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TOGETHER FOR A CHILDHOOD FREE FROM VIOLENCE

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"A childhood free from violence is the foundation of a happy future."
(Wise saying)
"Where violence exists, fear lives; where kindness exists, trust grows."
(Wise saying)

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Abstract: Today, preventing violence against children requires cooperation among families, educational institutions and public authorities. In our country, considerable attention is being paid at the level of state policy—on the basis of the Constitution, laws, resolutions and decrees—to caring for children, supporting their all-round development, and working together in a united effort to create a childhood free from violence.

Keywords: Constitution, children's rights, law, decree, violence, social protection.

In a democratic state, protecting children from all forms of violence and establishing legal safeguards for a childhood free from violence are among the most important responsibilities of the state and society. Laws and resolutions adopted on the basis of family upbringing and social protection provide for children to live in a safe environment, receive education and care, and have the necessary conditions created for their development.

In today's increasingly globalised world, children suffer violence in every part of the globe, and reported rates are rising. Forms of violence are also becoming more varied. Such violence is often committed within the family and community by parents, relatives, caregivers or other people responsible for children's supervision. On 20 November 1989, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention is intended to protect children's rights and legitimate interests, prevent violence against children in society, and ensure that every child can exercise their rights and live in a violence-free environment regardless of family circumstances, nationality, language, sex or social origin, in accordance with the Convention's principles.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the reforms being implemented in our country and the resolutions adopted at the international level help lay the foundation for protecting children today from violence and for a future in which childhood is free from violence. The adoption on 7 January 2008 of Law No. O'RQ-139, "On Guarantees of the Rights of the Child," was of historical importance in protecting children's rights, preventing violence against them and providing comprehensive support. The opportunities and conditions offered to young people help them raise our country's flag in different fields and on the world stage. Ensuring children's safety and protecting their rights as part of society's stability have been identified by the country's leadership as priority tasks.

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The adoption of the new Constitution on 30 April 2023 and the approval, on 24 December 2025, of Decree No. PF-256 on the strategy for 2026–2030 are among the measures aimed at identifying violence in society, providing social, cultural and psychological assistance to children who have experienced violence, and preventing further victimisation. These measures also provide for stronger accountability for crimes against children, protection of their rights and legitimate interests, and the strengthening of cooperation among organisations and institutions so that children can live freely, receive education and realise their potential in an environment free from violence. These objectives are among the priorities of state policy.

In the context of globalisation, rapid development of information technologies and increasingly complex social relations, protecting children's rights and legitimate interests is one of the urgent tasks facing the international community. Children are among the groups most in need of protection. Creating a safe environment for their physical, psychological and moral development is an important responsibility of the state and society.

Violence against children can adversely affect their health, psychological well-being, education, social adjustment and future lives. Such incidents can occur not only within families but also in educational institutions, public places, organisations and digital environments. Therefore, protecting children from violence must go beyond responding to an offence after it has occurred. It must also include prevention, early identification, assistance to affected children and measures to prevent recurrence. Developing preventive measures at the international level is necessary to address these problems. This article aims to examine efforts undertaken internationally and in Uzbekistan, identify areas in which problems need to be addressed, and outline measures that can be implemented in practice.

In 2023, UNICEF developed the International Classification of Violence against Children (ICVAC). This classification helps group incidents of violence into common categories and makes related information more comparable internationally. Using ICVAC, the practical forms of violence against children can be examined by reference to the main categories of abuse. This helps us understand how violence manifests itself and determine how to develop targeted preventive measures. In cases involving the killing of a child, physical or sexual violence, or neglect, relevant factors—including the age of the child, characteristics of the person who committed the sexual abuse, the location of the incident and other circumstances—must be taken into account.

Statistical indicators and the urgency of the issue show that living in a safe environment, receiving education, developing healthily and having one's social dignity respected are fundamental rights of every child. Nevertheless, children in many countries around the world experience different forms of violence at home, in educational institutions, in public places and online. Such experiences can harm children's physical and psychological development and negatively affect their education, social relationships and future lives.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), around one billion children aged 2–17 worldwide may experience some form of physical, sexual or psychological violence or neglect in a given year.

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Data published by UNICEF in 2024 indicated that nearly 400 million children under the age of five worldwide had experienced physical or psychological aggression at home. Of these children, approximately 330 million were subjected to physical punishment. These figures show that violence against children is not merely an issue for discussion within individual families; it is an urgent social problem that must be addressed internationally.

International statistics clearly demonstrate the scale of the problem and point to areas where action can be taken. For example, under international initiatives led by the United Nations and UNICEF, more than 100 governments made commitments to end violence against children at an international event held in Bogotá, Colombia, in 2024. Some countries announced measures to prohibit corporal punishment, strengthen school safety and support families.

Combating violence in schools is another important priority. According to the United Nations, more than 240 million children worldwide experience violence at or around school. For this reason, preventing bullying and abuse in schools, creating safe and trusted reporting channels, and training teachers are important tasks at the international level.

Protecting children in armed conflict is equally urgent. A 2025 United Nations report recorded the verification of 41,370 grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict. These included killing and maiming children, recruiting them into armed forces or groups, abduction, and attacks on schools and hospitals. These international figures show that violence can occur in families, educational institutions, online environments and situations of armed conflict. Child protection must therefore go beyond recording offences and include prevention, psychological support, legal protection and international cooperation.

In Uzbekistan, particular attention is being paid to strengthening the legal foundations for protecting children's rights and preventing violence. One of the key legal instruments in this area is Law No. O'RQ-996 of 14 November 2024, "On the Protection of Children from All Forms of Violence." The Law addresses physical, sexual and psychological violence against children, as well as situations involving failures of care, exploitation and harassment.

The Law does not limit violence to the infliction of physical injury. It also takes into account acts that harm a child's honour and dignity, psychological well-being, safety or essential needs. Its consideration of incidents committed through the internet and telecommunications networks also demonstrates the importance of protecting children in the digital environment.

According to an analysis of the Children's Ombudsman's work during the first six months of 2026, the Ombudsman received 1,147 appeals in the first half of the year. Based on the reviews conducted, eight criminal cases and 15 administrative cases relating to violence against children were initiated. Six decisions refusing to initiate criminal proceedings without sufficient grounds were overturned by prosecutors and referred for further examination. In cooperation with UNICEF, the Children's Ombudsman also conducted a social survey of more than 9,500 children to assess awareness of the Law "On the Protection of Children from All Forms of Violence." Through the joint efforts of the Children's Ombudsman and relevant foreign and national authorities, a total of 22 children were returned to their homeland from abroad.

To implement the principle of "Together for a Childhood Free from Violence" effectively, international experience must be aligned with Uzbekistan's national context. Protecting children

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from all forms of violence, safeguarding their rights and interests, and creating the conditions necessary for them to grow up in a safe environment are important responsibilities of the state and society. Alongside the effective implementation of existing legislation, systematic measures to prevent violence must be strengthened. Uzbekistan has established legal foundations in this field. The main task now is to ensure that the protective measures set out in law are effective in every child's life, to prevent violence and to provide timely assistance to children who have suffered it. The existence of systematic measures does not mean that the problem has been fully eliminated.

As proposals, mechanisms should be strengthened for reporting incidents of violence, improving cooperation among agencies, ensuring adequate access to psychological and social support, and eliminating corporal punishment as a method of discipline. It is also necessary to improve the effectiveness of mechanisms for evaluating statistics and outcomes against international and national programmes. These should be identified as important responsibilities of the state and society.

In conclusion, the principle of "Together for a Childhood Free from Violence" is a shared priority not only for family members but for society as a whole. Ensuring our children's safety and creating broad opportunities for their development, while protecting them from violence today, is a strategic goal for securing a violence-free childhood tomorrow. Promoting a childhood free from violence cannot be limited to adopting laws alone. Legal protection, family upbringing, safety in educational institutions, psychological support, digital literacy and inter-agency cooperation must operate as a unified system. Ensuring every child's dignity and safety is the shared responsibility of the state and society.

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