globalization processes. The Constitution and legislative framework of the Republic of Uzbekistan are based on the principle of secularism. In this sense, it is worth noting that state policy in the religious sphere is aimed at ensuring freedom of conscience, strengthening inter-ethnic and inter-confessional harmony.

MAIN PART

Freedom of conscience and the principles of a secular state

The Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan guarantees freedom of conscience for everyone (Article 35). Everyone has the right to profess any religion or not to profess any religion. At the same time, relations between the state and religion are regulated on a legal basis. Freedom of conscience is based on the

democratic principles of the state and guarantees the freedom of personal choice of each person. One of the main features of a secular state is its equal treatment of all religions and the absence of priority for any religious doctrine. Based on the principle of secularism, the state ensures equal rights and opportunities for representatives of different faiths. Relations between the state and religion in Uzbekistan are regulated on a legal basis, and in this process, the government's establishment of dialogue with religious organizations has become one of the main factors of stability in society.

Freedom of conscience ensures that citizens make free decisions in their personal and social lives. In this process, the state does not support any religion or belief, but strives to ensure equality between all confessions. Uzbek legislation has developed specific mechanisms for regulating the activities of religious organizations and coordinating their participation in public life. The Law "On Ensuring Freedom of Conscience of Citizens in the Republic of Uzbekistan and Approving the Concept of State Policy in the Religious Sphere", adopted on February 25, 2025 under the number ZURQ-1037, became an important event in this direction. It is worth noting that this Concept, consisting of seven chapters and 41 articles, serves as a specific mechanism to protect the minds of citizens, especially young people, from various destructive ideas such as radicalism and extremism. Its Article 7 notes the achievements in this area: "Today, Uzbekistan is developing steadily as a sovereign, democratic, legal, social and secular state, where interethnic and interreligious harmony is practically ensured. More than 2,300 religious organizations belonging to 16 confessions operate freely in the country, and representatives of more than 130 nations and ethnic groups live there. The fact that the state has created the opportunity to receive education in 7 languages, that television and radio programs are broadcast in 12 languages, that newspapers and magazines are published in 14 languages, and that 155 national cultural centers operate freely is a practical example of an environment of interethnic harmony, interreligious tolerance and harmony ." The third chapter of the Concept is devoted to the "Goals, main tasks and principles of state policy in the religious sphere in the Republic of Uzbekistan", and its 10th article states: "State policy in the religious sphere in the Republic of Uzbekistan is based on the following basic principles: legality, freedom of conscience, separation of religion from the state, equality, free choice, interfaith dialogue and mutual understanding." Information about these principles is presented below:

1. The principle of legality . Legality is one of the main principles of state policy, which implies that all religious activities in the country are carried out in accordance with the law. Ensuring legality requires state registration of religious organizations and their official legal status. This maintains stability and order in society. In the religious sphere, the principle of legality means that the state does not give priority to any religious denomination and accepts all religious organizations on an equal basis. By regulating the activities of religious organizations, the state ensures that they operate in accordance with the laws of the country. The principle of legality also plays an important role in protecting the freedom of conscience of citizens. Everyone has the right to practice their religious beliefs without any oppression, and this right is guaranteed and protected by the state

2. The principle of freedom of conscience. Freedom of conscience is a constitutional principle that ensures the right of every person to profess any religion or not to profess any religion. This principle is an integral part of human rights and serves the free development of various beliefs and ideologies in society. Article 35 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan guarantees everyone the right to freedom of conscience. The principle of freedom of conscience is aimed at respecting the personal beliefs of citizens and creating the opportunity to freely exercise their religious views. The state guarantees equal treatment of all citizens, regardless of their religious or secular views, without giving priority to any religion or denomination. Equal conditions are also created for the legal activity of religious organizations and the satisfaction of the religious needs of citizens. Freedom of conscience also plays an important role in ensuring peace and harmony and religious tolerance in society. The state takes strict measures to protect religious freedom so that people of different beliefs can live in an environment of mutual respect and

harmony. This serves to strengthen interethnic and interconfessional harmony in society.

3. The principle of separation of religion from the state. One of the main principles of a secular state is the separation of religion from the state. This principle ensures that the state treats different religions equally, does not give priority to any religion, and that state governance is carried out solely on the basis of legislation. According to this principle, the state does not grant official status to any religious organization and does not interfere in their work. The principle of separation of religion from the state also implies that religious organizations do not influence state political processes. State governance is aimed at creating equal rights and opportunities for citizens, regardless of their religious views. Therefore, state institutions, the education system, and law enforcement agencies operate on the basis of the principle of secularism. In addition, the state may regulate the activities of organizations engaged in religious affairs, but is not obliged to support or finance them. This, in turn, guarantees the independence of religious organizations and limits state interference in their internal affairs. This principle serves to ensure religious tolerance in society.

4. Principle of equality. The principle of equality ensures the creation of equal rights and opportunities for all citizens of the state, regardless of their attitude to religion. In accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, every person has equal rights, regardless of race, nationality, religion or social origin. This principle prevents discrimination of citizens based on their religious beliefs and serves to ensure stability in society. The principle of equality in the religious sphere means that the state does not give priority to any religion or denomination. All religious organizations have the same legal status and have equal opportunities for state registration and operation. The state also ensures the creation of equal conditions for the activities of religious organizations. The principle of equality also prohibits discrimination of citizens based on their religious beliefs in the admission to public service, education or other socio-economic processes. This principle, in turn, serves to create a just environment in society and strengthen interethnic harmony.

5. The principle of free choice . The principle of free choice ensures the right of every person to independently choose their religious beliefs. According to this principle, citizens have the right to profess a certain religion, to follow its requirements, or not to believe in any religion at all. The state should not force anyone to adopt a particular religion or belief. At the same time, the principle of free choice is also applied in matters of religious education and worship. Everyone should have the opportunity to study the religious teachings of interest to them, participate in religious ceremonies, or perform actions in accordance with their beliefs. In this regard, the state's task is to protect these rights and guarantee their implementation. The principle of free choice plays an important role in creating an atmosphere of tolerance in society and supporting religious pluralism. A culture of respect for the personal beliefs of each person serves to strengthen peace and interfaith harmony in society. Therefore, great attention is paid to ensuring this principle as one of the main directions of state policy.

6. Interreligious dialogue and mutual understanding . Interreligious dialogue and mutual understanding are one of the important principles in ensuring religious tolerance and stability in society. This principle involves establishing open dialogue between different confessions and religious groups, creating an environment of mutual respect and cooperation. A number of initiatives have been implemented in Uzbekistan in this direction, aimed at strengthening harmony between different religious confessions. The state creates conditions for the development of dialogue between religious organizations and society. In this process, meetings, conferences and events are organized for representatives of different confessions, creating opportunities for them to better understand each other and cooperate. This not only strengthens religious tolerance, but also strengthens interethnic harmony. Interreligious dialogue is also of great importance at the international level. Representatives of different religious confessions in Uzbekistan participate in international conferences, contributing to the development of interfaith cooperation on a global scale. This, in turn, plays an important role in enhancing the country's international prestige and

strengthening relations with the world community.

CONCLUSION

One of the main goals of the Constitution is to ensure an environment of tolerance between nations and religions. There are 16 confessions and more than 2,300 religious organizations operating in the country. In addition, broad opportunities have been created for the free celebration of religious holidays and the development of pilgrimage tourism. State policy in the religious sphere also includes combating radicalization and extremism. In this regard, the new Law "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations", adopted in 2021, provides for measures against radical movements. World experience shows that ensuring religious tolerance requires active participation of the state. Countries such as France, the USA, and Germany also rely on the principle of secularism. The religious policy implemented in Uzbekistan is also based on national traditions and values. Ensuring freedom of conscience and religious tolerance in the Republic of Uzbekistan is one of the priorities of state policy. The principle of secularism serves to strengthen peace and stability in the country. The unity of the state and society, as well as the mechanisms of legal regulation in the religious sphere, should be improved in the future.

REFERENCE

1. Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan. - T.: "Uzbekistan" NMK, 2023.
2. United Nations Resolution “Enlightenment and Religious Tolerance.” https://docs.un.org/a/res/73/128
3. Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations". https://lex.uz/docs/5491534
4. Law "On ensuring freedom of conscience of citizens in the Republic of Uzbekistan and approving the concept of state policy in the religious sphere." https://lex.uz/ru/docs/7404923
5. Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Combating Extremism". https://lex.uz/uz/docs/3841957