

POSITION PAPER

COUNTRY: - Uzbekistan

COMMITTEE: - UNHRC

AGENDA: - The impacts of unilateral coercive measures on the protection and enjoyment of human rights.

Human rights are the basic rights and freedom that belong to all people in the world, from birth to death. These rights are based on shared values like dignity, equality, fairness, respect, and independence. These ethics are protected and defined by the laws of various countries. Some human rights are more visible than others. It's much easier for people to relate to rights like the right to vote, or the right to a fair trial in a court of law. These are often related to the roles of government and the democratic process. But some human rights are more fundamental, and often unknown to the public. For example, the right to health is one of the most important yet overlooked. Without health care, people can't fulfill their basic needs, like getting a good night's sleep, or not getting sick. They also can't contribute to their communities and may even die from preventable diseases. You can think of human rights as the right to a basic, adequate standard of living, as protected by human rights law. Human rights are important because no one should be abused or discriminated against, and because everyone should have the chance to develop their talents. Unfortunately, many people around the world don't have these basic rights and freedoms.

Human rights in Uzbekistan have been described as "abysmal" by Human Rights watch and the country has received heavy criticism from the UK and the US for alleged arbitrary arrests, religious persecution and torture employed by the government on a regional and national level. Human Rights Watch stated that "Uzbekistan's record of cooperation with UN human rights mechanisms is arguably among the worst in the world. For the past 12 years, it has ignored requests for access by all 11 UN human rights experts and has rejected virtually all recommendations that international bodies have made for human rights improvements. IHF (international Helsinki federation of human rights) have expressed profound concern about "wide-scale violation of virtually all basic human rights. Also, religious freedom is one of the country's greatest issues.

Uzbekistan has been carrying out reforms on the principle of "human interests above all else" and ensuring the proper protection of human rights. Thus, the country has identified human rights protection as one of the priority areas. The analysis demonstrates that work in this area has a systemic character. The country has made a breakthrough in ensuring socio-economic, civil, and political rights.

First, the government carried out outstanding work to eradicate forced and child labor in cotton harvesting campaigns. For many years, it is no secret that these very issues have been a “stigma” on the international image of Uzbekistan. The government succeeded in close interaction with international organizations (including the ILO) and civil activists to eliminate problems in this area. As such, the government carried out significant structural changes in the agriculture sector. The high political will of the country’s leadership played an undoubted role in this. As a result, in its 2020 report, the International Labor Organization announced the end of child and forced labor in the cotton industry of Uzbekistan. According to the organization, the republic has made significant progress in enforcing fundamental labor rights in the cotton fields. The systematic recruitment of students, teachers, doctors, and nurses has wholly stopped. For the first time in ten years of monitoring in cotton-growing regions of Uzbekistan, the Uzbek Human Rights Forum did not record a single case of forced labor.

Simultaneously, ensuring human rights is not static but a dynamic process that requires constant improvement and complete dedication. Based on this logic, one may argue that some tasks remain for the future, which will further improve the country’s human rights protection system. In the course of work on improving the method for detecting and preventing cases of torture, it is recommended to ratify the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture. Continuing work to strengthen further the financial and functional independence of the Ombudsman, including the allocation of additional resources for the Secretariat and regional representatives of the Ombudsman, is also a further task. To ensure gender equality and women’s rights, strengthening the criminalization of domestic violence is another issue for discussion. As for some cases of illegal interference in media activities, the government should take further measures to eradicate them further and improve the foundations of freedom of speech. UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ratification is another goal for the state. The government also plans to adopt a Law on the Children’s Ombudsman.

Summarizing the above, we can say that the listed facts testify to essential milestones in Uzbekistan’s path of reforms to ensure human rights and recognize the policy pursued in this area by the international community. The country does not intend to stop the progress achieved and continues to solve the urgent tasks of protecting human rights. I am glad that there is a high political will of the country’s leadership for this. The historical status of a member of the UN HRC will allow Uzbekistan to use international platforms for the exchange of experience and more effective promotion of its initiatives in the international arena.