

SUBMISSION TO THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

For the adoption of the **List of Issues Prior to Reporting** in relation to the **sixth periodic report of Uzbekistan**

146th session, 19 October – 6 November 2026

Submitting organisations¹: Eurasian Harm Reduction Association (EHRA), Sex Workers' Advocacy Network (SWAN)

Introduction

1. This submission is made in view of the Committee's adoption of a List of Issues Prior to Reporting for Uzbekistan.
2. The submission does not attempt a full account of the situation; documentation supporting each concern is held by the submitting organisation and will be provided for the review itself. What follows is organised so that the Committee can see, for each issue, **the recommendation it has already made**, what has changed since, and the questions that would allow it to hold the State party to account.
3. Most of the issues raised are follow-up to existing recommendations, including two of the three matters selected for the follow-up procedure under paragraph 53 of the concluding observations. **Four are new:** the criminal penalties for drug offences introduced in June 2026, the absence of opioid agonist therapy, the criminalisation of HIV, and the situation of sex workers. Each is nonetheless connected to a recommendation the Committee has already made, except sex work, which is raised here for the first time.
4. This submission draws on two sources: a desk review of legislation and of presidential and governmental acts; a secondary review of reporting by international and regional organisations.

1. Criminal penalties for drug offences

Covenant articles: 7, 9, 10, 14, 15

Connected to CCPR/C/UZB/CO/5, para. 29 (d), on alternative measures to detention and imprisonment.

5. Presidential Decree No. DP-207² of 3 November 2025, "On comprehensive measures to effectively protect public health and the nation's gene pool from drug addiction and narcotic crimes", in force 8 November 2025, was given effect by Law No. LRU-1151³ of 11 June 2026, in force since 12 June 2026. The Law does not merely raise penalties. It renames Chapter XIX of the Criminal Code "Crimes against the health and gene pool of the population"; relocates the criminalisation of HIV into that chapter as article 276⁹ (section 8 below); creates administrative offences carrying detention; and delegates to an executive body the quantity thresholds that determine how serious a drug offence is.

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² Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. DP-207 of 3 November 2025, «On comprehensive measures to effectively protect public health and the nation's gene pool from drug addiction and narcotic crimes», in force 8 November 2025. English page: lex.uz/en/docs/7834487.

³ Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. LRU-1151 of 11 June 2026, «On amendments and additions to certain legislative acts aimed at improving liability for the illegal trafficking of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, their analogues, and potent substances», in force 12 June 2026. English page: lex.uz/en/docs/8276716.

The protected object of the criminal law is therefore no longer the health of identified persons but the "gene pool". Addressing an international forum in Samarkand on 19 April 2026, attended by UNODC, WHO and INCB, the President stated that a third of drug offences are committed by young people, the main risk group being aged fifteen to thirty, "which shows what a great threat this vice is to the gene pool of the nation"⁴. Framing criminal law around a national genetic resource invites the treatment of whole groups — people who use drugs, people living with HIV, LGBTIQ+ people, sex workers, migrants — as carriers of a threat, and is difficult to reconcile with article 26 of the Covenant, and with article 2 (1) read together with articles 7, 9 and 17.

6. The penalties are severe and reach conduct far removed from commercial dealing. Article 273⁴ establishes a six-step ladder rising to **fifteen to twenty years** where the quantity is "large", or where the act is committed by or for an organised group across two or more States or using the internet — conduct requiring no violence, injury or coercion. Under article 50 of the Code the general maximum term is twenty years, and up to twenty-five is available only for aggravated murder and terrorism, so non-violent drug supply now sits at the ceiling of the ordinary sentencing scale. Conditional early release is excluded for these offences by the amendment to article 73.

7. Two features determine who is reached. First, whether a person receives three years, seven or twenty turns on whether the quantity is "small", above small, or "large" — and the Law provides that both are **determined by the relevant State body**. The Plenum of the Supreme Court⁵ has confirmed that courts are directed to be guided by that body's conclusion **given in the individual case**, on the basis of a list of substances approved by Cabinet of Ministers resolution⁶. The threshold determining gravity is therefore fixed by expert opinion after the fact, not by a published rule; "analogues" is open-ended in the same way and requires no published list. Second, the Law replaces "sale" with the broader "**sbyt**" — transfer. District authorities explaining⁷ the reform stated that a dead-drop, a gift, or simply passing drugs to another person now attracts the same liability as selling, and the Plenum has held that *sbyt* covers any transfer to another person, whether for payment or free of charge, including a gift or the disclosure of where a substance is hidden. Sharing drugs between people who use them together is therefore supply, and where it is arranged by message the minimum sentence is **seven years**. Enforcement should be measured against the health problem invoked: the President reports more than 15,000 drug offences recorded in 2025 and states that a third are committed by young people, the principal risk group being aged fifteen to thirty⁸, while the Ministry of Health's chief narcologist puts the number of people registered at narcological dispensaries nationwide at approximately 5,000⁹.

Proposed questions

⁴ Address of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan to participants of the International Forum "Countering transnational drug threats for the health and security of society", Samarkand, 19 April 2026. Available at president.uz/ru/lists/view/9118.

⁵⁵ Plenum of the Supreme Court, resolution No. 33 of 27 November 2021, paras. 5 and 9, lex.uz/docs/5809130.

⁶ Ibid., para. 11, referring to the List of Potent Substances approved as annex 1 to Cabinet of Ministers resolution No. 818 of 27 September 2019. See also the Lists I–IV of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors approved by Cabinet of Ministers resolution No. 330 of 12 November 2015.

⁷ Hokimiyat of Mirishkor District, Kashkadarya Region, "Analysis of new legislation in Mirishkor District: criminal liability for the circulation of narcotic and potent substances sharply tightened", Government Portal of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 20 June 2026. Available at <https://gov.uz/ru/mirishkor/news/view/181583> (accessed 19 August 2026).

⁸ Address of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan to participants of the International Forum "Countering transnational drug threats for the health and security of society", Samarkand, 19 April 2026. Available at president.uz/ru/lists/view/9118

⁹ "Среди наркобольных есть даже 10-летний ребёнок" [Among those with drug dependence there is even a 10-year-old child], interview with Z. Ashurov, chief narcologist of the Ministry of Health, *Gazeta.uz*, 1 July 2025.

- Please identify the State body that determines "large" and "small" quantities of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their analogues, provide the acts by which those thresholds are currently fixed, state whether and where they are published, and explain how a person can foresee whether their conduct falls within a bracket carrying three years or one carrying twenty. Please also indicate what human rights impact assessment was carried out before the adoption of Law No. LRU-1151.
- Please explain how sentences of fifteen to twenty years for non-violent drug offences are compatible with articles 7 and 10, and how sentences are individualised for persons occupying minor roles, including where liability arises only from use of a telecommunications network.

2. Administrative arrest for drug use and personal possession

Covenant articles: 9, 26

Follow-up to CCPR/C/UZB/CO/5, paras. 28–29 — deficiencies in habeas corpus, fundamental safeguards, and the absence of information on alternatives to detention; and para. 9 (a), on discrimination on the ground of property. Paragraph 29 was one of three matters selected for the follow-up procedure under paragraph 53.

8. Since the Committee's recommendations, three new provisions of the Code of Administrative Responsibility authorise **administrative arrest of up to fifteen days**¹⁰: article 187¹ for use of drugs in a public place, article 56 for manufacture, acquisition, storage or transport without intent to supply in small amounts, and article 56³ for possession of certain potent substances. Deprivation of liberty is therefore available for personal possession as well as use, and the custodial term is identical in all three although the fine ranges differ twentyfold.

9. The fine is set at a level most people cannot pay. Twenty to forty base calculation units (BCU¹¹) is 8,240,000 to 16,480,000 UZS — between six and thirteen months of the statutory minimum wage¹². Where the nominal alternative to detention is unpayable, the sanction is detention in substance, and it falls on the poorest. Property is among the grounds expressly enumerated in article 26 and identified in the Committee's recommendation.¹³ Repetition then converts the same conduct into a criminal offence under article 276⁸ of the Criminal Code. For a person who is drug-dependent, repetition is a symptom.¹⁴

10. Access to a lawyer in these proceedings is narrow. Under Law No. LRU-848 of 16 June 2023, State-funded legal assistance in administrative-offence cases is available only to persons formally registered as low-income through the Unified Register of Social Protection, and only where the offence

¹⁰Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Administrative Responsibility, adopted 22 September 1994, in force 1 April 1995, as amended, lex.uz/docs/97664.

¹¹BCU is the base calculation unit by which fines are set: 412,000 UZS from 1 August 2025, rising to 440,000 on 1 September 2026. The statutory minimum wage was 1,271,000 UZS per month, and minimum consumer expenditure — the Government's poverty threshold — is 715,000 UZS per month for 2026.

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¹³Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 18 (1989) on non-discrimination, para. 13; and *Althammer et al. v. Austria*, communication No. 998/2001, Views adopted on 8 August 2003, para. 10.2.

¹⁴UNAIDS, UNDP and INPUD, *Decriminalization of drug use in the context of HIV: a guidance note*, Geneva, March 2026 (with substantive contributions from WHO and OHCHR).

carries administrative arrest.¹⁵ A person detained for fifteen days who is poor but not registered has no entitlement to a lawyer at State expense.

Proposed questions

- Further to the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 29 (d), please indicate what alternatives to detention exist for drug use and possession for personal use, and whether the State party intends to remove deprivation of liberty as a penalty for such conduct.

3. Treatment for drug dependence and access to HIV treatment in custody

Covenant articles: 6, 7, 10

Follow-up to CCPR/C/UZB/CO/5, para. 32, on inadequate access to medical care in places of deprivation of liberty.

11. **Opioid agonist therapy is not available anywhere in Uzbekistan.**¹⁶ A pilot programme using methadone and buprenorphine was discontinued on 25 June 2009 on the stated ground that it was inappropriate, and has not been resumed in the seventeen years since, despite repeated requests from clinicians.¹⁷ Uzbekistan is one of three States in the wider region, with the Russian Federation and Turkmenistan, providing none at all.

12. This bears directly on the measures above. Referral to treatment cannot be the less restrictive alternative to arrest when the principal evidence-based treatment does not exist. In custody the consequence is acute: a person detained for up to fifteen days, or remanded on a drug charge, will experience withdrawal without access to agonist medication. The Special Rapporteur on torture has identified denial of opioid substitution treatment as capable of amounting to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and, in certain circumstances, torture, and has called on States to ensure it is available in places of detention.¹⁸

13. While the law formally provides for HIV and tuberculosis treatment in detention — article 8 of Law No. LRU-353¹⁹ obliges the Ministry of Internal Affairs to ensure conditions for the provision of medical assistance to HIV-positive persons in institutions executing punishments — the same Law makes that treatment conditional on registration. Article 17 provides that medical assistance is given only after a person is entered on the dispensary register, and article 13 provides that on detection of HIV the person is entered on that register and warned in writing of criminal liability for infecting others. A prisoner who seeks testing or therapy therefore creates the documented record of their status, and the proof of awareness of it, that article 276⁹ of the Criminal Code requires. Formal availability of treatment and criminalisation of the diagnosis (section 8 below) pull in opposite directions, and the second defeats the first.

¹⁵Law No. LRU-848 of 16 June 2023 on the provision of legal assistance at the expense of the State, arts. 9, 11 and 17, in force 18 September 2023, lex.uz/docs/6502545.

¹⁶World Health Organization, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and UNAIDS, *Substitution maintenance therapy in the management of opioid dependence and HIV/AIDS prevention: position paper* (2004).

¹⁷Khachatryan, "Uzbekistan: Government discontinues pilot opiate substitution therapy program", *HIV/AIDS Policy and Law Review* 14(2) (2009), pp. 26–27; Latypov, Otiashvili, Aizberg and Boltaev, "Opioid substitution therapy in Central Asia" (EHRN, 2010).

¹⁸Report of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Juan E. Méndez, A/HRC/22/53, 1 February 2013, paras. 54, 56 and 73–74.

¹⁹Law No. LRU-353 of 23 September 2013 on countering the spread of the disease caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (text as at 21 April 2021), lex.uz/docs/2240472.

Proposed questions

- Please describe the clinical management of opioid withdrawal in police custody, during administrative arrest and in pre-trial detention.
- Please provide information on the availability of treatment for drug dependence, HIV and tuberculosis in places of deprivation of liberty, and the number of persons receiving each.

4. Torture, complaints and reprisals against those who report

Covenant articles: 2 (3), 7

Follow-up to CCPR/C/UZB/CO/5, paras. 24–25 — reprisals against those who report abuse, complaints to the Ombudsperson not made because it is not safe to do so, and complaints not duly investigated. Paragraph 25 was selected for the follow-up procedure under paragraph 53.

14. **The pattern the Committee identified persists.** In November 2024 the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found²⁰ the detention of Dauletmurat Tazhimuratov arbitrary under categories I, II, III and V, and was particularly disturbed that the trial court took no action when he testified to ill-treatment, turning off the live stream as he did so; the Government did not reply to the communication.²⁷ He remains in Prison Colony No. 11, where in November 2025 he was reportedly placed in a punishment cell and tortured — forced into a stress position, beaten, stripped, doused with cold water mixed with lime, and held in a freezing cell until he lost consciousness. On 1 May 2026 he was sentenced to a further five years and designated an especially dangerous repeat offender.

15. In September 2025 the father of Zhumasapar Dadebaev complained to the Ombudsperson of severe abuse requiring hospitalisation; **no response is known.** Rights groups reported two deaths in prison in separate incidents in February 2025 and a third detainee hospitalised unresponsive²¹; in August 2025 a man in Namangan sustained broken ribs, a punctured lung and organ damage after police beat him. Accountability is not unknown — in May 2025 a Tashkent court convicted three police officers of torture — but it remains exceptional.

Proposed questions

- Further to paragraph 25 (b) and (c), please describe the mechanism by which a detained person may submit a confidential complaint of ill-treatment without it passing through the administration of the institution, and the safeguards against reprisal, including where new criminal proceedings follow a complaint.
- Please provide, for each year 2020–2026, the number of complaints of torture received, investigations opened, officials prosecuted and convicted, and compensation awarded; and information on all deaths in custody, including cause of death and investigation outcome.

5. Independent monitoring of places of detention

Covenant articles: 7, 10

²⁰ Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, opinion No. 62/2024 concerning Dauletmurat Tazhimuratov (Uzbekistan), A/HRC/WGAD/2024/62, adopted 11 November 2024, paras. 79–80 and 86.

²¹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2026*, Uzbekistan chapter (events of 2025), 9 January 2026.

*Follow-up to CCPR/C/UZB/CO/5, paras. 32–33 — obstacles to access by independent NGOs and insufficient facilitation of ICRC monitoring; para. 33 (c) recommended monitoring without prior notice and **on an unsupervised basis**, and para. 33 (d) effective NGO and ICRC access.*

14. The State party has implemented part of this recommendation. **Law No. LRU-1002 of 15 November 2024** empowers the Ombudsperson to conduct monitoring visits at any time without prior notification, provides for sealed complaint boxes in every institution, prohibits censorship of correspondence addressed to the Ombudsperson, and prohibits reprisals against those who complain.²² Monitoring visits rose from 46 in 2019 to 381 in 2022.²³

15. Some elements of the recommendation are not met. Civil society may bring complaints to the Ombudsperson on behalf of detained persons, but has no independent access to places of detention. The Public Groups on prevention of torture are established by the Ombudsperson, who exercises general oversight over them and determines their objectives; and the Penal Enforcement Code, as amended by the same Law, confers the right of free visit to penal institutions on five named office-holders, none of them non-governmental. The Law makes no provision for access by the International Committee of the Red Cross. And the outcomes remain modest against the volume: of 3,235 complaints from detained persons in 2022, two resulted in criminal proceedings against officials.²⁴

Proposed questions

- Please state whether Uzbekistan intends to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, and on what legal basis the mechanism established within the Office of the Ombudsperson is described as a national preventive mechanism.
- Further to paragraph 33 (c), please explain why confidential interviews with detained persons are conducted within sight of institution staff, and what steps have been taken to ensure monitoring on an unsupervised basis.

6. Independence of the legal profession

Covenant article: 14

Follow-up to CCPR/C/UZB/CO/5, paras. 38–39 — lack of independence of the Chamber of Lawyers from the Ministry of Justice, and recertification of lawyers used for political purposes; para. 39 (c) recommended guaranteeing that independence in law and practice.

16. Pressure has since moved from professional sanction to prosecution. **Abdulaziz Razzokov**, a practising defence lawyer, is serving a prison sentence. In June 2026 two organisations asked the Ombudsperson to assess independently the legality of operational-search measures directed at him as a practising lawyer, the protection of lawyer–client confidentiality, the alleged non-disclosure of exculpatory material, allegations of torture and pressure, and his access to medical assistance²⁵. They also asked for a thematic study of the safeguards of the legal profession — a request which itself

²²Law No. LRU-1002 of 15 November 2024 on the Ombudsperson, arts. 10, 12, 23–25, 42 and 47–50, lex.uz/docs/7223295.

²³F. Eshmatova, Commissioner of the Oliy Majlis for Human Rights, "Взгляд на деятельность Омбудсмана: как разрешаются обращения граждан?" [A look at the work of the Ombudsperson: how are citizens' complaints resolved?], YuzNews, 29 April 2023.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Justice pour Tous Internationale and TOLEGRO Attorneys at Law Bureau, "Joint Request to the Uzbek Ombudsman for Intervention in the Case of Imprisoned Lawyer Abdulaziz Razzokov", 3 July 2026 (request submitted 29 June 2026). Available at jpti.ch.

indicates that none exists. His case has been before the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention since December 2025.

17. At the other end of the profession, monitoring of prosecutions under **Article 120. Homosexual Intercourse** of the Criminal Code records that retained lawyers decline such cases for fear of losing their licence, and that appointed defenders do not attend interrogations, file no motions, and press defendants to confess and to name sexual partners.

Proposed questions

- Further to paragraph 39 (c), please describe the measures taken to guarantee the independence of the Chamber of Lawyers.
- Please indicate what mechanisms ensure that appointed defence counsel provide effective assistance, and the number of complaints about their conduct and their outcomes.

7. Mandatory HIV testing

Covenant articles: 7, 12, 17, 23, 26

Follow-up to CCPR/C/UZB/CO/5, para. 10, on the mandatory disclosure of private medical information, and para. 9 (a), on comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation covering all grounds prohibited under the Covenant.

18. Under Law LRU-353²⁶, HIV testing is compulsory for persons under fifty who are marrying, pregnant women, persons suspected of injecting drug use, and others. Article 16 provides that compulsory testing is carried out **without consent**, and since 2019 may be ordered by an official of a body conducting a **pre-investigation check** — before any criminal case is opened.

19. **The 2025 extension.** At its ninth plenary session on 1 August 2025 the Senate approved²⁷ a Law amending LRU-353, the Law on Private Employment Agencies and the Law on Employment of the Population. Testing is now compulsory for citizens aged eighteen to sixty who remain abroad ninety days or more, for foreign nationals and stateless persons permanently residing, and for those arriving to work; non-nationals bear the cost themselves, and **detection of HIV or tuberculosis is a ground for refusing confirmation of the right to work**. The justification recorded is instructive: of 1.7 million citizens who returned from abroad in 2024, 434,000 were voluntarily tested and 1,512 diagnosed. The response to a 25 per cent uptake of voluntary testing was compulsion. A separate Ministry of Health order of January 2024 lists occupations prohibited to persons living with HIV.

Proposed questions

- Please explain how compulsory HIV testing carried out without the consent of the person concerned, including at the direction of an official conducting a pre-investigation check before any criminal case is opened, is compatible with articles 7 and 17; and how testing as a condition of civil marriage is compatible with articles 17, 23 and 26.

²⁶ Law No. LRU-353 of 23 September 2013 on countering the spread of the disease caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (text as at 21 April 2021), lex.uz/docs/2240472. Article 16 as amended by Law No. LRU-542 of 23 May 2019. The list of prohibited occupations was approved by Ministry of Health order No. 1 of 10 January 2024, reg. No. 3497 of 19 February 2024.

²⁷ Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan, «Сенаторы одобрили важный Закон, направленный на охрану здоровья населения» [Senators approved an important Law directed at protecting the health of the population], ninth plenary session, [1 August 2025]. Available at senat.uz/ru/plenary-sessions/post-3923 (accessed 20 August 2026).

- Further to paragraph 10, please describe the safeguards protecting the confidentiality of HIV status, indicate to which authorities a positive result must be notified, and provide the number of complaints of unlawful disclosure and of officials or health workers disciplined.

8. Criminalisation of HIV

Covenant articles: 17, 26

| *Connected to CCPR/C/UZB/CO/5, paras. 9 and 10.*

20. Law No. LRU-1151 **repealed article 113 of the Criminal Code and re-enacted its content as article 276⁹**, within a chapter renamed "**Crimes against the health and gene pool of the population**". People living with HIV are thereby placed, as a matter of the Code's own architecture, in the same chapter as drug laboratories and poisonous substances.

21. The penalties are graduated by diagnosis rather than by conduct. Exposing another person to a sexually transmitted infection attracts a fine or community work; transmitting one, a ladder rising to three years. **Knowingly placing another person in danger of HIV infection, or infecting them, carries five to eight years' imprisonment with no non-custodial alternative** — a higher minimum than aggravated transmission of a sexually transmitted infection to a minor. Exposure alone suffices; the provision does not exempt a person with an undetectable viral load who cannot transmit HIV²⁸.

22. The offence is locked to the treatment pathway. Article 17 of Law LRU-353 provides that medical assistance is given **only after** a person is entered on the dispensary register, and article 13 provides that on detection of HIV the person is entered on that register **and warned in writing of criminal liability**. Article 276⁹ of the Criminal Code punishes only a person who acts knowingly. A person therefore cannot obtain antiretroviral treatment without generating the State record of their status and the proof of awareness that the offence requires.

Proposed questions

- Please explain the reasons for repealing article 113 and re-enacting its content within a chapter entitled "Crimes against the health and gene pool of the population", and how that classification is compatible with articles 17 and 26.
- Please explain why exposure to HIV without transmission is punishable by five to eight years' imprisonment with no non-custodial alternative, and indicate whether an undetectable viral load, or disclosure to and acceptance of risk by a partner, constitutes a defence.
- Please explain how requiring entry on the dispensary register as a precondition of treatment, with a written warning of criminal liability on entry, is compatible with the obligation not to deter people from seeking care.

9. Raids, arbitrary arrest and article 120 of the Criminal Code

Covenant articles: 7, 9, 17, 26

²⁸ UNAIDS, *Undetectable = untransmittable: public health and HIV viral load suppression*, UNAIDS explainer, 2024 updated version, Geneva.

*Follow-up to CCPR/C/UZB/CO/5, paras. 10–11 — extortion, arbitrary arrest, torture and sexual abuse of LGBT persons including in detention, impunity, and mandatory disclosure of private medical information; para. 11 (c) recommended **repeal of article 120.***

23. Article 120 has not been repealed and prosecutions have increased. Between **5 and 7 February 2025** two coordinated national operations were conducted. Under "Oriyat", 340 establishments were checked and **2,957 people were subjected to explanatory interviews and medical examination**; 93 criminal cases followed. Under "Koradori", **1,401 people were detained** on suspicion of distributing or using drugs, and 269 criminal cases followed — so the large majority were deprived of liberty with nothing following.²⁹

24. Monitoring during these and subsequent operations records mass seizure of telephones and use of the messages and contacts found there to extort money or sexual favours and to identify others; referral for forced anal examination; confiscation without warrants; and entry of personal data into undisclosed databases. Between December 2025 and February 2026 monitors recorded 102 violations based on sexual orientation or gender identity, including 12 criminal cases under article 120³⁰.

Proposed questions

- Further to paragraph 11 (c), please indicate whether the State party intends to repeal article 120.
- Please provide the legal basis for the operations conducted as "Oriyat" and "Koradori"; state what the medical examination of 2,957 people consisted of, on what basis and with what consent it was conducted, and with whom results were shared.

10. Sex workers

Covenant articles: 2 (3), 7, 9, 17, 26

Not previously addressed in relation to Uzbekistan. Connected to CCPR/C/UZB/CO/5, para. 28, on fundamental legal safeguards not afforded in practice to all persons deprived of liberty.

25. Under article 190 of the Code of Administrative Responsibility, engaging in prostitution attracts a fine of three to seven BCU. Where the same conduct is repeated **within one year** of a previous penalty, the fine rises to seven to ten units **or administrative arrest of up to fifteen days**.³¹ Third-party involvement is criminalised. The combined effect is that safe working conditions are unavailable as a matter of law and contact with law enforcement is constant. Documented practice includes raids, compulsory HIV and sexually transmitted infection testing, requirements to produce test certificates, pressure to cooperate with police, and informal extortion.³² At the current base calculation value the first-offence fine is between roughly one and two and a half months of the statutory minimum wage, and the repeat fine between two and three months — so for most people the practical alternative on a second occasion is detention.

²⁹Масштабные операции «Ориат» и «Корадори» в Узбекистане: результаты" [Large-scale operations "Oriyat" and "Koradori" in Uzbekistan: results], nuz.uz, 9 February 2025, reporting official data for operations conducted 5–7 February 2025.

³⁰ RISE/Decriminalize, "Increasing pressure on civil society and marginalized communities in EECA", Project RESILIENT Update, March 2026, 12 March 2026, [resilient-update-mar-2026](https://resilient-update-mar-2026.risedecriminalize.org/).

³¹Code of Administrative Responsibility, art. 190, lex.uz/docs/97664.

³² HIV Legal Network (CHALN) & Eurasian Harm Reduction Association (EHRA). (2022). *Joint submission* [Stakeholder submission to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, review of Uzbekistan]. UN Doc. INT/CESCR/CSS/UZB/47615

26. The consequence is a barrier to remedy. Direct exposure to administrative sanction deters sex workers from reporting extortion, police abuse, sexual violence and other physical violence — particularly where the alleged perpetrator is a law enforcement official — for fear of identification, penalty or further discriminatory treatment. This deters them from seeking police protection or pursuing complaints, and thereby increases their exposure to violence and exploitation. Article 2 (3) requires a remedy that is accessible in practice, not only in form.

27. **State-funded legal aid is largely unavailable to them.** Under Law No. LRU-848 of 16 June 2023, legal aid at the expense of the State is provided in administrative-offence cases only where two conditions are met: the person must be formally registered as low-income through the Unified Register of Social Protection, and the offence must be one carrying administrative arrest.³³ A sex worker facing a first charge under article 190, which carries only a fine, therefore has no entitlement at all; and on a repeat charge the entitlement depends on being entered in a State database, which for this population is itself a disclosure. Where the request is not matched to the register, it is not registered in the legal-assistance system.

28. The same framework obstructs health access. Sex workers are recognised as a key population in Uzbekistan's HIV response and are among the groups requiring targeted prevention, testing and treatment. Article 190 penalises the conduct that defines that population. The result is that the legal framework which identifies sex workers as needing services simultaneously deters them from approaching health and other public services, including after experiencing violence or abuse. For sex workers living with HIV the deterrent is compounded by article 276⁹ of the Criminal Code, under which reporting a rape may expose the complainant to prosecution for exposure.

Proposed questions

- Please indicate whether the State party has considered removing administrative liability for selling sex.
- Please explain how a person charged under article 190 obtains legal assistance. Please indicate how many persons received State-funded assistance in administrative-offence cases in each year since 2023.

11. Freedom of association and expression

Covenant articles: 19, 21, 22

Follow-up to CCPR/C/UZB/CO/5, paras. 44–49 — restrictions on registration of NGOs, the extensive list of grounds for denial, the requirement of Ministry of Justice approval for foreign funding, undue restrictions on peaceful assembly, and blocking of online platforms on vaguely defined criteria.

29. Amendments³⁴ to nine laws signed on 21 August 2025 added further obligations: quarterly publication of information on foreign funds received; extension of foreign-funding reporting to individuals and to entities other than NGOs engaged in research or the non-commercial dissemination

³³ Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. LRU-848 of 16 June 2023 on the provision of legal aid at the expense of the State, in force 18 September 2023. Uzbek text: lex.uz/docs/6906878.

³⁴ CIVICUS Monitor, "New risks confront civil society in Uzbekistan", report prepared by the International Partnership for Human Rights and the Association for Human Rights in Central Asia, 20 July 2026, covering developments from June 2025 to May 2026.

of information; new grounds for refusing registration; and a ban on using foreign funds to "influence" elections, undefined. The instruments amended are the Laws on Non-Governmental Non-Commercial Organisations, Public Foundations, Charity, Social Partnership, Public Control, Guarantees of NNO Activity and State Dues, together with the Tax Code and the Code of Administrative Responsibility. The requirement of Ministry of Justice approval for foreign grants, which the Committee identified in 2020, remains.

30. A new restriction bears directly on the subject-matter of this submission. **Article 276⁵ of the Criminal Code**, introduced in June 2026, makes the production or distribution of products propagandising potent substances — including online — a criminal offence where committed after an administrative penalty, punishable by a fine of 150 to 300 BCU or up to two years' imprisonment. Neither "propaganda" nor "products propagandising" is defined, and no exemption exists for health, harm reduction or HIV prevention information.

Proposed questions

- Please indicate how the prohibition in article 276⁵ of the Criminal Code of "propaganda" of potent substances, including online, is distinguished in practice from the provision of health, harm reduction, overdose prevention and HIV prevention information; whether any exemption exists for such information; and how many persons have been penalised under that article and under articles 56² and 56⁴ of the Code of Administrative Responsibility.
- Please indicate what measures ensure that organisations working on drug policy, harm reduction, HIV and the rights of LGBTIQ+ persons and sex workers can register and operate lawfully, and the number of such organisations currently registered.