

**IMPROVING CITIZENS' SELF-GOVERNING BODIES IN THE TERRITORY OF  
UZBEKISTAN AS A FOCUS OF STATE POLICY****Bobojonov Islombek Usmonalievich**

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**ANNOTATION.** The article examines the development and improvement of citizens' self-governance bodies in the territory of Uzbekistan, with a particular focus on the Mahalla institution. Following Uzbekistan's independence, comprehensive reforms in public administration were initiated to strengthen civil society and restore citizens' rights. The study highlights the legal foundations of self-governance bodies, including the Constitution, laws, presidential decrees, and resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers. The article analyzes the evolution of the Mahalla system in four stages: 1991–2000, 2001–2010, 2010–2016, and from 2017 to the present, emphasizing its role in fostering democratic processes, social cohesion, and public participation. Recent reforms, including the establishment of the Ministry of Mahalla and Family Support, have further enhanced the efficiency and legal basis of local governance. The study concludes that strengthening self-governance institutions is essential for promoting social trust, addressing community issues systematically, and supporting sustainable development in Uzbekistan.

**Keywords:** Uzbekistan, self-governance bodies, Mahalla institution, local administration, civil society, legal framework, public participation, democratic reforms, social development, Ministry of Mahalla and Family Support

**INTRODUCTION.**

The establishment and development of citizens' self-governance bodies has long been a key component of a functional civil society. In Uzbekistan, the Mahalla institution historically served as the primary local community structure, fostering social cohesion, mutual assistance, and humanitarian values. However, during the periods of the Russian Empire and Soviet rule, the Mahalla's functions were largely marginalized, and its role in local governance was severely restricted.

With the declaration of Uzbekistan's independence, the restoration of citizens' rights and freedoms created an urgent need to reform public administration and strengthen local self-governance. The Mahalla institution has since become a central element in promoting civic participation, enhancing social responsibility, and supporting democratic reforms. Legal and

organizational foundations for self-governance have been established through the Constitution, laws, presidential decrees, and resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers, ensuring the institution's stability and efficiency.

This article aims to examine the historical development, legal framework, and modern reforms of citizens' self-governance bodies in Uzbekistan. It also analyzes the four main stages of Mahalla development since independence, highlighting its evolving role in social, economic, and political life. By understanding these reforms, policymakers, scholars, and practitioners can gain insight into the ways local governance structures contribute to social cohesion, citizen participation, and sustainable national development.

### **MAIN PART.**

The long-awaited political event for the people of Uzbekistan – the declaration of independence—created the foundation for restoring the socio-political and economic rights of the nation. Independence necessitated the implementation of large-scale reforms in various sectors, especially in public administration. Among these reforms, particular importance was attached to fundamentally renewing the system of citizens' self-governing bodies, which are considered a key element of civil society. This issue became more relevant than ever before. During the rule of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, the mahalla structure—which fostered mutual kindness, assistance, solidarity, and humanism among people—was neglected and prevented from fully performing its functions.

During the years of independence, due to increased attention to the mahalla institution, not only its number but also its quality steadily improved. This process continues today in connection with the expansion of cities and villages and ongoing urbanization. Currently, there are 9,155 mahallas in the Republic of Uzbekistan, and 203 district and city departments coordinate their activities [1].

The well-known French historian and sociologist Alexis de Tocqueville, speaking about municipalities, emphasized: “Just as primary schools are to science, so are community institutions to the establishment of independence.” Establishing the legal framework and restoring the political status of self-governing bodies is one of the fundamental requirements of civil society. In this regard, a key step was the inclusion of a norm concerning citizens' self-governing bodies—the mahalla institution—in Article 105 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan [3].

The legal foundations of the mahalla institution in Uzbekistan consist of the Constitution and laws, presidential decrees and resolutions, resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers, and other

subordinate normative legal acts. Accordingly, the legal framework of citizens' self-governing bodies can be divided into two groups:

First, the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Uzbekistan; Second, subordinate normative legal acts, including presidential decrees and resolutions, resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers, and decisions and orders of relevant ministries and local authorities.

In the early years of independence, in order to properly and effectively organize the activities of the mahalla institution and regulate it systematically, it was planned to adopt a special law fully covering this sphere. Thus, on September 2, 1993, for the first time in the country's history, the Law "On Citizens' Self-Governing Bodies" was adopted, establishing the legislative foundation of the mahalla institution.

Subsequently, the Law "On Citizens' Self-Governing Bodies" was adopted in new editions twice (1999 [4], 2013 [5]), demonstrating that reforms in this sphere were implemented in accordance with the demands of the time.

The improvement of citizens' self-governing bodies in Uzbekistan can appropriately be studied in four stages.

The first stage (1991–2000) was characterized by reforms aimed at defining the constitutional-legal and organizational foundations of citizens' self-governing bodies, determining their appropriate role in state and public life, and forming their powers.

The second stage (2001–2010) was a period of active democratic renewal, marked by the further development of the activities and powers of citizens' self-governing bodies.

The third stage (2010–2016) represented a period of further enhancement of their activities and authority. Based on the Concept "On Further Deepening Democratic Reforms and Developing Civil Society in the Country" adopted on November 12, 2010, the legal framework of the mahalla institution was further improved.

The fourth stage covers the period from 2017 to the present. This can be explained by the following factors:

First, on February 3, 2017, the Presidential Decree "On Measures to Further Improve the Mahalla Institution" [6] was adopted. This decree encompassed numerous reforms. In particular, it introduced a new position within the structure of the citizens' assembly—the advisor on youth issues.

Second, in the Presidential Decree of Shavkat Mirziyoyev dated February 7, 2017, "On the Strategy of Actions for the Further Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan" [7], special

attention was given to enhancing the role and effectiveness of the mahalla institution in public administration. The adoption of several normative legal acts in this regard has contributed to the further deepening of democratic reforms in this sphere and ensures the consistent implementation of socio-political and economic reforms related to the mahalla structure.

Third, the adoption of the Law “On the Election of the Chairman (Aksakal) of the Citizens’ Assembly” on October 15, 2018 [8], along with recent resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers, demonstrates that the development of the mahalla structure has reached a new stage.

Fourth, in accordance with the Strategy of Actions for the Further Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Presidential Decree No. PF-5938 dated February 18, 2020, “On Measures to Improve the Socio-Spiritual Environment in Society, Further Support the Mahalla Institution, and Elevate the System of Work with Families and Women to a New Level,” was issued. On the same day, a Presidential Resolution “On the Organization of the Activities of the Ministry for the Support of Mahalla and Family of the Republic of Uzbekistan” [9] was adopted. According to this resolution, the mahalla institution, which had previously functioned as a public organization, was to continue its activities as a ministry. Operating as a ministry primarily serves to partially eliminate the long-standing financial problems of the mahalla structure.

In conclusion, since the early years of independence, reforming and further developing citizens’ self-governing bodies has been of pressing importance. First, the constitutional and legal foundation of the mahalla institution was established and then gradually developed. In order to revitalize its activities, gain public trust, and resolve existing problems legally and systematically, the Ministry for the Support of Mahalla and Family was established.

**CONCLUSION.** Since the early years of Uzbekistan’s independence, the development and reform of citizens’ self-governance bodies have remained a priority for the state. The Mahalla institution, as the cornerstone of local governance, has undergone significant transformation, guided by constitutional and legal frameworks, as well as presidential decrees and government resolutions. These reforms have strengthened its role in promoting social cohesion, ensuring citizen participation, and addressing local socio-economic challenges.

The establishment of the Ministry of Mahalla and Family Support further institutionalized the Mahalla’s functions, providing the resources and authority necessary to resolve long-standing financial and organizational issues. As a result, the Mahalla system has become more effective, transparent, and responsive to the needs of local communities.

In summary, the ongoing modernization of self-governance bodies reflects Uzbekistan’s commitment to building a robust civil society and enhancing local democratic governance.

Continued legal, organizational, and social reforms are essential to ensure the Mahalla institution remains a dynamic and sustainable pillar of community life, fostering trust, solidarity, and active citizen engagement across the country.

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