

Penal Reform International's work in Uzbekistan in 2019 – highlights and successes

The Republic of Uzbekistan is implementing comprehensive measures to improve the system of execution of sentences, ensure the protection of detainees' rights, freedoms and legitimate interests, and increase the effectiveness of educational work in order to prevent recidivism.

Yet, there is a need to introduce transparent and effective legal mechanisms for observing the rights of detainees, ensuring respect for their dignity, correcting them and providing labor activities for further social adaptation in society. In order to radically improve the criminal executive legislation, taking into account human rights standards and international best practice, as well as in accordance with the Strategy of Action for the five priority areas of development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017 – 2021¹, the President signed a Resolution² on measures for the radical improvement of the criminal executive legislation.

Taking into account the stated course of the country for humanization, Penal Reform International supported the initiatives of the Government.

In the framework of the project “Supporting key prison reforms in Central Asian Republics (CARs) to increase the resilience of vulnerable persons in detention and after their release” implemented by Penal Reform International in Central Asia with the support of the UK Government, the following key activities were carried out in 2019 in the Republic of Uzbekistan:

- On 24-25 April, Penal Reform International held expert consultations on the roll out of the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) in Uzbekistan. The event was planned after adoption on 14 March of the amendments to the Law on the Ombudsman, vesting him with a new authority to conduct preventive visits to places of deprivation of liberty. Two days in-house consultations with the Ombudsman's office leadership allowed sharing best practices of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and their NPMs, providing copies of monitoring tools of two NPMs and developing a roadmap with all necessary steps to launch the NPM. The Parliament is currently reviewing the provisions on NPM and expert monitoring groups and is expected to approve them soon. Following approval, special monitoring visit groups will be organised with the Ombudsman office.
- The Uzbekistan Prison Service (GUIN) is currently working on the amendments to the Criminal Executive Code (prison code) defined by the Strategy of Action in five priority

¹ available in Russian language at: <https://www.lex.uz/ru/docs/3107042>

² dated from November 7, 2018 No. PP-4006, available in Russian language at:

<https://lex.uz/docs/4045448?query=%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%BC%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%B2>

areas of the development of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017–2021. Best practices of countries around the world were shared with GUIN representatives. The Strategy of Action includes the development of a new probation service in the country which started operating from January 1, 2019. PRI conducted expert consultations with representatives of the probation service to share best international practice.



- On May 20 2019, together with the office of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Uzbekistan in Tashkent, a round table was held on the topic: “Effective approaches to the implementation of measures to prevent torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”. The round table was attended by 38 participants. The participants were representatives from the Parliament, the General Prosecutor’s Office, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ombudsman office, the Prison Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Public Education.



- Additionally, from April to December 2019, 329 Ombudsman and law enforcement staff members were trained on human rights-based approaches in the regions of Uzbekistan, in cooperation with the OSCE and OHCHR. The covered regions were Samarkand, Dzhizak, Gulistan, Tashkent, Navoi, Namangan, Fergana, Andizhan, and Bukhara. These capacity building forums were organized for the staff of the Ombudsman’s office and its regional representatives, the General Prosecutor’s Office, the Prison Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Public Education. Educational activities aimed at studying international standards for monitoring closed institutions where adults and children are deprived of their liberty in Uzbekistan and prevention of torture and other forms of ill-treatment and punishment, taking into account new changes in the legislation.



- A toolkit on Investigation of Death in Custody and Investigation of Complaints from detention facilities was prepared by international expert, ex-Ombudsman of the Republic of Ireland, Ms. Pauline McCabe and handed over to colleagues from the Ombudsman's office. It allowed Ombudsman office staff to learn international practice on investigation of complaints and death in custody, this document was developed upon request of Uzbek representatives.
- Representatives of the Ombudsman's office took part in the regional summer school "Features of conducting rehabilitation programmes in closed facilities and the role of prison staff in the re-socialization of prisoners", which took place from August 19 to 23 in the Issyk-Kul region, Kyrgyzstan. The participants included the representatives of the prison services of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. This event allowed participants to exchange experiences and gain new knowledge in conducting rehabilitation programmes in prisons.



- From August 26 to 29, 2019, four regional trainings on probation service development were held in Uzbekistan. The main concept of the probation institution, types of probation and its purpose, issues of law enforcement practice (experience of foreign countries) were discussed during the regional trainings around the country. Participants emphasized that such useful and comprehensive trainings should be conducted in the future too. In total 93 probation officers from Uzbekistan were trained on the use of international standards on probation development in Samarkand, Dzhizak, Gulistan and Tashkent regions.



- Representatives of the Probation Service of the Main Directorate for the Execution of Sentences of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Supreme Court and the Office of the Ombudsman took part in the regional event “II Central Asian Dialogue: reducing the prison population and developing the probation service”, which was held from October 28 to October 31 in Almaty, Kazakhstan. The event was attended by representatives of the prison systems of 4 countries of Central Asia - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Participants exchanged their practices on the work of probation services in their countries and received recommendations on the development of probation services from international experts from the UK, Georgia and Poland. Participants also listed recommendations of their own for the promotion of alternatives to imprisonment in Central Asia.



- Representatives of the Main Directorate for the Execution of Sentences of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the General Prosecutor’s Office and the Ombudsman Office took part to a study visit to the UK to study international experience in managing prisons, as well as

developing probation services. The visit included a study of the probation service work in the UK, as well as practical visits to probation services and prisons which allowed delegates to see the practical side of the UK penal system.

