

Uzbekistan

In 1991, Uzbekistan emerged as a sovereign country after more than a century of Russian rule. A former Communist emerged as President; he has exercised a ruthlessly authoritarian approach to all forms of opposition, using the danger of Islamic militancy to justify the absence of civil rights. Uzbekistan is a member state of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Constitution and government	Education and children's rights	Family, community, society, religious courts and tribunals	Freedom of expression advocacy of humanist values
		<u>It is made difficult to register or operate an explicitly Humanist, atheist, secularist or other non-religious NGO or other human rights organization</u>	<u>Expression of core humanist principles on democracy, freedom or human rights is severely restricted</u>
			<u>Concerns that secular or religious authorities interfere in specifically religious freedoms</u>
<u>No condition holds in this strand</u>	<u>Insufficient information or detail not included in this report</u>		

Legend

Constitution and government

Uzbekistan's constitution states: "Freedom of conscience is guaranteed to all. Everyone shall have the right to profess or not to profess any religion. Any compulsory imposition of religion shall be impermissible." Other laws provide for close and strict regulation of religious activity, including registration of religious or belief groups.

Freedom of association and assembly are restricted; freedom of expression is also restricted by law. The state tightly controls the media, including the Internet. According to Reporters Without Borders, the law punishes journalists for "interference in internal affairs" and "insulting the dignity of citizens". Uzbekistan is a Reporters Without Borders "Enemy of the Internet". The organization describes it as one of the region's most "internet-repressive" countries and says censorship and surveillance were increased in response to the 2011 Arab Spring.

Family, community and society

Monitoring and suppression of religious groups

The population is predominantly Muslim, mostly "nondenominational" and the state creates fewer problems for these Muslims than for other religion or belief groups.

However, devout Muslims are common targets of the legal system. Jail sentences for alleged membership of banned organizations have been imposed without evidence. In Tashkent, a Muslim father and son who taught the Koran to school-aged children were charged with: "Teaching religious beliefs without specialized religious education and without permission from the central organ of a [registered] religious organization, as well as teaching religious beliefs privately." They face up to three years in prison.

<rferl.org/content/uzbek-propagating-islam/25175284.html>

Ravshan Rahmatullayev was jailed for six years in July 2013 for discussing religion in a teahouse, with five others - Azimjon Eminov, Zhamshid Bazarbayev, Mirkamol Musayev, Zhavlon Umarbekov and Dilshod Shokirov - who were given suspended sentences of two to three years. Human Rights defender Surat Ikramov believes the six were tortured whilst in police custody. Muslim prisoners of conscience are forbidden to openly pray or read Muslim literature whilst incarcerated.

<forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=1832>

<forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=1900>

Christian groups are targeted as well. Several devout Christians had their homes searched and religious literature, including the Bible, seized. Fines for possession of such materials have become increasingly harsh. The extent of the attack on human rights is summed up by the following quote.

"Citizens are arrested on arbitrary charges, denied due process, and tortured during interrogation and in prison. Since the events in Andijon in May 2005, when government forces opened fire on a crowd of protesters, including women and children, Uzbekistan's regime has become increasingly insular, opposing foreign efforts to monitor or intervene in domestic political affairs and rejecting cooperation with international organizations."

— Nations in Transit 2014 - Uzbekistan, Freedom House

Highlighted cases

Atheists are not immune from surveillance. In April 2011, a Tashkent-based couple **Vyacheslav Shinkin** and **Snezhana Galiaskarova** were found guilty of producing and spreading religious literature and conducting meetings and other illegal activities, despite the fact that Shinkin is an atheist while his wife inherited the books from her father. They were given a combined fine of 5.5 million uzbecks (\$2,000), equivalent to 110 minimum monthly wages. In addition, the court ruled to destroy the literature confiscated from the couple, among them three rare publications of the Bible, children's books on Christianity, and literary works. Shinkin's father Vladimir spent one and a half years contacting state oversight bodies asking how his son as an atheist could be punished for religious activities and his spouse, who is not a practising Christian, for keeping the bibles that she had inherited from her father.

<uznews.net/en/human-rights/20889-uzbekistan-fines-atheist-couple-for-storing-bibles>