

# THE STRATEGY OF NEW UZBEKISTAN IN ENSURING INTERETHNIC HARMONY AND RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

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## Abstract

The strategy of New Uzbekistan in ensuring interethnic harmony and religious tolerance is based on the principles of peace, mutual respect, and humanism. In the context of globalization and increasing geopolitical challenges, promoting an environment of harmony among different ethnic groups and confessions has become a vital priority for the state. Uzbekistan, home to more than 130 nationalities and 16 religious' denominations, has developed a unique model of interethnic and interfaith relations that reflects historical traditions of tolerance and cultural diversity. The state policy focuses on supporting national cultural centers, ensuring equal rights, creating favorable conditions for education in native languages, and fostering cooperation among various communities. Furthermore, international initiatives such as the UN resolution on "Education and Religious

Tolerance,” proposed by Uzbekistan, demonstrate the country’s commitment to global peace and stability. This article explores the main directions of Uzbekistan’s strategy, analyzes its socio-political significance, and highlights its role in strengthening national unity and international reputation.

**Keywords:** New Uzbekistan, interethnic harmony, religious tolerance, national policy, cultural diversity, social stability, humanism, UN resolution, peacebuilding, international cooperation

## INTRODUCTION

Today, the idea of preserving an environment of interethnic harmony and religious tolerance on a global scale means ensuring that people of different faiths can live together in one land, in one homeland, in unity and with noble intentions. All religions in the world, by promoting goodness, rely on such noble virtues as honesty, peace, kindness, and friendship. By their essence, religions call people to honesty and purity, compassion, humanity, and tolerance.

In the current process of globalization, preserving an environment of interethnic harmony and religious tolerance is becoming increasingly important for the world community. Today, humanity is compelled to live in an entirely new environment with unprecedented demands, as well as increasing dangers and threats. In such complex circumstances, maintaining peace and stability worldwide and strengthening independence are becoming ever more pressing tasks.

In our country, all religious representatives are equally interested in ensuring peace and stability and preserving an atmosphere of prosperity. In turn, the state facilitates mutual understanding and respect between citizens of different religions and religious organizations, preventing actions aimed at opposing and exacerbating attitudes toward intolerance and extremism, as well as inciting hostility between different confessions.

As stated by the Head of our State, Shavkat Mirziyoyev: *“Today, interethnic and interfaith tensions are intensifying in various regions of the world, while nationalism and religious intolerance are on the rise. These vices are destroying states, fragmenting societies, and becoming an ideological basis for radical groups and movements. In such a complex situation, strengthening friendship and unity among people of different nationalities and religions in our country is increasingly important for us. Undoubtedly, this serves as a solid guarantee of peace and tranquility in our land and as a foundation for enhancing our people’s creative potential and their confidence in the future.”*

Indeed, ensuring interethnic harmony and religious tolerance in our country not only prevents interfaith conflicts but also creates the basis for fostering mutual cooperation, solidarity, and unity among representatives of different religions.

Today, our beloved Motherland, recognized worldwide as a tolerant nation, is home to more than 130 nationalities and ethnic groups and 16 religious confessions living together in peace and harmony. To develop ethnic identity and further harmonize interethnic relations, 157 national cultural centers and 38 friendship societies operate actively. They make significant contributions to preserving and developing their culture, language, and craftsmanship, enriching one another, and

strengthening the sense of a united, multiethnic family. All necessary opportunities and conditions have been created for them to carry out their activities and actively participate in the country's life.

In the educational institutions of our country, the teaching and educational process is conducted in Uzbek, Karakalpak, Russian, Tajik, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Turkmen languages, and students in schools with related languages are provided with textbooks and literary works at the expense of the state.

It is noteworthy that the noble idea *"Uzbekistan – our common home"* has become the slogan of all national cultural centers. This is a practical reflection of the environment of interethnic harmony and tolerance, peace, and tranquility prevailing in our society. Particularly, this situation is of great importance in ensuring security and stability on a global scale. The environment of interethnic harmony, religious tolerance, friendship, and unity in our country creates the foundation for further enhancing Uzbekistan's reputation on the international stage. Our state supports peace and harmony among religious confessions.

It is no secret that the current world situation is unstable, and mutual trust between states in the international arena is declining. In such difficult conditions, life itself requires us to strengthen the atmosphere of mutual respect, compassion, harmony, and unity in our country and to raise our efforts to protect young people from destructive alien ideas, external influences, and radical movements to a new level.

History shows that our land has always been home to followers of Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity, Manichaeism, and Islam, who lived in peace and harmony. In many cities that were cultural centers of our homeland, mosques, churches, and synagogues functioned, and people of different religions freely performed their religious rituals in these sacred places. Naturally, the same can be observed today in the relationships among various nations and ethnicities professing different religions living in our country.

In our Republic, all religious representatives are equally interested in maintaining peace and stability through the preservation and strengthening of interethnic harmony and religious tolerance. As our President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has noted: **"Our country is a multiethnic and multiconfessional state. Today, more than 130 nationalities and ethnic groups live in harmony in our country as members of one family. In this regard, there is no doubt that the traditions of tolerance inherent in our people for centuries play an important role."** – These words embody immense confidence. This situation, in turn, demonstrates that Uzbekistan serves as a unique symbol of interethnic harmony, religious tolerance, interfaith solidarity, and unity, reflecting a positive example of tolerance toward all representatives of different religions. At this point, it should be emphasized that the essence of all existing religions in the world is based on promoting goodness, peace, kindness, friendship, and constructive ideas. Religion calls people to honesty and purity, compassion, brotherhood, and tolerance. The roots of ethnic, cultural, and religious tolerance, which are an integral part of our spirituality, date back to ancient history, and

representatives of other faiths also acknowledge this. Uzbekistan has accumulated significant experience in the wise governance of a multiethnic and multicultural society. Our activities in this regard are attracting great interest worldwide.

#### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The establishment of an atmosphere of tolerance in our country primarily creates the basis for preventing interfaith conflicts and fostering cooperation, solidarity, and harmony among representatives of different religions. This factor directly contributes to national peace and development and to the advancement of universal culture and spirituality.

Today, in the New Uzbekistan, which is confidently moving toward progress, the political will of our President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, his people-oriented and nation-oriented policies, and his active foreign policy in the Central Asian region have led to the consistent development of comprehensive, mutually beneficial relations with neighboring states, which deserves recognition. By further strengthening and promoting the principles of religious tolerance—the foundation of peace and stability—our country is entering a new stage in education, science, spirituality, enlightenment, and fostering friendship and tolerance among nations.

It is noteworthy that our high-level and top-level relations with neighboring states are continuously strengthening and becoming more active, which brings us joy. In particular, the important proposals and initiatives put forward by our President Shavkat Mirziyoyev during the sessions of the UN General Assembly and the UN Human Rights Council have generated significant interest in the international community. In this regard, it is particularly remarkable that, based on the important initiative of our Head of State, on December 12, 2018, the UN General Assembly adopted a special resolution titled “Education and Religious Tolerance,” which was unanimously supported by more than 50 countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

On **November 16, 2024**, an international conference on “*Religious Tolerance in the New Uzbekistan*” was held in our capital within the framework of the “**Tolerance Week**”, organized in cooperation with the **Committee on Religious Affairs**, the **Committee on Interethnic Relations and Friendly Ties with Foreign Countries**, and the **International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan**.

The main purpose of this conference was to examine efforts aimed at strengthening religious tolerance, interfaith harmony, and inter-confessional solidarity—key factors ensuring peace and stability in Uzbekistan. It also aimed to analyze future tasks, identify existing challenges, and develop proposals for resolving issues in this field.

The conference brought together experts and scholars from countries such as **the United States, the United Kingdom, Korea, Turkey, Malaysia, Portugal, Armenia, Russia, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan**, representatives of the **UNESCO office in Uzbekistan**, religious scholars, Islamic studies experts, members of national cultural centers, various religious denominations, public organizations, and professors from the International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan.

Among the remarks made during the event, the statement by **José Luis Mumbiela Sierra**, Chairman of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of Central Asia, was particularly noteworthy. He emphasized:

*"I have visited Uzbekistan several times before. I am deeply impressed by the high level of religious tolerance and the culture of harmony among people of different religions and ethnicities in this country. Under the leadership of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Uzbekistan is rapidly developing, and its international prestige is growing steadily. In today's world, where various conflicts persist, bringing together representatives of different religions and nations around common goals of peace and prosperity demonstrates great courage and serves as an example to the global community."*

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Similarly, **Metropolitan Vikenty**, Head of the Tashkent and Uzbekistan Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church, stated:

*"President Shavkat Mirziyoyev consistently advocates for ensuring that all people live in peace and harmony, which is the key to the success of religious tolerance. In recent years, Uzbekistan has been increasingly opening up to the international community and is recognized globally as a country promoting values of goodness, peace, harmony, tolerance, and friendship among nations. This conference itself is being acknowledged as a model of Uzbek-style religious tolerance."*

These remarks reflect the satisfaction of representatives of all religious denominations with the state policies implemented in Uzbekistan to promote peace, interethnic harmony, and religious tolerance.

The opinion expressed by **Archbishop Vladimir Provorov** of the Russian Evangelical Lutheran Church regarding this conference is also noteworthy. He emphasized:

*"I believe that this conference aligns with the efforts of representatives of various nationalities and ethnic groups in Uzbekistan to live peacefully and work together for the development of society. The policy of the President of Uzbekistan, based on the principles of interethnic harmony and religious tolerance, is uniting representatives of different nations toward a common goal. This is being recognized by the international community as one of the humanistic reforms of New Uzbekistan."*

In turn, **Professor Mustafa Demirci**, Director of the Seljuk Studies Institute at Seljuk University in Turkey, highlighted his positive impression of the Uzbek government's policy aimed at uniting representatives of more than **130 nationalities and ethnic groups and 16 religious denominations** in pursuit of common goals, promoting interfaith dialogue and religious tolerance. He stated:

*"Through this prestigious forum, representatives of different nations have expressed their satisfaction with the reforms implemented by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev in the field of religious tolerance and interethnic harmony in Uzbekistan. Historically, this land has been located at the crossroads of the Great Silk Road, where peoples of different nations and ethnicities have coexisted. This made the region a unique meeting point of civilizations. There is no other place in the world like it."*

**Professor Abd Rahman Mohd Rosmizi** of the University of Islamic Sciences in Malaysia also shared an important observation:

*"I am very pleased to be in Uzbekistan thanks to the conference on 'Religious Tolerance in the New Uzbekistan.' I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to His Excellency, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev, as the organizer and initiator of this prestigious forum. It is very gratifying that such events continue to take place. As we know, according to the teachings of Islam, Almighty Allah created people as different nations and tribes so that they may live together in harmony and cooperation."*

Likewise, **Sanjit Jha**, Chairman of the India Forum of the CIS and Head of the Indian Council in Russia, emphasized:

*"I consider today's conference on 'Religious Tolerance in the New Uzbekistan' a unique event in its field worldwide. I know countries where representatives of different religions and nations live, but I do not know of any other state where such attention is paid at the level of the head of state. I have personally witnessed how in Uzbekistan several nationalities live together like one united family. I am very pleased to participate in such a prestigious event."*

These statements clearly confirm the high level of efforts carried out in our country in this regard.

## CONCLUSION

**In conclusion**, the alarming global situation and ongoing conflicts are increasing the value of peace and harmony. In this context, active cooperation in the religious and educational sphere, particularly in promoting humanitarian and tolerance-based ideas, is of vital importance in applying effective measures in the global fight against extremism, radicalism, and terrorism. These efforts will ultimately help achieve peace and stability through mutual understanding and unity.

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