



Country Reports on Terrorism 2020: Uzbekistan

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Uzbekistan

Overview: The Government of Uzbekistan remained concerned about the potential spillover of terrorism from Afghanistan and its Central Asian neighbors, the return of ISIS fighters from Iraq and Syria, and terrorist radicalization of Uzbekistanis abroad. The government repatriated 98 FTF family members from Syria in 2020. The government has actively worked to improve its implementation of existing laws, including updating existing anti-money laundering/countering financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) legislation, but it has not yet adopted a draft national CT strategy and action plan. Uzbekistan continued its active cooperation with others in the region and beyond, including in security. Uzbekistan remains an active participant in the C5+1 diplomatic platform, which includes a focus on CVE.

2020 Terrorist Incidents: There were no reported terrorist incidents in Uzbekistan in 2020.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: There were no significant changes to nonfinancial terrorism-related legislation and law enforcement practices in 2020. The Law on Combating Terrorism governs terrorism-related investigations and prosecutions and identifies the State Security Service (DXX) as the lead CT law enforcement agency. The DXX, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the National Guard have dedicated CT units. Uzbekistan

also criminalizes terrorism under its criminal code, and the National Development Strategy for 2017-21 targets corruption, extremism, and terrorism.

Uzbekistani law enforcement maintains its own terrorist watchlist and contributes to INTERPOL databases. Most border posts and airports are equipped with biometric data scanners. Uzbekistan has implemented an international biometric passport. Also, while Uzbekistan had mostly completed the conversion of all internal passports to a new biometric version, in 2020 it adopted a resolution to replace all internal passports with a new ID card. Uzbekistan will begin issuing the new ID cards in 2021 and completely phase out internal passports by 2030.

Uzbekistan has reported the development of an API/PNR system in line with requirements under UNSCRs 2309 and 2396. The government expects to complete the pilot phase by 2021. Additionally, Uzbekistan participated in a national-level workshop implemented by UNODC on compliance with UNSCR 2396 in December.

International human rights NGOs criticized Uzbekistani laws relating to extremism, arguing these laws allowed for arbitrary interpretation and application.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Uzbekistan belongs to the EAG, and Uzbekistan's FIU is a member of the Egmont Group. Existing AML/CFT legislation was amended in 2020 to require commercial banks to report on transfers abroad of more than \$10,000 per month by individuals and to require payment processing services and electronic money platforms to conduct customer due diligence, risk management for money laundering, and the detection of suspicious transactions. These two developments should enhance Uzbekistan's ability to combat terrorist financing. But serious questions remain about the effectiveness of Uzbekistan's battle against terrorist financing. Government officials received U.S.-funded training in 2020 that will support the ability to conduct financial investigations, improve interagency coordination on AML/CFT, and prepare for the upcoming EAG assessment of Uzbekistan's compliance with international FATF standards in 2021.

Countering Violent Extremism: Uzbekistan remains concerned about the so-called radicalization of Uzbekistanis, including among labor migrants in Russia and other countries. Local government organizations continued to educate citizens about the dangers of what they call religious extremism. International human rights observers have voiced concerns that authorities have in the past used extremism laws to arbitrarily suppress religious practice. The government has developed advertisements and funded other projects specifically targeting migrants deemed to be at high risk of terrorist radicalization. Official media and civil

society organizations produced public messages about the dangers of so-called extremism and posted them on social media platforms and messaging apps.

The Government of Uzbekistan has publicly endorsed the repatriation and formal prosecution of citizens previously engaged or suspected of being engaged in terrorist activities. It has also endorsed the repatriation, rehabilitation, and reintegration of all family members of FTFs. In 2020 the government repatriated 98 FTF family members from Syria, bringing the total number of Uzbekistani nationals repatriated from Syria and Iraq in the government's "Mehr" operations to 318. The government continues to work to reintegrate FTF-associated family members into their home communities and has identified suitable families for unaccompanied minors or placed them in orphanages. In close cooperation with UNICEF, the government provided a mix of national- and local-level social services to help reintegrate the returnees and continually monitors their progress.

The national strategy on "Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Terrorism," developed in 2019 by an interagency working group coordinated by the Uzbekistani National Security Council and supported by the OSCE, remains under review by the Cabinet of Ministers. Formal adoption is expected in 2021. The government continued to play an active role in the Central Asia + United States regional CVE framework. This included a virtual C5+1 regional workshop on CVE.

International and Regional Cooperation: Uzbekistan is a member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. In 2020, Uzbekistan continued its participation in the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee and the OSCE Action Against Terrorism Unit. During the 2020 SCO Summit, President Mirziyoyev proposed increased cooperation and information sharing among member states in countering the threats of terrorism and extremism. SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure remains headquartered in Tashkent, and Uzbekistan participated in its Peace Mission 2020 exercise, held in Russia. Uzbekistan also remains engaged in CT-related activities with the Commonwealth of Independent States, of which it held the Chairmanship of the Executive Committee in 2020. In December, Uzbekistan and Russia conducted a joint military exercise in Uzbekistan with a CT focus. In addition, Uzbekistan continued bilateral cooperation with other countries related to CT issues, including India and the PRC.

In 2020, U.S. Central Command in coordination with supporting DoD agencies conducted CT and border security activities with the Ministry of Defense, the National Guard, and the Border Troops of the DXX. These included exchanges and CT-focused seminars. From

February 24 through March 2, Uzbekistan hosted the bilateral Invincible Sentry 20 exercise with USCENTCOM and other U.S. government agencies. The exercise was designed to build readiness and interoperability between U.S. and Uzbekistan forces in response to regional crises or contingencies. Uzbekistan continued its active engagement in the C5+1 diplomatic platform, including a Security Working Group meeting in November. The government also hosted or participated in U.S.-funded regional lessons-learned workshops on repatriation and reintegration, including a large event attended by all Central Asian countries in March that was hosted in Tashkent.

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