

Legal Guarantees for the Protection of Women's Rights in the Republic Of Uzbekistan: International and National Experience

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Received: 18 June 2026; **Accepted:** 13 July 2026; **Published:** 07 August 2026

Abstract: The protection of women's rights has become a key indicator of democratic development, social justice, and the rule of law. In recent years, the Republic of Uzbekistan has implemented comprehensive legal and institutional reforms aimed at strengthening gender equality and protecting women from discrimination, harassment, and violence. These reforms have been guided by the country's constitutional principles and its obligations under international human rights treaties, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). This paper examines the legal guarantees for the protection of women's rights in Uzbekistan through an analysis of both international standards and national legislation. It explores the constitutional framework, key laws, institutional mechanisms, and judicial protections that safeguard women's rights in political, economic, social, and family life. The study also compares Uzbekistan's legal framework with international best practices and identifies existing challenges in implementation. Although substantial progress has been achieved through legislative reforms, practical issues such as effective law enforcement, public awareness, and access to justice remain important areas for further improvement. The paper concludes that Uzbekistan has established a solid legal foundation for the protection of women's rights, while continued institutional development and compliance with international standards are essential for ensuring the full realization of gender equality.

Keywords: Women's rights, gender equality, Uzbekistan, legal guarantees, Constitution, CEDAW, human rights, domestic violence, international law, national legislation.

Introduction: The protection of women's rights represents one of the fundamental principles of modern international human rights law and democratic governance. Gender equality is recognized not only as a basic human right but also as an essential condition for sustainable economic development, social stability, and the realization of justice. Across the world, states have undertaken legal and institutional reforms to eliminate discrimination against women and ensure equal participation in political, economic, social, and cultural life. International organizations, particularly the United Nations, have played a significant role in developing universal legal standards that protect women from discrimination, violence, and unequal treatment. As a member of the international community, the Republic

of Uzbekistan has committed itself to implementing internationally recognized human rights standards. Since gaining independence in 1991, Uzbekistan has gradually reformed its legal system to strengthen constitutional guarantees of equality and improve the protection of women's rights. In recent years, particularly following constitutional and legislative reforms, significant attention has been devoted to preventing gender-based violence, promoting equal opportunities, and ensuring women's participation in public administration, education, employment, and entrepreneurship.

The adoption of the Law "On Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men" and the Law "On Protection of Women from Harassment and Violence" marked important milestones in

aligning national legislation with international obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Furthermore, the revised Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan reinforces the principle of equality before the law and obliges the state to guarantee equal rights and opportunities regardless of gender. This paper examines the legal guarantees for the protection of women's rights in Uzbekistan by analyzing international legal standards, constitutional provisions, national legislation, institutional mechanisms, and current challenges. It also evaluates how Uzbekistan's experience reflects international best practices and identifies areas requiring further legal and institutional development.

International Legal Framework for the Protection of Women's Rights

International law provides the foundation for protecting women's rights throughout the world. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) established the principle that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights without discrimination based on sex. This principle was further developed in legally binding treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The most significant international instrument dedicated specifically to women's rights is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979. Often described as the international bill of rights for women, CEDAW requires states to eliminate discrimination in political participation, education, employment, healthcare, family relations, and public life. Uzbekistan acceded to CEDAW in 1995 and regularly submits national reports to the CEDAW Committee regarding its implementation.[1] In addition to United Nations treaties, the International Labour Organization has adopted conventions promoting equal remuneration, maternity protection, and non-discrimination in employment, all of which contribute to protecting women's labour rights.

The Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan establishes equality as one of the basic constitutional principles. The updated Constitution adopted in 2023 explicitly guarantees equal rights and opportunities for women and men and prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex.[2] The Constitution recognizes human rights as the highest value and obliges the state to protect individual dignity, freedom, and equality before the law. Citizens are guaranteed equal access to education, healthcare, employment, and participation in state administration.

Constitutional guarantees also provide the legal basis for challenging discriminatory practices before national courts and ensure that state institutions develop gender-sensitive policies.

National Legislative Framework

Uzbekistan has significantly strengthened its legal framework through specialized legislation. Law "On Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men" Adopted in 2019, this law establishes the legal concept of gender equality and prohibits both direct and indirect discrimination. It requires state authorities to integrate gender equality into policymaking and provides legal mechanisms for monitoring compliance.

The law guarantees equal opportunities in:

- education;
- employment;
- political participation;
- entrepreneurship;
- public administration;
- access to justice.

This law introduced an entirely new legal approach toward combating domestic violence. It defines various forms of violence, including physical, psychological, sexual, and economic violence. One of its most important innovations is the introduction of protection orders issued to victims. These measures allow law enforcement agencies to provide immediate legal protection while criminal or administrative proceedings continue. The law also promotes cooperation among police authorities, healthcare providers, educational institutions, and social protection services.[3] The Labour Code prohibits gender discrimination in recruitment, remuneration, promotion, and working conditions. Female employees enjoy maternity leave, childcare protections, and occupational safety guarantees. The Family Code ensures equality between spouses in marriage, property ownership, parental rights, and family responsibilities.

Many international legal principles have been incorporated into Uzbekistan's national legislation. For example, CEDAW requires equal participation of women in political life. Uzbekistan has increased women's representation in Parliament and local representative bodies through electoral reforms and policies encouraging women's leadership. International standards also emphasize protection against domestic violence. Uzbekistan has responded by criminalizing domestic violence, strengthening victim protection measures, and expanding

rehabilitation services. Educational policies increasingly promote equal access for girls and women to higher education, scientific research, and vocational training.[5] Economic reforms encourage women's entrepreneurship through preferential loans, vocational education, and state-supported business development programs.

Despite significant progress, several challenges remain. Implementation of legislation differs across regions, particularly in rural communities where traditional social norms may limit women's opportunities. Victims of domestic violence may hesitate to seek legal assistance due to fear of social stigma or economic dependence. Legal awareness among citizens remains uneven, reducing the effectiveness of available legal remedies. Improved judicial training, increased legal aid, expanded public education campaigns, and stronger monitoring mechanisms are essential for ensuring that legal guarantees produce practical results. Digital technologies also present new challenges, including online harassment and cyber violence targeting women. Future legislation should continue adapting to these emerging forms of discrimination. Overall, Uzbekistan has demonstrated considerable political commitment to strengthening women's rights, but continuous legal reform and institutional development remain necessary to ensure full compliance with international human rights standards.

The protection of women's rights has become one of the defining priorities of legal reform in the Republic of Uzbekistan. Guided by constitutional principles and international human rights obligations, the country has established a comprehensive legal framework designed to guarantee equality, eliminate discrimination, and protect women from violence and abuse. The adoption of specialized legislation, together with constitutional reforms and institutional strengthening, demonstrates Uzbekistan's commitment to creating a society based on justice, equality, and respect for human dignity. International legal instruments, particularly the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), have significantly influenced the development of national legislation. Many of the convention's principles have been incorporated into domestic law, including equal opportunities in employment, education, political participation, healthcare, and family relations. This alignment reflects Uzbekistan's intention to fulfill its international obligations while adapting global standards to national legal and social conditions. The introduction of laws guaranteeing equal rights for women and men, protecting women from harassment

and violence, and strengthening constitutional safeguards has substantially improved legal protection. Institutional reforms, including the establishment of specialized governmental bodies, crisis centers, and expanded judicial protections, have created additional mechanisms for implementing these legal guarantees.

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of legal protection depends not only on the adoption of legislation but also on its practical implementation. Continued efforts are needed to strengthen law enforcement, improve judicial practice, enhance legal awareness among citizens, expand access to legal aid, and ensure effective protection for victims of discrimination and violence. Public education and cooperation between government institutions, civil society organizations, and international partners remain essential for changing social attitudes and promoting genuine gender equality. Future reforms should also address emerging challenges such as cyber harassment, workplace discrimination in the digital economy, and equal participation of women in science, technology, innovation, and decision-making processes. Continuous monitoring of legislation and regular evaluation of policy outcomes will help ensure that legal guarantees remain effective and responsive to social change. In conclusion, Uzbekistan has made substantial progress in developing a modern legal system that protects women's rights in accordance with international standards. Although practical challenges remain, the country's ongoing constitutional, legislative, and institutional reforms provide a strong foundation for achieving substantive gender equality and ensuring that every woman can fully enjoy her rights and freedoms under the law.

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