

A CRITIQUE OF THE COMMUNITY SELF-MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION
MAHALLA AND ITS COMPLICITY IN GOVERNMENT REPRESSION
IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract

This research paper presents a study of *Mahalla*, a traditional neighborhood community management body in Uzbekistan, and its relationship with the local and central governments of that country. This work attempts a study of the Uzbek *Mahalla*, discussing both the government motivations and the impact of this management structure on the people, as well as the possible victimization of *Mahalla* and its residents. Multiple sources are consulted to provide an encompassing analysis of both the structure and the application of the law. The hypothesis in this work is that, although *Mahalla* is codified as an independent entity, it comes under control of the government due to the undemocratic nature of the regime in order to perpetuate its ideological agenda. First, a historical analysis of *Mahalla* is provided, from its ancient roots through Soviet times and its contemporary reincarnation. Next, the legal premise of *Mahalla*'s current manifestation is described, with emphasis on how the laws governing *Mahalla* are contradictory to other legislation, including the country's Constitution. Lastly, examples that elucidate the application of law toward the *Mahalla* and its practices show that legal and extralegal pressure are exerted on *Mahalla* by the central and local government authorities at the behest of the regime. In conclusion, the hypothesis that *Mahalla* is legally and extra-legally controlled by the government is proven. *Mahalla* is demonstrated to be used by the government as a tool of repression against the Uzbek people, rather than in its intended capacity as a means to organize residents into communities with social networking and mutual assistance opportunities.