

Political parties in Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan has a presidential system of government. The president, Islam Karimov, has played a principal role in all areas of the political landscape since independence in 1991. Although some recent steps empower the legislature against the executive, all political parties represented in parliament are pro-regime and far from providing political alternatives.

The executive

Article 98 of the [constitution](#) stipulates that executive power is exercised by the Cabinet of Ministers which is accountable both to the parliament and the president. The cabinet ensures the execution of laws and other decisions issued by the parliament and decrees and orders of the president. Since the 2014 constitutional amendments, the political party holding the majority in parliament proposes a candidate for the post of prime minister. After considering the nominee, the president proposes him/her for consideration and approval by each chamber of the parliament. [Shavkat Mirziyoyev](#) has been prime minister since 2003.

The president is the head of state and is elected by absolute majority vote through a two-round system. [Islam Karimov](#), the last Communist Party leader from the Soviet era, was elected as the first president of the Republic of Uzbekistan in December 1991. Karimov was challenged by Muhammed Salih, leader of the opposition [Erk \(Freedom\) Party](#), but the election was regarded as '[seriously marred](#)'. President Karimov subsequently [banned](#) the oppositionist [Erk Party](#) and [Birlik \(Unity\) Party](#); their leaders fled the country and lived in exile after the [crackdown](#) against the opposition intensified.

A referendum in 1995 extended Karimov's mandate until 2000. Karimov was re-elected for a five-year period in January 2000, capturing 91.9% of the votes. In January 2002, constitutional amendments extended the tenure of the president from five to seven years, enabling Karimov to stay in post until 2007. He won by a landslide in the [2007 presidential election](#), having received 90.7% of the votes. In 2008, constitutional amendments abolished the possibility of running for president as an independent candidate. In 2011, the length of the presidential term was [changed](#) back from seven to five years. Despite the clear limit on the presidential term set by the constitution (Article 90), the [Central Election Commission](#) registered Karimov as a candidate on the grounds that previous terms served before the amendment did [not count](#) towards the two-term limit. Islam Karimov, capturing 90.39% of the votes, was elected for a fourth term in the 29 March 2015 elections.

The legislature

Uzbekistan has a bicameral parliament, *Oliy Majlis* (Supreme Assembly). The upper chamber, [Senat](#) (Senate), of the parliament is the chamber of territorial representation. According to the [Law on the Senat](#), the 12 provinces, along with the capital Tashkent and the (autonomous) Republic of Karakalpakstan, are represented equally in the Senate (six persons each). Senate members serve a five-year term: 84 are indirectly elected by secret vote from among the local councils and 16 are appointed from among the most distinguished citizens by the president. Establishment of groups on territorial, political or other grounds in the Senate is prohibited.

The 150-member [Qonunchilik Palatasi](#) (legislative chamber) is the parliament's lower chamber. When the number of seats in the lower chamber was increased from 120 to 150 in 2008, so as to increase the number of parties represented, 15 seats were reserved without election for the [Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan](#) (EMU), which is [regarded](#) as 'an important factor in increasing the role of the parliament in addressing environmental issues'. The remaining 135 members of the chamber are elected on the basis of a majoritarian system in single-mandate constituencies. Candidates are declared elected if they obtain more than 50% of the votes. If this condition is not met, a second round of elections takes place between the two leading candidates.

The parliament has been steadily [gaining](#) more responsibilities after a series of constitutional amendments. On 16 April 2014, President Karimov [signed](#) the amendments which granted the parliament the right to exercise

oversight over the government. Moreover, the parliament gained the right to dismiss the government with a no-confidence vote. These steps to boost the parliament's influence have been seen as [improvements](#) towards restoring the checks and balances between the legislative and executive branches of government.

Political parties represented in Parliament

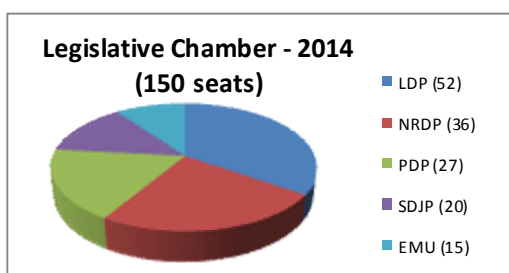
[The Liberal Democratic Party of Uzbekistan \(LDP\)](#), founded in 2003, defines itself as 'a staunch supporter of the ideas forming the country's free, socially oriented market economy, democratic state and a strong civil society [and] a broad political party and civil society movement for liberalisation of all the spheres of life in Uzbekistan'. LDP took part in the elections to the Legislative Chamber for the first time in the 2004 parliamentary elections, capturing 34.2% of the votes and gaining 41 of the 120 seats. Its seats increased to 150 in 2008. It ranked first in the 2009 and 2014 elections, winning 53 and 52 seats respectively. LDP's nominee for the 2007 and 2015 presidential elections was Islam Karimov.

First established in 1995, the [National Revival \(Milly Tiklanish\) Democratic Party \(NRDP\)](#) later merged with the National Democratic Party (*Fidokorlar*) in June 2008. Before the merger, *Fidokorlar* and *Milli Tiklanish* had 18 and 11 parliamentary seats respectively. NRDP encourages Uzbeks to grow their national consciousness, nurture and strengthen their national pride, fidelity and love for their country. Based on these values, it is critical of Russia's influence over Uzbekistan. In the most recent parliamentary elections, NRDP won 36 seats, ranking second after the LDP. NRDP nominated Akmal Saidov for the presidential elections in 2015. Akmal Saidov received 3.08% of the votes, far behind Karimov's 90.39%.

The [People's Democratic Party \(PDP\)](#), founded in 1991, is the heir of the Communist Party of the Uzbek SSR. In terms of membership, it is the biggest party in the country. PDP's [programme](#) focuses on social policies and one of its objectives is the 'protection of the interests of the general population, who are in need of targeted and social protection of the state and society'. PDP supported Islam Karimov in the 1991 presidential elections but nominated its chairman Khotamjon Ketmonov for those in 2015, in which he got 2.92% of the votes. PDP came third in the 2014 legislative elections, getting 27 of the 150 seats.

The [Social Democratic Justice \(Adolat\) Party \(SDJP\)](#), founded in 1995, [aims](#) at intensifying democratic processes that strengthen national independence and places special attention on trade unions and vulnerable sections of the population, such as low-income families. *Adolat* Party had 11 seats after its first participation in the elections held in 1999 for the then 250-member parliament. It got ten out of 120 seats in the 2004 elections, 19 seats in those of 2009, and 20 seats in the 2014 elections. Its nominee for the 2015 presidential elections, Narimon Umarov, received 2.05% of the votes.

The [Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan \(EMU\)](#), founded in 2008, [aims](#) at ensuring environmental and public health protection, which is among the priorities of the government. EMU places [special attention](#) on the drying up of the Aral Sea and the Rogun Dam construction, the latter creating [disputes](#) between upstream (Tajikistan) and downstream (Uzbekistan) countries. The EMU does not take part in the parliamentary elections. The 15 members representing the EMU in parliament are designated by its supreme body.



Uzbekistan bans the existence of opposition parties, [religious parties](#) and movements. Given that amendments to the [Elections Law](#) in 2008 bar independent candidates from standing, only pro-government parties are allowed to field candidates for the legislative chamber elections. This limitation has evoked [criticism](#) that 'genuinely independent voices have not been allowed to register and participate in the elections'.

Uzbekistan and the EU

Bilateral relations between Uzbekistan and the EU have been governed by a [Partnership and Cooperation Agreement \(PCA\)](#) since 1999. The [EU imposed sanctions](#) on Uzbekistan in 2005 after the authorities rejected calls for an international inquiry into the [events in Andijan](#). Commission President, José Manuel Barroso had a meeting with Islam Karimov in Brussels on 24 January 2011, when a Memorandum of Understanding regarding energy relations was [signed](#). On 23 October 2014, the EP adopted a [resolution](#) on the human rights situation in Uzbekistan, calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all persons imprisoned on politically motivated charges. The 12th meeting of the Cooperation Council between the EU and Uzbekistan was [held](#) on 18 May 2015.