

**CRIMINAL LAW MECHANISMS FOR COMBATING DRUG ADDICTION AND
DRUG-RELATED CRIMES IN UZBEKISTAN**

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Abstract: The article analyzes the criminal law mechanisms for combating drug addiction and drug-related crimes in Uzbekistan. The study highlights the negative impact of drug-related crimes on society, offenses committed among youth, and preventive measures aimed at their prevention. It also examines preventive activities carried out through local communities (mahalla), families, and educational institutions, as well as legal liability and the implementation of international experience. The article demonstrates the effectiveness of legal and social mechanisms in combating drug addiction and drug-related crimes and emphasizes their importance in ensuring public safety and public health.

Keywords: drug addiction, drug-related crime, criminal law mechanisms, preventive measures, youth, legal liability, public safety, mahalla, family, educational institutions.

Drug addiction and drug-related crimes in the Republic of Uzbekistan constitute one of the most serious social and legal problems that pose a threat to public safety, public health, and national development. The expansion of the illegal circulation of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances not only leads to an increase in crime rates but also results in moral degradation among youth, health-related problems, and growing social instability. Therefore, combating this phenomenon has been identified as one of the priority areas of state policy, requiring a comprehensive and systematic approach.

In Uzbekistan, criminal law mechanisms play a crucial role in combating drug addiction and drug-related crimes, aiming to prevent, detect, and impose fair punishment for such offenses. The clear establishment of liability in criminal legislation for acts related to the illegal circulation of narcotic drugs serves as an important factor in crime prevention. Moreover, criminal law mechanisms function as effective tools for coordinating the activities of law enforcement agencies, uncovering crimes, and bringing offenders to justice. In recent years, special attention has been paid to improving legislation in this field, introducing international experience, and strengthening preventive measures. This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the criminal law mechanisms for combating drug addiction and drug-related crimes in Uzbekistan, their essence, and practical significance.

Narcotic drugs are substances that exert psychotropic effects and cause harm to the human body, and their regular use has a serious negative impact on health [1; 2025]. These substances directly affect the central nervous system, causing severe negative changes in a person's mental state, behavior, and cognitive abilities. Continuous use of narcotic drugs leads to the development of strong dependence, gradually depriving individuals of the ability to control their actions. This condition creates serious social problems not only for individual health but also for

family stability and society as a whole. Drug addiction is recognized as one of the main causes of chronic diseases, mental disorders, and premature death. Furthermore, crimes committed by individuals under the influence of drugs pose a significant threat to public safety. The widespread prevalence of drug addiction negatively affects the moral and ethical upbringing of the younger generation and hinders the formation of a healthy lifestyle. Therefore, preventing drug use, reducing its harmful consequences, and increasing legal and medical awareness among the population remain urgent tasks.

The criminological study of crimes related to narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances among youth, identification of criminogenic factors contributing to such crimes, and development of effective preventive measures are among the key directions in the fight against crime today [2; 2025]. Social environment, family upbringing, economic conditions, and the moral and ethical level of individuals play a significant role in the emergence of these crimes. In particular, youth unemployment, difficulties in organizing meaningful leisure time, and exposure to negative environments act as factors increasing susceptibility to drug addiction. Criminological analysis makes it possible to identify the dynamics, regional characteristics, and level of social danger of youth crime. This, in turn, contributes to more effective organization of activities by law enforcement agencies, educational institutions, and public organizations. Moral and educational work, legal awareness campaigns, and psychological assistance are of great importance in preventing drug-related crimes among youth. Developing preventive measures on a scientific basis allows addressing the root causes of crime and eliminating the conditions that give rise to it. As a result, protecting young people from drug addiction and ensuring their development as healthy and well-rounded individuals becomes an important guarantee of social stability and state security.

On May 6, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev signed a decree on strategic measures aimed at preventing the negative impact of the illegal circulation of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances on public health and the nation's gene pool [3; 2024]. This decree marked a new stage in state policy on combating drug addiction and is recognized as an important legal document aimed at strengthening prevention, control, and punitive mechanisms. The decree emphasizes improving the activities of law enforcement agencies, strengthening interagency cooperation, and introducing modern approaches in combating illegal drug circulation. It also identifies reducing drug addiction among the population—especially youth—promoting a healthy lifestyle, and strengthening moral and educational work as key objectives. The implementation of the decree предусматривает improving criminal law measures, strengthening liability for drug-related crimes, and developing effective prevention mechanisms. In addition, expanding international cooperation and exchanging experience with foreign states and international organizations in combating transnational drug crime are highlighted as important directions. This decree promotes the formation of a comprehensive system that integrates social, legal, and medical approaches rather than relying solely on punitive measures. As a result, these strategic measures play a significant role in strengthening public health, ensuring social security, and protecting the national gene pool in Uzbekistan.

“Drug-related crimes belong to the category of extremely dangerous crimes for society, as they intensify not only criminal activity but also other social vices” [4; 2021]. Such crimes lead to violations of public order and contribute to the formation of fear and distrust among the population. Drug-related crimes are often closely linked with theft, robbery, violence, and other serious offenses, increasing the complexity and social danger of criminal activity. At the same time, these crimes negatively affect the moral upbringing of the younger generation and undermine healthy lifestyles. The spread of drug-related crimes also places a significant burden on healthcare, social protection, and law enforcement systems. The widespread nature of such

crimes is considered a factor threatening national security. Therefore, combating drug-related crimes requires not only punitive measures but also the implementation of comprehensive preventive, social, and legal mechanisms.

Preventive measures should be implemented through collective responsibility within local communities (mahalla), families, and educational institutions [5; 2022]. These social institutions play a decisive role in shaping an individual's worldview and behavior. The mahalla system enables continuous monitoring of the social conditions of the population—especially youth—early identification of problematic situations, and their timely resolution. In the family environment, healthy upbringing, parental responsibility, and regular communication with children are among the most effective preventive tools against drug addiction. Educational institutions play a crucial role in increasing legal awareness, promoting healthy lifestyles, and providing in-depth knowledge about the consequences of harmful habits. Cooperation among these three key institutions significantly enhances the effectiveness of preventive measures. Preventive activities based on collective responsibility help prevent social indifference and foster active civic engagement among citizens. As a result, sustainable and long-term positive outcomes in preventing drug addiction and related crimes can be achieved.

In the United States, the “Drug-Free Communities” program widely applies preventive measures in cooperation with youth groups at the local level, motivational and practical seminars in schools under the slogan “Say No to Drugs,” and peer-to-peer education methods among youth [6; 2023]. This experience demonstrates the effectiveness of approaches based not only on official propaganda but also on mutual communication and trust among young people. Peer-to-peer education, in particular, has a stronger impact on youth consciousness and contributes to forming a stable negative attitude toward harmful habits. Therefore, implementing such advanced practices in Uzbekistan could play an important role in preventing drug addiction. Integrating these programs into the activities of mahallas, educational institutions, and youth organizations would expand the scope of preventive efforts. Organizing motivational seminars, training sessions, and practical workshops in schools and higher education institutions would enhance youth legal and moral awareness. Additionally, training active and socially responsible youth as peer leaders would help develop effective advocacy networks. As a result, preventive approaches based on U.S. experience may serve as effective mechanisms in combating drug addiction and related crimes in Uzbekistan.

In recent years, systematic reforms and comprehensive preventive measures implemented in the country to combat crime have begun to yield positive results. In particular, mechanisms for early crime prevention have been improved through cooperation between law enforcement agencies, mahalla institutions, and the public. Awareness-raising efforts aimed at increasing legal consciousness and culture among the population have played an important role in forming immunity against crime. Targeted work with youth and socially vulnerable groups has helped reduce the influence of criminogenic factors. Strengthening the activities of preventive inspectors and establishing effective territorial security systems have significantly reduced the risk of crime. At the same time, measures aimed at strengthening socio-economic stability have also had a positive impact on reducing crime rates. As a result of this comprehensive approach, improvements in public order and security have been achieved. Across the republic, 11,725 preventable crimes were recorded, representing a 26 percent decrease compared to the previous year [2; 2025].

In Uzbekistan, a number of systemic measures are being implemented to improve criminal law mechanisms for combating drug addiction and drug-related crimes. In particular, the Criminal Code has clarified provisions establishing liability for crimes involving narcotic drugs

and psychotropic substances, and practices have been introduced to strengthen penalties in proportion to their social danger. Within the framework of operational-search activities, mechanisms for early detection, prevention, and combating transnational drug trafficking are being expanded. In judicial practice, special attention is paid to individualizing punishment, thoroughly analyzing the offender's personality and the consequences of the offense. Alongside criminal law measures, the legal foundations for compulsory treatment, rehabilitation, and social reintegration mechanisms are being strengthened. Measures aimed at confiscating illegal proceeds and restricting financial sources derived from drug trafficking are also being implemented to weaken the economic foundations of drug crime. International legal cooperation—including information exchange and joint operations with neighboring and foreign states—remains an important component of criminal law mechanisms. As a result, these mechanisms serve to ensure the rule of law and strengthen public safety in the fight against drug addiction and drug-related crimes.

In conclusion, combating drug addiction and drug-related crimes in Uzbekistan is one of the priority areas of state policy, and effective criminal law mechanisms are being consistently improved in this regard. Strengthening the legislative framework, clarifying liability measures, and enhancing the activities of law enforcement agencies play an important role in preventing drug-related crimes. At the same time, preventive measures carried out in cooperation with mahallas, families, and educational institutions contribute to the formation of a comprehensive approach to combating drug addiction. The introduction of international experience and modern criminological approaches further increases the effectiveness of measures in this field. Efforts aimed at forming legal awareness and healthy lifestyles among youth remain key factors in addressing the root causes of drug addiction. Alongside criminal law measures, the development of rehabilitation and social reintegration mechanisms ensures a humane approach. Overall, harmonizing legal, social, and moral measures makes it possible to strengthen public safety and protect public health in the fight against drug addiction and drug-related crimes.

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