



THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE OMBUDSMAN INSTITUTION IN PROTECTING HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS IN UZBEKISTAN

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ABSTRACT	KEYWORDS
<p>This article provides a scientific analysis of the constitutional and legal foundations for ensuring human rights and freedoms in Uzbekistan, as well as the role and significance of national human rights institutions. In particular, it highlights the history of the establishment, legal status, powers, and main areas of activity of the institution of the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The paper also examines the practical results of the Ombudsman’s activities, mechanisms for restoring violated citizen rights, and the system for processing appeals. The article substantiates that ensuring the primacy of human rights is a key indicator of a democratic state and discusses issues of improving the activities of national institutions and aligning them with international standards. The research results have both theoretical and practical significance in developing effective mechanisms for the protection of human rights.</p>	<p>Human rights, democratic state, constitutional guarantees, national institutions, Ombudsman, parliamentary oversight, appeal system, international legal norms, human rights protection mechanisms.</p>

Introduction

Human rights and freedoms are among the most pressing issues of our time, and guaranteeing these rights is one of the essential attributes of a democratic rule-of-law state. It also serves as a criterion reflecting the extent of a country’s development. In recent years, particular attention has been paid in our country to fully ensuring human rights, especially to the protection of violated rights through various mechanisms. A number of normative foundations have been established in the Constitution of Uzbekistan and the subordinate laws and regulations to guarantee the rights and freedoms of individuals and citizens. In particular, the strategic decrees initiated by our President provide direct evidence of this commitment.

The second direction — from the thirteenth to the twentieth goals — of the 2022-2026 Strategy for the Development of New Uzbekistan specifically outlines the priority of human rights, with targeted tasks being implemented step by step today.

Alongside state law enforcement agencies, the activities of national institutions that protect human rights are being developed with special legal foundations, providing them with all the necessary conditions to operate independently and free from pressure. To support this point, it is relevant to refer

to the activities of the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Oliy Majlis, the National Center for Human Rights, and the Monitoring Institute for Effective Legislation of the Oliy Majlis. The main task of these institutions is to assist citizens of our country in protecting and exercising their rights and freedoms.

Attention was first paid to the issue of national human rights institutions in 1946 at the second session of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). At this session, the Human Rights Commission recommended that member states establish national committees on human rights, and subsequently, national institutions began to be created in various countries to ensure the rights of the individual and the citizen. After gaining independence, Uzbekistan became one of the first CIS countries to establish a national human rights institution: in 1995, the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) under the Oliy Majlis (Parliament) of the Republic of Uzbekistan was formed. To provide a legal basis for its activity, on April 24, 1996, the Law "On the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan" was adopted.

The word "ombudsman" nowadays means "protector of human rights" in both developed and developing countries. This term is of Swedish origin and literally means "representative of someone." The first ombudsman served at the court of the Swedish king, but after the formation of parliament, the institution moved to the parliamentary setting in 1809. According to historical sources, the Swedish king is believed to have adopted this practice from the muhtasibs who operated in Islamic states. Muhtasibs performed supervisory functions based on Islamic law (Sharia) and religion. In the 12th century, when the Swedish kingdom was under attack, the king had to flee to present-day Turkey. There, in exile under the protection of the Turkish sultan, he observed people responsible for protecting citizens' rights and monitoring public order. On his return to Sweden, he introduced this system in his country as the Ombudsman institution, which later became widespread across Europe. The Spanish envoy Clavijo, in his diary describing his visit to Amir Temur, notes that the term "ombudsman" was used for those individuals who provided information about the shortcomings of leaders who failed to fulfill Timur's orders on time. Additionally, Clavijo observed that leaders who did not process citizen appeals were personally punished by Amir Temur in public, demonstrating that in his governance, violations of human rights were met with strict measures. In 2004, a new edition of the Law "On the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan" was adopted. This law defined the rights, duties, main directions and guarantees of the Ombudsman's activity.

According to the law, the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Oliy Majlis is an official empowered to ensure parliamentary oversight of the observance of human rights and freedoms legislation by state agencies, enterprises, institutions, organizations, and their officials. The law states that the institution of the Ombudsman supplements the existing forms and means of protecting human rights and freedoms in Uzbekistan. The Ombudsman also contributes to improving national human rights legislation and its harmonization with international standards, developing international cooperation, and raising citizens' legal awareness in the field of human rights. In addition, in 2021, with the aim of improving the legal foundation for the activities of the Authorized Person of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Human Rights (Ombudsman), as well as expanding powers in the field of ensuring respect for human rights and freedoms, the Presidential Decree PF-6312 "On Measures to Improve the Activities of the Authorized Person of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Human Rights (Ombudsman)" was adopted. This decree outlines the priority tasks for

the Ombudsman to ensure reliable protection of human rights and freedoms. Over the past years, along with law enforcement agencies, the Ombudsman, as a national institution, has been effectively protecting the rights and freedoms of individuals and citizens, as well as restoring and ensuring the legal interests of people.

According to the law, the Authorized Person of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Human Rights (Ombudsman), as a national human rights institution, supplements the existing forms and means of protection of human rights and freedoms. The Ombudsman works towards improving Uzbekistan's human rights legislation and bringing it into line with international legal norms, developing international cooperation in the field of human rights and freedoms, and raising public legal awareness regarding human rights.

The Ombudsman carries out activities independently, without interference from organizations or officials, and acts only in accordance with the law.

It is encouraging to note that information among citizens of Uzbekistan regarding the Ombudsman's activities as a national institution is increasing day by day. People are increasingly aware that their rights and legal interests can be reliably protected not only by law enforcement bodies but also through national institutions like the Ombudsman. The fact that citizens are applying to the Ombudsman for the protection, restoration, and safeguarding of their rights in various legal matters further confirms this.

In 2025, the Ombudsman received a total of 26,372 appeals from citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan, foreign nationals and ombudsmen, stateless persons, public organizations, and other legal entities. This figure increased by 12.6% compared to 2024. Thanks to the Ombudsman's assistance, over 10.6 billion soums were recovered in favor of citizens. Of this amount, 2.3 billion soums related to wages and labor relations payments, and more than 3.9 billion soums constituted compensation paid to citizens for damaged housing. Members of the Ombudsman and public groups under the Ombudsman carried out 954 monitoring visits to prevent cases of torture. During these monitoring visits, 5,487 individual interviews with prisoners and detainees and more than 11,000 group meetings with various individuals were conducted.

In the activities of the Ombudsman institution, special attention is paid to monitoring the conditions created for prisoners in penal institutions, ensuring the protection of their labor rights, safeguarding their health, and guaranteeing their unhindered access to all rights provided by law. According to the current legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the existence of effective legal measures that the Ombudsman can apply in the event of detected violations of rights ensures that the Ombudsman's activities are more effective and result-oriented. To make it easier for citizens to apply to the Ombudsman institution, the mobile application "Ombudsman.uz" has been developed. The advantages of this app include providing citizens with online consultations, tracking the status of their appeals online, getting acquainted with response letters from relevant organizations regarding the progress of their appeals, and accessing statistical information. The app operates in Uzbek, Russian, and English languages.

The tasks of the mobile application are as follows:

- Sending quick and brief appeals;
- Monitoring the status and results of appeals;
- Reviewing statistical data of submitted appeals;
- Informing users about news related to the activities of the Ombudsman;

- Assisting in obtaining online consultations;
- Getting information about the Ombudsman, its regional representatives, and the central office;
- Providing information on reception days.

It should be noted that citizens can submit their appeals at any time and from any distance, in 24/7 mode.

As emphasized in Article 13 of our Constitution, democracy in the Republic of Uzbekistan is based on universal principles, according to which a person, his life, freedom, honor, dignity, and other inalienable rights are considered the highest values. From the essence of this legal norm, it follows that the main goal of all reforms carried out in our country is to satisfy people, to create all conditions for them to live a peaceful, safe, protected, and prosperous life. The main function of the state is to serve the interests of the individual.

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