

MEASURES TAKEN BY THE UNITED NATIONS, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN TO RETURN FAMILY MEMBERS OF TERRORISTS TO THEIR HOMELAND AND ADAPT THEM TO A FREE LIFE

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Abstract: This article discusses the work carried out under the leadership of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev to repatriate the wives and children of terrorists who were forcibly taken away from the Republic of Uzbekistan for various reasons from countries such as Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

Keywords: United Nations, terrorism, Mehr-1, Mehr-2, Mehr-3, Interpol, Religious-extremist, Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Introduction

The United Nations and its constituent entities, having made a significant contribution to the fight against terrorism and extremism, reaffirm their support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of all States, in accordance with their Charter, and consistently emphasize that all Member States bear the primary responsibility for combating terrorist acts and violent extremism, which are fertile ground for terrorism.

The Republic of Uzbekistan, realizing the importance of strengthening international cooperation in the fight against terrorism in accordance with the current norms of international law, participates in the activities of the Counter-Terrorism Department, the Executive Directorate of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and other agencies within the UN and Interpol systems in the fight against terrorism and extremism.

In recent years, the President and Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan have taken a number of concrete measures aimed at creating a framework for the full return of such citizens to life. In particular, in June 2017, the "black lists" of supporters of radical movements were revised, and citizens who were firmly on the path of correction, deeply aware of their mistakes, and who did not pose a threat to the state were removed from this list.

In different regions of Uzbekistan, special commissions have been formed from representatives of local executive authorities, law enforcement agencies, religious and public organizations, the purpose of which is to coordinate the activities of state and public organizations to return citizens of the country who have fallen under the influence of extremist ideas to a normal way of life. In September 2018, the procedure for exempting citizens of Uzbekistan who have mistakenly joined terrorist, extremist or other banned organizations and groups from criminal liability was approved, ensuring their effective integration into society. An important step

towards the rehabilitation of individuals associated with religious and extremist movements was the application of amnesty decisions in their regard[1].

Since 2017, this measure has been applied in Uzbekistan to more than 4 thousand individuals who, having served their sentences in prisons, sincerely repented of their actions and embarked on the path of correction.

During 2016-2020, a large-scale consistent policy has been implemented in our country to ensure human rights and freedoms. In particular, “In 2020, specific measures were taken to promptly and positively resolve the existing problems of our citizens in foreign countries, provide them with practical legal assistance, and return them to our homeland. In particular, during the pandemic, more than 500 thousand citizens of Uzbekistan were brought to our country. Various assistance was provided to about 100 thousand of our compatriots who found themselves in difficult situations abroad”[2].

It is worth noting that our compatriots who were returned from “hot spots” during the past period have found their place in our society with the help of state and public organizations, as well as our kind-hearted citizens.

In his congratulatory message to our people on the occasion of the 28th anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev emphasized that “citizens of Uzbekistan will always be under the protection of their state and Constitution, and we will continue to firmly implement this principle”[3].

As a practical expression of these words, humanitarian measures are being taken to bring back to our country our citizens, mainly women and children, who, deceived by false promises, left our country and are going through difficult times in the Middle East region, where armed conflicts are taking place. It is worth noting that over the past period, our compatriots who were returned from "hot spots" have found their place in our society with the help of state and public organizations, as well as our kind-hearted citizens.

From this point of view, the implementation of the humanitarian campaigns “Mehr-1”, “Mehr-2”, “Mehr-3” and “Mehr-4” in 2019, on the instructions of our President, was a unique and unprecedented event not only in Uzbekistan, but also in the entire Central Asia. For their rapid rehabilitation and adaptation to society, a number of state-level measures were taken to provide such people with timely medical, psychological, material and moral assistance. To date, all returnees have been provided with the necessary conditions for their peaceful adaptation and integration into society, and educational and other social programs, including housing and employment, have been provided.

On the instructions of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev, with the support of a number of foreign countries and international organizations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross and UNICEF, on May 30, 2019, the “Mehr-1” humanitarian campaign was held to return 156 citizens of the country, mainly women and children, who were in camps in Syria and in zones of armed conflict. After their return, 142 people, including 47 women and 95 children, were provided with social benefits. Three children were placed in the “Mehribonlik Uyy” and three more in the “Kichkintoy” orphanages[4].

A documentary about the return of 156 citizens from Syria was broadcast on Uzbek television. In 2019, the “Mehr-2” operation was carried out in cooperation with the Iraqi government and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). Among those repatriated were 39 boys and 25 girls, including 14 children under the age of 3, and 2 orphans. The special working group negotiated with Uzbek women sentenced to long (10-20 years) or life sentences for participating in various international terrorist organizations that threaten the peace of various countries, and obtained their consent to return their children. The spouses of these women still remain in the ranks of terrorist organizations. Some were killed during the war, others are serving their sentences in prisons in Iraq and Syria.

Under the direct supervision of the President, the next stage of the “Mehr-3” operation was carried out, and 98 of our compatriots, namely 25 women and 73 children, 14 of whom are orphans, were returned to our homeland from the war-torn areas of Syria. Also, through the “Mehr-4” operation, it was possible to evacuate women and children from the territory of Afghanistan. They lived in extremely difficult conditions and faced bitter trials of life.

These people, who got lost on the roads of life and found themselves in difficult situations in other countries, were placed in a rehabilitation facility and provided with hot food, clothing and all other necessary conditions. They were provided with medical and psychological assistance from specialists.

Also, relevant work was carried out to formalize their identity passports, birth certificates and other necessary documents. Thus, all opportunities are being created for the full adaptation of these people, who have returned to a healthy, peaceful life, to society.

All this is being done in accordance with Resolution 2396 (2017) adopted by the UN Security Council on December 21, 2017.

Almost 60% of the surveyed migrants went to Syria (when the war was going on there) in 2016-2017. Knowing that the war is ongoing, serious reasons are needed to do this. In various international forums, they cite socio-economic problems, the inability to advance in the career ladder, and unfavorable conditions for satisfying their religious needs as the main reasons for leaving.

Probably, no one could have imagined that the ideology of the “Islamic state”, which is banned in Uzbekistan, would be so effective. The partial success of this ideology is based not only on the skillful promotion of the baseless caliphate, but also on some mistakes made in the work of state agencies and other structures.

As we have already mentioned, the low level of socialization among young people, whose worldview and level of culture coincide, played a significant role in their sad fate. Of course, the parents are to blame for the tragedy of these families, but what is the fault of the orphaned children? There are many instructive examples of such situations in Islam. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “The one who takes care of an orphan will be like me in Paradise,” and he pointed with his index and middle fingers, opening them slightly. (From the hadith of Imam Bukhari).

“Taking care of an orphan” means raising him, feeding him, clothing him, and if he has wealth, increasing his wealth. If he does not have wealth, he should spend on him, seeking the pleasure of Allah Almighty.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever takes care of an orphan among the Muslims, Allah will admit him to Paradise, provided he does not commit an unforgivable sin (i.e., associating partners with Allah).” (From the hadith of Imam Tirmidhi).

It was narrated from Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “I will be the first to open the gates of Paradise. I have never seen a woman faster than me. I will ask her: “Who are you?” She will say: “I am a woman who looks after orphans.” (Narrated by Abu Ya’la).

The Holy Quran also mentions people who are worthy of kindness other than parents: “Worship Allah and do not associate anything with Him. And do good to parents, and to relatives, and to orphans, and to the needy, and to the neighbor who is near, and to the neighbor who is next to you, and to the owner of the house, and to the wayfarer who is in need, and to those whose property you own.” (Surah An-Nisa, verse 36)

In order for children not to be abandoned in orphanages today and not to be humiliated, they need humanity and kindness towards each other, and such qualities are found only in a believer, that is, in the religion itself, which awakens and educates these feelings. Our government, led by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, is showing precisely such care and patronage towards orphans brought from troubled regions.

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