



ISSUES OF IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF MINOR VICTIMS IN UZBEKISTAN

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Article history:	Abstract:
<p>Received: 6th June 2025 Accepted: 4th July 2025</p>	<p>Juvenile victims require comprehensive legal protection frameworks to safeguard their rights and ensure their well-being in society. Despite existing regulatory mechanisms, gaps in legal protection continue to affect the effectiveness of safeguarding minors' rights within the criminal justice system. The article discusses the rights of juvenile victims, the regulatory legal acts concerning their legal protection, and the significance of the amendments made for the comprehensive improvement of minors' lives in our society. It also covers statistics on juvenile victims and emphasizes the inevitability of punishment for any violence against minors.</p> <p>The study employed retrospective and comparative methods to analyze the effectiveness of protecting the rights of minor victims. The research determined that consolidating the status of minor victims in a separate article within the Criminal Procedure Code is necessary for enhanced protection. Statistical data on juvenile victims demonstrated the urgency of legislative improvements, while the study of recent amendments showed their positive impact on comprehensive protection mechanisms. These regulatory improvements represent critical steps toward establishing a more effective system for protecting juvenile victims in society.</p>

Keywords: Law, rights, minors, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Law on the Children's Ombudsman, Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan «On Guarantees of the Rights of the Child», Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan «On the Protection of Children from All Forms of Violence».

INTRODUCTION. Since ancient times, our people have loved children, saved everything they earned for their children, and cared for their future. During World War II, our people cared not only for their own children, but also for evacuated orphaned children. Unfortunately, in the era of globalization and the rise of information networks, we are witnessing an increase in the number of underage children who have suffered from various forms of violence.

At the first meeting of the chambers of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan after the parliamentary elections, one of the issues that the head of our country paid special attention to was the protection of the younger generation. President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev emphasized that there are still cases of pressure and violence against children in society, and he clearly stated the need for an uncompromising fight against such phenomena that contradict national values. The head of state's personal attention to this issue is a clear indication of the priority given to protecting children's rights in Uzbekistan's state policy [1].

METHODS. In Uzbekistan, the rights of minors are always considered relevant and to a certain extent

theoretically and practically studied [2]. In studying the issue of improving the effectiveness of protection of the rights of juvenile victims, attempts have been made to use retrospective, comparative methods.

On February 29, 2024, the President of Uzbekistan signed the law "On the Commissioner of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Children's Rights (Children's Ombudsman)", which came into force on March 2, 2024, after its publication in the newspaper "Narodnoe slovo". The Act defines the basic principles of the activities of the children's ombudsman, such as legality, independence, fairness, humanity, inadmissibility of discrimination, objectivity, openness and the priority of children's rights.

Plans to adopt a law on the children's ombudsman were reported back in 2018. In April 2019, President Sh. M. Mirziyoyev signed a decree introducing the institution of a children's ombudsman in the country [3].

The main act on children's rights at the international level is the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention was adopted in New York on November 20, 1989. It includes 54 articles that detail the individual rights of children.



The Convention for the first time considers the child as an individual with rights that states that have ratified the Convention are obliged to “respect and guarantee”. This provision demonstrates that the child is a particularly vulnerable member of society and therefore requires and deserves special protection.

The Convention views the child as an independent person. The Convention characterizes the child as a person endowed with specific rights: the right to life (art. 6), to have a family (art. 9), to a name and citizenship (art. 7), to education (art. 28), to protection from violence (art. 19), to equality, to freedom of thought and speech (art. 13), to rest and leisure (art. 31), to medical care and health care (art. 24), to State assistance (arts. 18-27) [4] and others.

Uzbekistan acceded to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992 and ratified it in June 1994 [5]. And since then it has been consistently implementing measures to create a favorable and safe environment for every child. More than 40 laws and by-laws on the protection of children's rights have been adopted in our country.

Children's rights – a category of human rights in relation to children, the rights and freedoms that every child should have regardless of race, sex, language, religion, place of birth, national or social origin, property or birth status. Every person under 18 years of age is recognized as a child under international law.

The Rights of the Child (Safeguards) Act No. 139 of January 7, 2008, reflects the basic provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. For example, article 13. Guarantees of the right of the child to a family environment; Article 14. Guarantees of the right of the child to protection from unlawful displacement; Article 15. Guarantees of the right of the child to express his/her own opinion; Article 22. Guarantees of the right of the child to health care; Article 23. Guarantees of the right of the child to education, etc. [6].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION. Children may encounter the justice system for a variety of reasons – as witnesses, victims or defendants. Most children, faced with the realities of the judicial process, find such experiences uncomfortable or even frightening. In accordance with the Act of December 7, 2021 on amendments and additions to certain legislative acts in connection with the further improvement of the system for safeguarding the rights of the child, it is stipulated that a psychologist together with a teacher will be present during the questioning of a minor witness or victim.

The first child-friendly investigative room was opened in early 2018 at the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Uzbekistan to strengthen the protection of juvenile victims and witnesses of crime.

This room provides a safe and non-intimidating environment for minors, taking into account their age, maturity and psychological state. The room was established with the support of UNICEF based on international best practices.

“Trauma resulting from crime can have the most serious consequences for minors, having a significant impact on the process of growing up and development,” emphasized Sascha Graumann, Head of UNICEF Uzbekistan. – It is very important that at the pre-trial and trial stages, protection measures for juvenile victims and witnesses are provided to facilitate their passage through the justice system and facilitate their early return to their normal life» [7].

The mechanism of providing qualified legal assistance to a juvenile victim of a crime needs qualitative improvement. “Awareness of representatives of the legal community and the public about the international aspects of protecting children's rights is still insufficient. Often, specialists who do not have sufficient experience and knowledge in this area cannot effectively protect the rights and interests of minors. Therefore, it is important to improve the level of professional training of legal personnel in this area and increase the capacity of specialists who directly interact with children”, correctly notes Esemurat Kanyazov [8], Director of the Center for Advanced Training of Lawyers.

While in 2021 there were 1,831 known offenses against children, in 2022 that number increased by 20% to 2,194. The number of crimes against sexual freedom of a child increased from 334 to 395 (+18%) during this period. The majority of such crimes were registered in Fergana (719), Samarkand, Tashkent regions and Tashkent [9].

The number of persons found guilty of sexual intercourse with a child under 16 years of age was 99 in 2019, 153 in 2020, 216 in 2021, and 238 in 2022. The number of sex offenders who committed a violent sexual offense with a child under 14 years of age was 52 in 2019, 35 in 2020, 57 in 2021, and 73 in 2022.

On April 11, 2023, the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No.829, «On Amendments and Additions to Certain Legislative Acts of the Republic of Uzbekistan in Connection with Further Improvement of the System of Reliable Protection of the Rights, Freedoms and Legitimate Interests of Women and Children» was adopted [10]. According to the law, crimes against the sexual freedom of children are equated with crimes against the peace and security of mankind, and it is established that humanitarian acts in the form of parole or replacement of punishment with a more lenient one are not applied to persons who committed them. In October 2023, over nine months, 1,240 cases of violence against children were registered in Uzbekistan, of which 417 were sexual violence, 166



were from relatives. 22 children died as a result of violence [11].

A multi-indicator survey conducted by UNICEF in 2023 showed that two thirds of children aged 1-14 years (62%) in Uzbekistan have been subjected to violent methods of upbringing (physical punishment, psychological aggression).

On October 10, 2023, the National Agency for Social Protection, the Ministry of Justice of Uzbekistan and UNICEF submitted a draft law on the protection of children from all forms of violence.

On November 14, 2024, the Protection of Children from All Forms of Violence Act (No. ZRU-996) [12] was passed by the Legislative Chamber on May 31, 2024, approved by the Senate on August 15, 2024. It went into effect on May 15, 2025. The law expanded the number of definitions of forms of violence against children from three (physical, sexual, psychological) to six (neglect, exploitation, abuse).

In addition, the law strengthened the responsibility of parents and persons in loco parentis. In particular, they are obliged to protect the life of children, care for them, show them affection and protect them from information that is harmful to their health, as well as to ensure that the methods of upbringing are not rude, cruel and do not allow treatment that degrades human dignity.

The law introduces for the first time a mechanism for issuing a protection order to children who have suffered from violence. It is issued by the internal affairs bodies for up to 30 days and is handed to the victim of violence or their legal representative. If the threat has not yet been eliminated, the protection order may be extended by the criminal court for up to one year.

In Uzbekistan in 2024, cases of violence against children were recorded: 412 children suffered from sexual violence; 1,028 children were subjected to physical violence. 929 children lived under psychological pressure. 106 children were left defenseless due to adult indifference [13]. These are only registered cases.

In June 2024, it was established that 32-year-old Abror Kozubaev committed systematic sexual violence against the 11-year-old daughter of his second wife. He was found guilty of committing crimes under Article 168, Part 4, paragraph «a» (fraud), Article 126-1 (domestic violence), Part 3, Article 112 (threat of murder or violence), Part 1, Article 25,119 (violent satisfaction of sexual need in an unnatural form) and Part 4 of Article 119 of the Criminal Code. The sentence was 17 years of imprisonment by partial addition of terms, and 254.6 million soums in material damages were also collected in favor of the victim.

By the decision of the appellate instance of the Tashkent City Court dated April 17, 2025, the charge

under the article on the threat of murder or violence was excluded, as a result of which the term of imprisonment was reduced to 16 years and 6 months. The rest of the sentence was left unchanged [14].

In China, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, Iran, South Korea and Saudi Arabia, there is a death penalty for sexual violence against children.

Since the beginning of 2025, 60 cases of violence against children have been identified. The number of appeals received by the children's ombudsman has increased by 47 percent compared to the same period last year. In the first six months of 2025, 885 appeals were considered, which is 47 percent more than in the same period last year. Of these, 20 appeals (2.3 percent) were sent by minors. As noted above, life itself emphasizes the need for regular improvement and testing of the knowledge and potential of specialists who are in direct contact with children. Unfortunately, this can be understood from the following examples found in our society:

On December 9-11, 2024, teacher Laylo Alimova mistreated Zubair Anvarzhonov, born in 2022. Laylo Alimova, a teacher at a private kindergarten in the Almazar district (Tashkent), cruelly abused the child for not sleeping during lunch: she picked him up and threw him on the ground, stuffed a sheet into his mouth, tortured him, kicked him and hit him in the face. The child, who received serious bodily injuries from this torture, was taken to the hospital in a coma and died two days later. The court sentenced the teacher to 6.5 years in prison [15].

A 2.5-year-old girl died in a private kindergarten in the Ushoktepa mahalla of the Koson district of the Kashkadarya region. The incident occurred on June 20, 2025, in a private kindergarten owned by Lola Khaknazarova. In the morning, Lola Khaknazarova took 2.5-year-old Zarina Izzatillaeva from home to the kindergarten. Soon after, her relatives were informed that the girl had lost consciousness. «We were told that the child got stuck in the car and died», the father said. After the girl's death, the private kindergarten's activities were suspended [16]. Earlier, a two-year-old girl drowned in a ditch in a private kindergarten in the Kamashinsky district of the Kashkadarya region.

In Khiva, the director of a private kindergarten injured a child. He squeezed the shoulder of a child from the preparatory group hard, causing him bodily harm because he had not memorized a poem. A pre-investigation check is being conducted on this fact [17].

On July 20, 2024, citizen D.Zh. contacted the Children's Ombudsman. In her appeal, she stated that her son, born in 2011, was insulted and hit in the face several times by a store clerk in Gulistan (Syrdarya region) because he bought something in the store and asked for a receipt with a QR code. The boy's mother



asked to take legal action against this clerk [18]. On July 22, the court Gulistan found the seller guilty of committing an offense under Article 183 (petty hooliganism) of the Code of Administrative Responsibility [19].

In July 2025, a 15-year-old girl was admitted to the Angren Children's Hospital as a victim of rape. This was reported by blogger Saodat Abduzakirova [20]. According to her, the criminal case is at the final stage, and there are four boys among the defendants. The situation is under the control of the children's ombudsman, the Inson centers, and the Ministry of Health. According to the blogger, a year ago, when the girl was 14 years old, she was subjected to violence by a relative, and six months ago the girl was raped by a group of young people – one of them was a minor, and three more were between the ages of 20 and 24.

The government resolution approved the Regulation «On the procedure for identifying cases of violence against children, assessing the level of risk of violence, developing a protection plan and implementing it». The Inson Center conducts a preliminary assessment of the factors threatening the life or health of the child and can determine the risk level as «low» or «high». If the risk level is assessed as «high», the internal affairs agency takes one of the following measures:

- administrative detention of the person who committed the violence and the use of procedural coercion measures;
- issuance of a protective order to the child or his legal representative;
- removal of the child from the parents (one of them) or other persons dependent on him, and ensuring his safety.

After the threatening factors are eliminated, the Inson Center conducts a comprehensive assessment of the child's life situation within 14 calendar days [21].

The National Agency for Social Protection under the President of Uzbekistan initiates changes in legislation aimed at strengthening the protection of children from violence. In particular, an interdepartmental working group has been formed with the participation of representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Preschool and School Education. Among the proposed changes:

- tougher sanctions for those who harm children;
- lifetime ban on working with children for those who have committed cruelty;
- introduction of unified response protocols «so that responsibility is swift and protection is real».

«A child can't 'grow up to be protected.' He must have it from the first breath. Without conditions», Shakhnoza Mirziyoyeva, first deputy head of the Social Protection Agency, emphasized. «I do not believe that violence is an "accident". It is always an adult's choice. Which means that on the other side of the scales there

should be a choice to stop it. Not to justify it. And not to turn a blind eye. Because otherwise we will lose the right to be called human beings», Shakhnoza Mirziyoyeva concluded [22].

CONCLUSIONS. Children's rights should be prioritized in almost all spheres, starting with the family. Here is an example: In Japan, a 60-year-old schoolteacher was fired for moonlighting as a sales clerk at a store near his home. The purpose of the part-time job was to earn extra income without disrupting his main activity. Despite the fact that the teacher had never missed a class and was responsible for his work, his actions were perceived as incompatible with teaching ethics. Subsequently, the teacher was fired and required to publicly apologize to parents and students.

Experts note that in Japan, additional part-time work for civil servants is viewed very negatively. It is believed that it leads to fatigue and decreases the quality of the main work [23]. So, a teacher cannot give a child a low-quality education. Such a measure is taken due to the possible negative impact on the level of education of the child. The child's knowledge is the child's future – the future of the country.

Thus, it is obvious that in every sphere, whether it is education, health care or law enforcement agencies, they should approach the observance of children's rights with a deep understanding of this issue, and this is enshrined in the new law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On the Protection of Children from All Forms of Violence".

In examining the problem, we recommend the following:

First, we need to reasonably use our values and principles of humanity to prevent incidents, and not act only after information about minor victims is published on social media;

Second, the status of a minor victim should be enshrined in the CPC in a separate article.

Thirdly, the creation of touching films and videos for a wide audience, highlighting the importance of protecting the rights of minor victims.

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