

Uzbekistan's Role in the Fight against Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances

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Abstract. *The article highlights the legal foundations for combating the entry of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances into the territory of Uzbekistan, which pose a threat and concern to the international community. It also analyzes, with scientific examples, the illegal trafficking and distribution of these substances within the country, along with their negative consequences. Furthermore, the article sheds light on the tragic fate of individuals, especially young people, who fall victim to these narcotic substances in the Central Asian region, and emphasizes the role of spirituality in the fight against them.*

Key words: *Drug addiction, narcotics, psychotropic, drug trafficking, heroin, opium, Central Asia, South Asia, West Asia, global, extremism, terrorism, arms trade, human trafficking.*

In the second decade of the 21st century, which puts humanity under various trials and threats, science and technology have advanced in some regions of the planet, occupying a significant place in the development of the world economy. The escalating religious, national, and ethnic conflicts in the countries of the Middle East and South Asia region are leading to the premature departure from this world of innocent people living in this region, especially young children. Moreover, the heavy blows of internecine wars are forcing school-age children and adolescents in the countries of the region to endure the hardships of life instead of receiving education. In these regions, along with the growing threat of global terrorism and extremism, separatism, the spread of narcotic and psychoactive substances in the region is also increasing.

Consequently, the fact that drug addiction, which is becoming a global threat in these regions without borders, is becoming a vice that leads humanity not to goodness, but to crime and evil, has deeply concerned the world community. The fact that this disease, which has become the plague of the century, is spreading among young people day by day, especially since the main part of this plague is grown in Afghanistan and delivered to the countries of Eastern and Western Europe through countries located in the Central Asian region, requires the strengthening of cooperation between law enforcement agencies and relevant organizations to prevent the illegal distribution of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in the countries of the region, as well as to prevent the spread of these substances in the countries of the region.

In this regard, in the Republic of Uzbekistan, from the first days of independence, in order to prevent the illegal import of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances into the territory of the country, as well as to prevent the spread of these drugs among the population, especially among young people, a legal basis for combating the plague of this century has been created. In particular, Article 34 of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. 813-I "On Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances," adopted on August 19, 1999, consisting of 5 chapters and 43 articles, provides for the prohibition of the promotion and restriction of advertising of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors, which prohibits the promotion of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors,

i.e., activities aimed at disseminating information about the methods, techniques of development, manufacture and use of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors, places of their acquisition[1].

Based on the above article, it is envisaged that today, not only the manufacture of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors, but also the distribution of these substances is not allowed on the territory of Uzbekistan, otherwise, in the event of committing these actions, punishment is inevitable.

Also, 8 sections consist of Chapter XXIV, Article 302, Chapter XIX of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan defines "Crimes consisting of illegal trafficking in narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances." In particular, Article 273 of the Code provides for the illegal manufacture, acquisition, storage, and other actions of narcotic drugs, their analogues, or psychotropic substances for the purpose of sale, as well as their illegal sale, which are defined in paragraphs "g" and "d" of this article as follows; committed in educational institutions or in other places used by pupils, students for conducting educational, sports, and public events, and using telecommunication networks, as well as the Internet, - is punishable by imprisonment from seven to ten years[2].

Indeed, today, the widespread use of drugs and psychotropic substances among young people, along with the increase in crime among young people, leads to an increase in divorces in many families, as well as to the disruption of the nation's gene pool. Today, if we look at world statistics, we can see that the number of people suffering from drug addiction in the world exceeds 500 million. Consequently, the fact that the majority of people addicted to drugs are young people under 30 years old encourages the world to find ways to protect themselves from the severe consequences of this vice and to fight against it. Sadly, while more than 200,000 people die annually from the effects of this poison, 57 percent of crimes committed worldwide are attributed to drug addicts[3].

According to global statistics, 1.3% of deaths among people aged 15 to 64 are caused by drug addiction. 211 thousand deaths a year are caused precisely by drug addiction. The average age of deaths from drug addiction in Europe is 35 years. According to experts, as a result of drug addiction, 1.6 million people are infected with HIV. 7.2 million people are infected with the hepatitis C virus. 1.2 million people are infected with the hepatitis B virus[4].

The scourge of drug addiction, which plagues humanity with various diseases and calamities, by the beginning of the 20th century had become widespread among the population in many countries of the world and manifested itself as a disease. In this regard, according to the United Nations, in 2021 alone, the amount of opium grown and produced in Afghanistan increased by almost 8 percent, and the amount of this deadly poison reached 6.8 thousand tons. According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), such growth of this poison means that 320 tons of pure heroin will reach the global market. Consequently, Afghanistan currently provides 80 percent of all drug users in the world. We can see that this indicator decreased by 5% compared to 2020. According to UNODC, in 2021, the profits from opium production increased from \$1.8 billion to \$2.7 billion, and the sale of narcotics outside the country generated significantly more revenue[5].

Another reason for the growth of drug revenues is the unstable socio-political situation in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, these drugs are grown in neighboring Afghanistan, processed, mixed with necessary chemicals, and are smuggled into our republic through neighboring Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. As a result, drug addiction is taking root among the population, especially among young people. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Tashkent City Police Department, a total of 989 criminal cases were initiated by the end of 2018 regarding the negative consequences of this crime, in which more than 50 kilograms of various narcotic substances were seized as evidence. In particular, in 2018 alone, 121 drug-related cases were identified[6]. This is due to the fact that preventive and operational work is being carried out in our country aimed at preventing young people from falling into the trap of drug addiction, as well as eliminating its factors, especially against the penetration and spread of drugs and synthetic narcotic substances that are replacing drugs into the territory of our republic.

Thus, in 2018, the number of crimes related to drug trafficking decreased by 12 percent and amounted to 4,779.

In 2021, more than 1.3 tons of drugs were seized by law enforcement agencies, which is almost a third more compared to 2020. Crimes related to drug trafficking amounted to 6,032, which is a 20% increase compared to the previous year. Of the crimes committed, 1814 (1701) were related to the smuggling and sale of narcotic drugs, 304 (395) were related to smuggling, 1521 (1064) were related to the cultivation of prohibited plants, 49 (43) were related to the establishment of drug dens, and 2344 (1823) were related to other types of drug crimes.

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, 1 ton 542.6 kg (1 ton 200.5 kg) of narcotic drugs were seized from illegal circulation, which is 28.5% more than in 2020. Of these, 28.4 (40.9) kg - heroin, 124.1 (224.6) kg - opium, 323.9 (111.6) kg - hashish, 692.8 (736.4) kg - marijuana, 279.4 (0) g - cocaine, 1229.7 (194.1) g - synthetic narcotics, 446.98 (0) g - other narcotics (eutylone - an analog of the ethylene drug of the amphetamine group, metamphetamin, mephedrone, LSD (lysergic acid) and other types of narcotics) and 19.96 (23.8) kg - drugs containing narcotics[7]. The influx of narcotic drugs and potent psychotropic substances into Uzbekistan continues to this day. In particular, in a total of 535 cases identified during 2024, the illegal circulation of narcotic drugs weighing more than 1 ton was stopped. Of these, 570.4 kg and 438 liters of narcotic drugs, as well as 14,123 tablets (capsules) containing narcotic substances, and 1,243 plants were prevented from illegal circulation and circulation. 87% of the seized narcotic drugs were natural and 13% were synthetic. According to experts, in 2024, the import of new types of psychoactive synthetic drugs (alpha-PVP, amphetamine, methamphetamine, mephedrone) into Uzbekistan increased even more. In particular, of the 438 liters of liquid drugs, 252 liters were "methamphetamine" and 186 liters were "amphetamine" synthetic drugs[8].

In conclusion, in Uzbekistan, which unites more than 130 nationalities, today more than 37.5 million people live in peace and harmony. The fact that more than 55 percent of the country's population is young people under 30 years old requires a number of effective measures to educate and develop this harmoniously developed generation.

Consequently, the Republic of Uzbekistan is of particular importance today for its active participation in the fight against narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances at the national and international levels. Looking at the country's geographical location, the state's border with Afghanistan has made it an important strategic area in the fight against the problems of transnational drug addiction.

The legal framework for suppressing and combating illicit drug trafficking has been developed, and national programs and legislative measures adopted by the state, including the Law "On Combating Illicit Trafficking in and Abuse of Narcotic Drugs," have strengthened the legal framework for combating drug trafficking. At the same time, the country has signed relevant UN conventions and established international cooperation based on them.

In the fight against drug addiction in the country, special attention is paid to prevention, including work among the population, especially with families, which are the main unit of society, as well as propaganda and awareness-raising work among young people. In the fight against drugs and psychotropic substances, it is necessary to strengthen cooperation not only between government bodies, but also between civil society institutions.

In conclusion, the fight against narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in Uzbekistan is of paramount importance for ensuring the peace, stability, and security of the more than 80 million people living not only in our country but also in the Central Asian region. Consequently, the political will of our country in this direction, openness to international cooperation, and the desire to improve the legal framework are increasing its authority as one of the leaders in the Central Asian region.

Therefore, since we have set ourselves the goal of building a third renaissance in New Uzbekistan, in this regard, first of all, it will be necessary to educate young people as a generation worthy of their ancestors.

Indeed, in preventing our youth from falling under the influence of destructive ideas and actions of criminal groups that lead them to their vile deeds, if we do not promote ideas of goodness and creativity in society, we will make a big mistake, that is, an irreparable mistake.

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