BG Pulse Journal USA
ISSN:1947-2536 http://www.bgpulseusa.com/index.php/bg
BG PULSE JOURNAL

CONSTITUTIONAL-LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE FOUNDATIONS OF COUNTERING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN UZBEKISTAN

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Doi: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21891563

Abstract: The article examines the development of the constitutional and administrative framework for combating domestic violence in Uzbekistan between 2019 and 2026. It analyses constitutional guarantees of human dignity, equality and personal security, as well as administrative and criminal-law measures, protection orders, social services and inter-agency cooperation. Particular attention is paid to the protection of women and children, judicial practice, the digitalization of response mechanisms and recent legislative reforms. The study identifies inconsistencies in the categories of people entitled to protection, the distinction between administrative and criminal liability, the prevention of repeated violence and information exchange between public authorities. It argues that the effectiveness of legal regulation should be assessed not merely by the number of adopted provisions, but by its ability to provide victims with timely, continuous and effective protection.

Keywords: domestic violence, family violence, constitutional rights, administrative legal protection, protection order, protection of women and children, social services, inter-agency cooperation, digitalization, Uzbekistan.

1. Relevance of the problem and formulation of the research question

In Uzbekistan, the family is both a social value and a constitutional-legal institution. This status does not mean that it is isolated from public-law regulation. On the contrary, it presupposes the duty of the state to ensure effective protection of the dignity, equality and security of every person in family relations. In his Address to the Oliy Majlis and the people of Uzbekistan of 26 December 2025, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev directly rejected the view of domestic violence as an exclusively private matter, emphasizing that “domestic violence is not only a family problem, but also a problem of the whole society”. In this regard, the need was identified to establish an effective system for preventing violence with the participation of state bodies, Parliament, civil society institutions and the wider public[1].

This position forms the modern political and constitutional basis for recognizing protection from domestic violence as a public duty of the state, directly connected with ensuring human dignity, equality and personal security. Consequently, family violence cannot be regarded solely as a conflict within the private sphere, the resolution of which depends entirely on the will of the

[1] Mirziyoyev Sh. M. Address of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the Oliy Majlis and the people of Uzbekistan of 26 December 2025 // Official website of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan: https://president.uz/ru/lists/view/8834.

participants in family relations. Where family relations become a source of threat to life, health, dignity, freedom or other constitutionally protected human rights, there arises a need for public intervention consistent with the principles of legality, proportionality and judicial control.

Thus, the scientific problem is no longer limited to the question of whether domestic violence should be treated as a matter of public law. The central question is whether constitutional guarantees, administrative prevention, criminal liability, judicial remedies and social services form an integrated and measurable system. In other words, the existence of a significant number of normative acts does not in itself demonstrate the sufficient effectiveness of state policy. It is necessary to determine how coordinated the individual legal mechanisms are, whether they ensure continuity of protection for the affected person and whether they are capable of responding promptly to repeated or escalating violence.

The purpose of the study is to identify gaps that reduce the effectiveness of the current system for countering domestic violence and to develop proposals suitable for legislative or administrative implementation.

The scientific novelty of the study lies in bringing together four levels that are traditionally considered separately: directly applicable constitutional rights; the administrative-preventive regime; the transition to criminal-law measures and judicial interpretation; and social services together with digital inter-agency coordination. An additional result is the identification of the problem of inconsistency in the circle of protected persons: different normative acts extend protection to different categories of relatives and household members, as a result of which persons may have different access to protective procedures even where the level of risk is comparable.

2. Constitutional-legal foundations of protection from family violence

The normative basis for countering family violence is, first of all, the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, adopted by referendum on 30 April 2023 and entered into force on 1 May 2023.

Article 15 of the Constitution establishes its direct effect and supreme legal force. Articles 19 and 58 guarantee equality, equal rights of women and men and equal opportunities for them, while Article 20 establishes the direct effect of human rights and requires state bodies to build their activities with due regard to these rights. Article 26 is of particular significance for the issue under consideration, as it declares the honor and dignity of the person inviolable and prohibits violence and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. At the same time, Article 76 ensures the constitutional protection of the family and imposes on the state the duty to create conditions for its full development[2].

These provisions must be considered not in isolation, but in their systemic interrelationship. Constitutional protection of the family cannot be interpreted as a basis for preserving family relations at any cost. On the contrary, the constitutional value of the family presupposes ensuring safe conditions for each of its members. If dignity, equality or a person's physical and psychological integrity are violated within the family, protection of the family must be realized primarily through protection of the person.

It is in this context that the question of the state's positive obligations arises. The state must not only refrain from violence by its own representatives, but also take reasonable measures to prevent, identify, investigate and stop foreseeable violence by private individuals. This obligation is directly connected with the principle of due diligence and presupposes the availability of accessible and effective remedies.

[2] Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the new edition of 2023, https://lex.uz/ru/docs/6445147.

The direct effect of the Constitution also has practical significance. The absence of a special by-law instruction should not be regarded by administrative bodies as a ground for ignoring an immediate threat to a person's dignity or security. At the same time, the state's positive obligations are not unlimited: preventive intervention must be carried out on the basis of law, be proportionate to the legitimate aim pursued and allow for the possibility of appealing the decision taken. This is especially important in the sphere of family relations, where state protection must be combined with respect for private and family life.

Accordingly, constitutional provisions create not only a normative basis for prohibiting family violence, but also a criterion for assessing subsequent administrative, criminal and social regulation. The effectiveness of special mechanisms should be determined by the extent to which they enable the constitutional guarantees of dignity, equality and security to be implemented in practice.

3. International and doctrinal standards

The constitutional understanding of protection from family violence receives further development in international legal and academic doctrine.

A significant place in contemporary scientific and legal discussion is occupied by the four-dimensional concept of substantive equality developed by the South African legal scholar and Professor of Law at the University of Oxford, Sandra Fredman. It includes redressing disadvantage, addressing stigma and violence, enhancing participation and transforming social structures[3]. This concept makes it possible to explain why formal gender neutrality alone is insufficient to ensure substantive equality in the sphere of family relations.

A similar position is taken by Bonita Meyersfeld, Professor at the School of Law of the University of the Witwatersrand. She links systematic domestic violence and the absence of effective state protection to the international legal responsibility of the state and its compliance with the due diligence standard[4]. This approach is directly relevant for assessing the Uzbek system, since it allows the analysis to move from individual legal norms to the question of the state's actual capacity to prevent foreseeable risk and ensure effective protection for victims.

The works of the national legal scholar, Academician A.Kh. Saidov, devoted to human rights, also deserve particular attention. They make it possible to consider national constitutional guarantees in close connection with international standards, rather than as separate domestic declarations[5].

At the international legal level, it is also necessary to note General Recommendation No. 35 of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, adopted on 14 July 2017. It qualifies gender-based violence against women as a form of discrimination and provides for the need for legislative, preventive, protective, criminal-procedural and restorative measures[6]. In the present study, this document is used primarily as a standard of interpretation, not as a substitute for provisions of national legislation.

A similar reservation is necessary with regard to the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, adopted on 11 May

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[3] Sandra Fredman, "Substantive Equality Revisited", International Journal of Constitutional Law 14(3) (2016), pp. 712–738, https://academic.oup.com/icon/article/14/3/712/2404476.

[4] Bonita Meyersfeld, Domestic Violence and International Law (Hart Publishing, 2010), https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/domestic-violence-and-international-law-9781841139111/.

[5] A.Kh. Saidov, International Human Rights Law (Tashkent, 2002); bibliographic record cited by Tashkent State University of Law, https://yurisprudensiya.tsul.uz/index.php/yurisprudensiya/article/view/742.

[6] CEDAW Committee, General Recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, updating General Recommendation No. 19 (2017), https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1305057?v=pdf.

2011. Its comprehensive architecture is of considerable comparative interest; however, until Uzbekistan accedes to the Convention, it is not treated in the present study as an international treaty binding upon Uzbekistan[7]. Its significance lies in the possibility of using the institutional approaches developed in it for the comparative assessment of national legislation.

Thus, international and doctrinal standards make it possible to formulate several criteria that may subsequently be used to assess the national system: effective prevention, timely protection, proportionate state intervention, access to justice, specialized services, inter-agency coordination and risk-assessment mechanisms.

4. Formation of a special protection system: Law No. LRU-561

The first fundamental stage in the formation of a special system of legal regulation was the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. LRU-561 of 2 September 2019 "On the Protection of Women from Harassment and Violence".

The Law established a special preventive system. In particular, Article 3 defines the concepts of harassment, stalking, a protection order, and physical, psychological, sexual and economic violence. Articles 21–28 regulate individual preventive measures, the issuance of protection orders and the activities of special assistance centers.

The fundamental significance of Law No. LRU-561 lies in the fact that family violence and related forms of harassment acquired an independent legal dimension. The Law made it possible to move from predominantly general provisions on the protection of individual rights to a specialized preventive mechanism.

At the same time, the targeted model was initially oriented directly toward women. This approach corresponds to the need to overcome gender inequality and takes into account women's disproportionate vulnerability to certain forms of violence. However, it does not exhaust the broader constitutional duty of the state to ensure protection for every person subjected to violence in the family or household.

Therefore, already at this stage a problem arises that later becomes systemic: the circle of persons having access to protection mechanisms must be harmonized among different normative acts. If different forms of violence are regulated through different categories of victims, a person's formal status may affect the possibility of obtaining protection even at the same level of actual danger.

Thus, Law No. LRU-561 should be regarded as the starting point for the formation of the modern system, but not as a completed regulatory model.

5. Administrative and criminal liability for family (domestic) violence

The next major stage of the reforms was the adoption of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan of 11 April 2023 No. LRU-829, by which the Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Administrative Responsibility was supplemented with Article 59^2, and the Criminal Code with Article 126^1. As a result, an independent two-level system of response to family (domestic) violence was formed[8].

The introduction of special administrative liability was a fundamentally important step. The state directly recognized the relevant acts as independent offenses requiring public-law intervention, rather than merely resolution within a family conflict.

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[7] Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul, 11 May 2011, CETS No. 210), https://rm.coe.int/168046253f.

[8] Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. LRU-829 of 11.04.2023 "On Amendments and Additions to Certain Legislative Acts of the Republic of Uzbekistan in Connection with the Further Improvement of the System of Reliable Protection of the Rights, Freedoms and Legitimate Interests of Women and Children".

At the same time, administrative liability is not simply a symbolic first stage. It enables a response to violence at an early stage, prevents its recurrence and further escalation, and, in cases provided by law, including repeated commission within one year after the imposition of an administrative penalty or the presence of qualifying elements, creates the prerequisites for a transition to a criminal-law response.

5.1. Administrative liability

Part one of Article 59² covers obstruction of the exercise of the right to property, education, health care or work, intentional damage to property or personal belongings, humiliation of honor and dignity, intimidation and isolation from close relatives, where the relevant acts are committed against a spouse, former spouse, a person living together on the basis of a common household, or a person who has a common child with the offender, subject to the conditions provided by law and in the absence of elements of a crime or another administrative offense.

A substantial advantage of this norm is that it goes beyond the traditional understanding of family violence as exclusively physical impact. Administrative-legal protection also extends to economic autonomy, dignity, psychological safety and a person's social ties.

This approach appears justified, since the listed forms of pressure and control often precede more dangerous manifestations of violence. Their independent legal assessment enables the state to intervene before serious consequences occur.

At the same time, the variety of covered acts and the use of evaluative concepts such as "humiliation", "intimidation" and "isolation" require careful establishment of the circumstances of each specific case, the direction of intent and the actual restriction of the victim's rights. This is necessary in order to distinguish family (domestic) violence from an ordinary interpersonal conflict.

Consequently, the practical effectiveness of part one of Article 59² depends not only on the establishment of liability, but also on the uniform interpretation of the norm, the quality of evidence recording and the ability of the competent authorities to identify non-physical forms of violence in a timely manner.

Part two of Article 59² provides for liability for battery or intentional infliction of minor bodily injury within the framework of the relevant relationships; the sanctions provided include a fine or administrative arrest.

The scientific and legal significance of this norm is determined not so much by the severity of the penalties provided, as by the definition of the circle of protected persons, the establishment of the threshold of health consequences and the distinction between the elements provided for in parts one and two of the article. Such differentiation allows the state to respond to various manifestations of family violence before more serious consequences occur.

5.2. Criminal liability

The criminal-law aspect of the reform was reflected in Article 126¹ of the Criminal Code. Unlike the two-part structure of the administrative norm, Article 126¹ consists of eight parts and provides for differentiated liability taking into account repetition, the nature of the physical harm caused and other qualifying circumstances.

It is fundamentally important not to reduce the content of the article to the simplified formula that "any repeated act automatically becomes a crime". Qualification depends on the specific part of the article, the fact of prior administrative liability, the nature of the relationship between the victim and the offender, the consequences that occurred, qualifying elements and other circumstances established by law.

Such differentiation is important not only for correct legal qualification, but also for compliance with the principles of legality and individualization of liability. At the same time, it

forms a consistent response model in which administrative-law intervention may perform a preventive function, while criminal liability is applied where there are grounds established by law.

6. Expanding the protection of children and developing judicial interpretation

The next significant stage was the adoption of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan of 21 October 2024 No. LRU-978 "On Amendments and an Addition to Certain Legislative Acts of the Republic of Uzbekistan in Connection with Strengthening Measures of Protection from Family (Domestic) Violence".

This Law strengthened the protection of children by including a child in the disposition of part two of Article 59^2 of the Code of Administrative Responsibility and in the corresponding parts of Article 126^1 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan. This made it possible to correct a previously existing gap, under which the protection of children had been largely concentrated in the criminal-law dimension.

At the same time, it is premature to consider the problem fully resolved. The direct reference to a child has not been uniformly incorporated into all dispositions covering non-physical forms of family (domestic) violence. Therefore, further improvement of legislation should be aimed at unifying the circle of protected persons so that the scope of a child's legal protection does not depend on the specific form of violence or the structural features of a particular norm.

A significant role in the development of law enforcement practice is played by Resolution of the Plenum of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. 6 of 27 June 2007 "On Judicial Practice in Cases Concerning the Infliction of Intentional Bodily Injury", as amended and supplemented as of 16 December 2024.

The Resolution forms a broader system of judicial interpretation. It recognizes physical and psychological family (domestic) violence; the latter includes humiliation, restriction of rights, obstruction of access to education, health care or work, isolation, destruction of property and threats dangerous to life or health.

Judicial interpretation is of substantial importance for ensuring uniformity of practice. At the same time, stable legislative definitions appear preferable for primary administrative decisions taken before materials are submitted to a court within the framework of an administrative offense or criminal case. The earlier state intervention occurs, the greater the importance of clear normative criteria enabling an officer to determine the existence of risk and choose the appropriate protection mechanism.

7. The protection order as an instrument of immediate protection

One of the key administrative-legal mechanisms for protecting persons affected by family violence is the protection order.

In accordance with the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. LRU-561 of 2 September 2019, an authorized official of the internal affairs bodies issues a protection order within twenty-four hours from the moment the fact of harassment, violence or the threat of their commission is established.

The initial validity period of the order is up to thirty days and is calculated from the day of its formalization. If the threat persists, upon the application of the affected woman, the district or city criminal court may extend the validity of the order for up to one year. Therefore, this is precisely a possibility of extension by the court, not an automatic issuance by an internal affairs body of an order valid for one year.

Failure to comply with the requirements of a protection order constitutes an administrative offense under Article 206^1 of the Code of Administrative Responsibility of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan of 1 February 2024 No. LRU-902 "On

Additions to Article 248 of the Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Administrative Responsibility" additionally established the power of inspectors for women's affairs to draw up materials concerning such violations.

Thus, the protection order performs a dual function. On the one hand, it is an immediate preventive measure that makes it possible to protect a person before the completion of criminal proceedings. On the other hand, violation of the requirements established by it acquires independent legal significance.

However, the effectiveness of an order cannot be assessed solely by the number of documents issued. No less important are the timeliness of its issuance, compliance with the established restrictions, the affected person's access to social and legal services, and the reduction of the risk of repeated violence.

8. Social services and inter-agency response

The next important administrative and social guarantee was Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PP-175 of 10 May 2024 "On Additional Measures to Improve the Provision of Social Services to Persons Affected by Harassment and Violence".

From 1 June 2024, the "Inson" social services centers provide social and legal services without requiring the prior issuance of a protection order. Thus, access to social protection was separated from the formal need first to obtain an administrative protective document.

The mechanism of calls to the "102" line is also of additional significance. Such calls are subject to registration, and an inter-agency response is initiated within twenty-four hours. Information is transmitted through the Unified National Social Protection Information System.

The Resolution also introduced the principle of service delivery along the "family – mahalla – district and region" model and established round-the-clock primary assistance rooms in hospitals.

Thus, state policy is gradually moving from a model in which the police are practically the only entry point into the protection system toward a more comprehensive support system that brings together law enforcement agencies, social services and medical care.

Measures aimed at identifying recurring risk are of particular significance. From 1 December 2024, the existence of two or more complaints concerning facts of harassment or violence within one calendar year entails the obligation of internal affairs bodies to issue a protection order on their own initiative. From 1 January 2025, a register is maintained of persons who have committed or are inclined to commit harassment and violence.

These mechanisms are aimed at shifting from a response to a single incident toward the identification of recurring risk. At the same time, their effectiveness is directly connected with the quality of information management. Uniform entry of data, the legality of access to them, procedures for correcting erroneous information, established periods for data retention and clear rules for using the relevant data in protective decision-making are necessary.

In other words, digitalization in itself is not a guarantee of effectiveness. It becomes an instrument of protection only where there are legal restrictions, procedural guarantees and a clear distribution of responsibility among state bodies.

9. Improving protection in divorce and housing relations

A significant continuation of the reforms was the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan of 9 April 2025 No. LRU-1053 "On Additions and Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Republic of Uzbekistan in Connection with the Improvement of the System for Supporting the Family and Women".

It established two private-law guarantees directly significant for affected persons.

First, the amendments to part four of Article 40 of the Family Code provide that, at the request of a person affected by family (domestic) violence, the court does not grant the spouses a period for reconciliation.

Second, part eight of Article 32 of the Housing Code allows the court to impose on the owner the obligation to provide the person subject to compulsory accommodation with another residential premises belonging to the owner and having equivalent conditions, or to pay rent for another residential premises, on the basis of an agreement between the parties and on the owner's initiative.

The practical significance of these amendments lies in the refusal to formally preserve family relations in a situation where granting a period for reconciliation may delay the termination of unsafe relations. The housing guarantee is no less significant, since the absence of a safe place to live may in fact prevent an affected person from leaving a situation of violence.

At the same time, the effectiveness of these mechanisms will depend on the uniformity of judicial practice. In particular, it is necessary to ensure a clearer definition of the criteria for the equivalence of the premises provided and the procedure for determining the amount of rent.

The clarifications of the Supreme Court adopted in 2025 link the non-application of the period for reconciliation to violence by the spouse and instruct courts to verify whether new facts of violence occurred after subsequent cohabitation. This direction of law enforcement practice is important for preventing formal reconciliation that does not eliminate the existing risk.

10. The current stage of reforms: 2025–2026

The cycle of reforms in 2025–2026 supplemented the system with special measures concerning children and digital tools.

By Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. UP-256 of 24 December 2025, the Strategy for Protecting Children from All Forms of Violence for 2026–2030 was approved. The key areas included the creation of a service for professional foster families, compact social support centers and a Center for the Support and Social Integration of Children, as well as the introduction of the "Mehrli oila" service to assist parents.

At the same time, the creation of a Unified Electronic Platform integrated with the information systems of state bodies and the "112" service is envisaged. Its tasks are inter-agency data exchange, the maintenance of unified statistics and control over each stage of the adoption of protective measures.

Thus, the document establishes a transition from predominantly fragmented response to a comprehensive system of early identification, support and social rehabilitation of children.

The next stage was Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. UP-33 of 3 March 2026 "On Additional Organizational and Legal Measures to Strengthen the Protection of the Rights of Women and Children and to Prevent Cases of Harassment and Violence against Them".

In particular, from 1 April 2026, the Decree provides for the installation, with the consent of a woman who has received a protection order, of the SOS application "my.ihma.uz" on her device. At the same time, the document provides for the further development of specialized training and instructs that proposals be developed concerning stalking, cyberviolence and related phenomena.

In assessing these provisions, it is necessary to distinguish between existing legal mechanisms and prospective areas of legislative work. The very fact of an instruction to develop proposals on liability for stalking or cyberviolence does not yet mean that the corresponding elements of offenses have already been included in current legislation.

This distinction is of fundamental importance for scientific analysis, since it makes it possible to avoid mixing existing law with planned reforms.

The analysis conducted shows that, between 2019 and 2026, a multi-level normative and institutional system for countering family violence was formed in Uzbekistan.

Its development may be conditionally divided into several stages.

The first stage, 2019, involved the creation of a special preventive mechanism through Law No. LRU-561, including definitions of various forms of violence, individual preventive measures, a protection order and special assistance centers.

The second stage, 2023, involved the formation of an independent administrative-criminal model of liability through Articles 59^2 of the Code of Administrative Responsibility and 126^1 of the Criminal Code, which marked the final transition from perceiving family violence predominantly as a private conflict to treating it as an independent object of public-law response.

The third stage, 2024, involved the expansion of child protection, the development of judicial interpretation, the strengthening of the mechanism for enforcing protection orders and the formation of an inter-agency system of social services.

The fourth stage, 2025–2026, involved the transition to a more comprehensive system including protection upon divorce, housing guarantees, the child protection strategy, digital integration, SOS tools and the development of specialized competencies.

Taken together, these changes demonstrate a significant expansion of the role of the state in preventing and suppressing family violence. At the same time, the existence of multi-level regulation does not automatically mean its systemic coherence or practical effectiveness.

At this stage, at least several issues requiring further research can be identified: consistency in the circle of protected persons, the sufficiency of legal mechanisms against non-physical and controlling behavior, the relationship between administrative and criminal liability, the connection between the protection order and social services, the limits of applying reconciliation, and the quality of inter-agency data exchange and risk assessment.

Accordingly, the first part of the study allows one to conclude that a normative basis has been formed, but it does not provide grounds for limiting the analysis to the number of adopted norms. It is necessary to assess the extent to which the system created is capable of ensuring the real safety of affected persons, preventing repeated violence and ensuring continuity of legal and social protection. The second part of the study is devoted precisely to this issue.

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