A CRITIQUE OF THE COMMUNITY SELF-MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION

_MAHALLA_ AND ITS COMPLICITY IN GOVERNMENT REPRESSION

IN UZBEKISTAN

A THESIS

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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.