

## REFORMS IN THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM IN THE CONDITIONS OF NEW UZBEKISTAN

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### Annotation:

This article explores the comprehensive reforms undertaken in the judicial system within the framework of "New Uzbekistan." The focus is on recent transformations aimed at increasing the efficiency, transparency, and fairness of the judiciary. The reforms emphasize enhancing judicial independence, improving legal protection for citizens, modernizing court procedures, and creating specialized courts to address economic, administrative, and criminal cases more effectively. The analysis also highlights the measures taken to ensure the rule of law, protect human rights, and increase public confidence in the justice system. Key achievements and challenges encountered during the reform process are discussed, illustrating the evolving landscape of the judicial system in Uzbekistan.

**Keywords:** New Uzbekistan, judicial system, reforms, transparency, judicial independence, court procedures, specialized courts, rule of law, human rights, public confidence.

On December 7, 2020, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan issued a decree titled "On Measures to Ensure Genuine Independence of Judges and Enhance the Effectiveness of Anti-Corruption Efforts within the Judiciary." The decree emphasized the introduction of the "Exemplary Judge" award as a form of incentive for judges implementing fair justice, as well as the "Honorary Judge" medal for retired judges who have served effectively for many years in the judiciary.

For the first time in the history of the judicial system, on February 4, 2022, the decision of the Supreme Judicial Council recognized 16 judges as deserving of the award. These judges not only demonstrated high performance in achieving justice but also set an example for their colleagues with profound knowledge and moral qualities. It is notable that the recipients of the award included judges from the Supreme Court to district courts, demonstrating the transparency and impartiality of the selection process.

In Uzbekistan, a new training principle has been introduced for candidates for judicial positions, emphasizing "30 percent theory – 70 percent practice." This training program is divided into four stages. The first stage is the initial theoretical training phase, which lasts two months. During this phase, candidates for judicial positions enhance their theoretical knowledge based on a specialized curriculum. They study subjects such as judicial psychology, judicial-legal reforms, and courses on shaping the moral image of a judge, followed by practical training and internships.

The second stage involves practical internships lasting nine months. Separate internship programs have been developed for candidates of different specialties. Additionally, a 140-day period is allocated for practical experience at the first-instance courts, where candidates become familiar with the work of district courts. Moreover, candidates learn to use the "E-XSUD" unified centralized information system, work with modern information and communication technologies, participate in court hearings, draft court documents, and process applications and complaints.

Furthermore, candidates for judicial positions are sent to regional courts for a 40-day internship at the appellate level. Here, they are required to prepare drafts of judicial documents, conduct court sessions, participate in traveling courts, and acquire skills in complaint review.

The third stage is the final theoretical training phase, lasting one month. During this phase, candidates for judicial positions are expected to adopt an individualized approach to each topic, address problematic issues encountered in judicial practice, analyze the decisions of the Plenum and the Presidium of the Supreme Court, explain the essence of recent legislative developments, and improve their professional skills and abilities.

The fourth stage involves the development of professional skills for newly appointed judges. This phase lasts for three months and focuses on combating corruption within the judicial system, preventing conflicts of interest, and developing skills in case analysis. It also includes training in psychology, ethics, oratory, diplomacy, and administration. Additionally, community commissions were established to evaluate the personal and professional qualities of candidates for judicial positions in local areas.

On March 12, 2022, the latest issue of the \*New Uzbekistan\* newspaper published a major article by renowned legal scholar Akmal Saidov titled "Fair and Independent Judiciary as the Foundation of New Uzbekistan." In this article, the scholar presented valuable insights into the current problems of the judicial system and their possible solutions.

Several unresolved issues remain in the functioning of the courts and judges, with proposals developed to address them. The first issue concerns judicial self-governance. First, proposals were made to draft a law "On the Community of Judges," which should establish the procedures and forms for judges' self-governance. This law aims to introduce norms regarding the congress, conference, council, general assembly, and qualification board of judges.

Secondly, efforts were made to introduce a completely new procedure for forming the composition of the Supreme Judicial Council, turning it into a true organ of the community of judges. Most importantly, a new system for appointing and electing council members by the President of Uzbekistan, the Senate of the Oliy Majlis, and the Congress of Judges was proposed.

Thirdly, it was suggested to introduce a practice where the head and deputies of a multi-member district (inter-district, city) court are elected by the judges of the same court. This new approach aims to ensure judicial independence and prevent undue pressure on judges.

However, the appointment of heads of single-member and two-member courts by the Supreme Judicial Council would be maintained. These reforms have contributed to an improved position for Uzbekistan in international rankings.

There is a lack of specialized media representatives in the judicial-legal field in Uzbekistan. Therefore, establishing a special department of legal journalism at the University of Journalism and Mass Communications of Uzbekistan is deemed essential.

"Once such a department is established, media representatives will have the opportunity to effectively convey information about judicial-legal reforms to the public. Additionally, it will pave the way for enhancing journalists' skills in this field."

Given the demands of the time, there is a need to expand the scope of interactive services for citizens and entrepreneurs, simplify the procedures for electronic court appeals and electronic submission of judicial documents, limit human involvement by up to 70% through data digitization, unify judicial information systems into a single platform, ensure data exchange via integrated platforms, enable the automated formation of judicial documents, and implement an electronic archive.

The 2022–2026 Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan is a continuation of the Action Strategy. It is designed based on today's global changes, the living standards of the population, the demands of life, and our values, setting goals and tasks in seven priority areas. While the Development Strategy encompasses 100 priority goals, the sections related to judicial reforms are directly specified under the second priority area.

In conclusion, the new stage of Uzbekistan's development has witnessed extensive efforts to further reform the judicial system, which plays a crucial role in the implementation of fair justice.

A distinctive system for appointing judges to their positions has been introduced, enhancing the independence and transparency of the judiciary.

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