

## Referendum in Uzbekistan: Operation “President for Life”

### News:

On April 30, 2023, Uzbekistan votes in a constitutional referendum that could allow President Shavkat Mirziyoyev to extend his term of office by 14 years, according to the website of the Aljazeera TV Channel. If Sunday's referendum passes, the presidential term will be extended from five to seven years. The change would allow Mirziyoyev, 65, to serve two more terms and extend his stay in power until 2040.

Authorities in Central Asia's most populous former Soviet republic have said the constitutional revision will improve governance and quality of life in the predominantly Muslim country of 35 million. The government also said the referendum would start human rights reforms.

Since coming to power in 2016 after the death of his predecessor Islam Karimov, Mirziyoyev has spearheaded a number of reforms in Uzbekistan, including a ban on forced labor in the cotton fields. But activists said rights violations continue and authorities show no signs of allowing political opposition to emerge. In 2022, at least 21 people were killed during demonstrations in the autonomous region of Karakalpakstan. Human rights activists accused the authorities of using firearms against protesters. ([Aljazeera.com](http://Aljazeera.com))

### Comment:

Uzbekistan is one of the precious pearls of the Islamic Ummah. On the territory of this country were born such imams-muhaddis as al-Bukhari and at-Tirmizi, such luminaries of world science as al-Khwarizmi, al-Biruni, Ibn Sina, and others. But this value is not due only to its ancient history, geographical location and richest natural resources. The most important treasure of Uzbekistan, as well as other countries of this region, are the Muslims inhabiting it, who have maintained a strong adherence to Islam, despite Russian colonialism and Communist terror.

The ruling regime of Uzbekistan, like other post-Soviet countries of Central Asia, is a burp of the communist party nomenklatura. During the Soviet era, its main duty was to fight against Islam, through repression and godless atheistic education, as well as the fragmentation of the unity of Muslims according to the Stalinist national policy. Russia wanted to digest Muslims together with the rest of the population of the USSR into a single "Soviet people", fighting religion, replacing the Arabic script with Russian, introducing moral principles alien to Islam.

For these purposes, the communists selected the lowest people from Muslims and put them at the head of the republics formed on a national basis. Brought up in the spirit of party careerism, they were concerned only with personal well-being and enrichment, and, having become like kings, they began to oppress their people, surrounding themselves with flatterers and corrupt officials. Each of these local satraps was supervised by a specially appointed communist from Moscow, who served as second secretary of the republican party apparatus.

After the abolition of communist ideology on the eve of the collapse of the Soviet Union, they retained power in the hands of their clans, disguised as democrats and reformers. In exchange for the weakened Russian influence, they rushed to seek the patronage of the West and China, while at the same time slowly breaking off political, military, economic and other ties with Russia that developed during the time of its undivided dominance in the region. They continue to trade in the interests of their people, just as before, only now under oaths of devotion to democracy and human rights, and not to communism.

The current Uzbek regime, headed by Mirziyoyev, although it does not look as comical as, for example, the neighboring Turkmen or Tajik regime, is just as unscrupulous, cunning and cruel. He is absolutely indifferent to the needs and problems of ordinary citizens, and is only occupied with his own selfish interests and narcissism. Therefore, even with rich reserves of natural gas, oil, gold, uranium, non-ferrous metals and other minerals, most of the people of Uzbekistan live in insurmountable poverty, lacking electricity and heat. To feed their families, millions of men and women are forced to go to work in Russia, Kazakhstan and other countries, being subjected to humiliation, discrimination and a threat to their health and even life.

Despite the fact that Mirziyoyev wants to distance himself from the “Andijan butcher” Karimov, he is his heir and successor. After cleaning up the old cadres in law enforcement agencies, he replaced them with people who from now on will owe their "career success" personally to him. Declaring an amnesty under the pretext of liberalization, he released from prison a number of political prisoners whose age and state of health were close to death. At the same time, many thousands of Muslims, criminally seized and thrown into prison by Karimov only because they were zealous in the path of Allah, continue to serve long and life sentences, being subjected to the most severe abuse and torture. Moreover, their number is growing as a result of the ongoing struggle of the Uzbek regime with the revival of Islamic identity.

It is the fight against Islam and conscious Muslims that gives legitimacy to the regime of Uzbekistan in the eyes of the West, which is ready to forgive him for this and the corruption of the system, and the persecution of any dissent, and any violation of human rights. After all, no one doubts that the main goal of changing the Constitution at the current referendum, nicknamed by Western journalists as “Operation for Life President”, is to extend Mirziyoyev’s presidential powers. And all statements about liberalization and democratization are just a garb of empty promises that cover up the authoritarian essence of the Uzbek regime. But even if he does manage to contain at least one of them, this will be a pleasant bonus for them - a step away from Islam towards secular secularism.

**Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by**

**Mustafa Amin**

**Member of the Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir in Ukraine**