

Liability of Civil Servants in Uzbekistan

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Abstract: This article examines the ongoing reforms in the public administration system of Uzbekistan, particularly focusing on the recently enacted Law on State Civil Service. It highlights the significance of improving civil service efficiency as a cornerstone for developing a democratic state that prioritizes citizen welfare. The article details the legal framework surrounding the responsibilities, rights, and liabilities of civil servants, emphasizing the distinct nature of civil liability compared to other forms of accountability. The analysis addresses the challenges of implementing these reforms, including the need for effective training, public trust, and ethical conduct among civil servants. It also discusses the mechanisms of accountability established by law, proposing recommendations for enhancing civil servant performance and fostering a culture of integrity. Ultimately, the article underscores the importance of both legal and moral dimensions in realizing a transparent and accountable civil service that serves the interests of the public.

Keywords: civil service, civil servant, legal, contravention, criminal, disciplinary, material liability

Introduction.

Recognising the need for a more effective and responsible civil service, the Republic of Uzbekistan started a major overhaul of its civil service system. These reforms are essential for strengthening legislative frameworks, guaranteeing openness in governance, and improving the operational capacities of governmental bodies. Prioritizing human interests is at the core of this change, as embodied in the tenet that "the people must not serve the government; rather, the government must serve the people." An important turning point in this reform process was reached on August 8, 2022, with the passage of the Law on State Civil Service. This law outlines the rights, obligations, and categories of civil officials in addition to clarifying their legal position. The law seeks to improve public trust in government institutions and cultivate a favourable perception of civil officials by instituting transparent accountability procedures.

It is critical to comprehend the ramifications of these reforms as Uzbekistan works to establish a strong democratic state and a just society. The legal framework for civil servant accountability and liability, the procedures for implementing this accountability and liability, and the wider effects on governance are all examined in this article. We hope that this analysis will add to the current discussion about efficient public administration and the part civil servants play in creating a more responsive government.

The main part (result and discussion)

Nowadays, the reform of the public administration system is being carried out in the Republic of Uzbekistan. Improving the efficiency of the civil service is necessary for the further development of the public administration system, strengthening the legal and human resources potential of state bodies, ensuring openness and regulation of their activities in order to create a positive image of civil servants in society. The ultimate goal of all reforms and changes is the creation of a strong democratic state and justice society, where "human interests above all".

Today, the government of Uzbekistan is functioning based on the principle that “the people must not serve the government bodies, rather the government bodies must serve to the people” [1].

The issues of responsibility and accountability of state civil servants are covered by the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Criminal Code (1994), the Code of Administrative Responsibility (1994), the Labor Code (2023), "On Crime Prevention" (Separately, it should be noted the Laws "On the State Civil Service" (2022), "On Combating Corruption" (2017), "Strategy of Uzbekistan - 2030" (2023), Model Rules of Ethics of State Civil Servants (2022).

The adoption of the Law “On State Civil Service” of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated August 8, 2022, and the definition of the legal status of civil servants are essential aspects of administrative reforms. First, the concept of a state civil servant and its features are clarified. Secondly, the circle and types of civil servants were determined. Thirdly, a list of positions in the state civil service has been formed. Fourthly, the rights, duties, scope of authority, declaration, rules of etiquette, responsibility, and issues of social protection of employees were clearly defined. Also, this law also establishes rules regulating issues of liability of civil servants.

If we analyze the issue of liability of civil servants - liability may arise for failure to comply with the requirements of the law, violation of official discipline and violation of the rights and legitimate interests of citizens. The subject of this liability will be a civil servant.

According to Professor E.T.Khojiev: “Legal liability of civil servants means the application of certain types of penalties provided by law for violations of the law by civil servants”[2]. Based on this concept, the liability of civil servants may arise in cases where they did not work within the law, did not perform their duties properly, neglected their duties, deviated or abused their authority, violated service discipline, caused material damage to the state and public associations, violated the rights of citizens and their legitimate interests are violated.

The legal nature of the civil liability of a civil servant has several features that distinguish it from the liability of other people. First of all, its subject is a civil servant. Also, the subject may have the status of an official or a government representative.

Another distinctive feature is the obligation of all public servants to know the law. A civil servant is responsible for actions and omissions that violate the rights and legitimate interests of citizens. This stems from the duty of the public servant to recognize, observe and protect the rights and freedoms of man and citizen.

A special feature is that a civil servant is not personally liable to a citizen or organization that has suffered as a result of actions related to the performance of their official duties. This responsibility rests with the relevant public authorities[3].

Legal liability for civil servants encompasses multiple forms of accountability, including disciplinary, civil, administrative, and criminal liability. Each type of liability serves a specific function in holding civil servants accountable for their actions under the law. Civil liability ensures that citizens' rights are protected and that damages are compensated. Administrative liability maintains procedural discipline within government bodies. Criminal liability acts as a safeguard against corruption and abuse of power. Together, these forms of liability create a comprehensive system of accountability for civil servants in the modern legal framework.

Disciplinary liability is the form of legal liability of a civil servant which, apart from the general conditions of any legal liability, also highlights the following specific conditions: "a) The active subject is qualified, having the status of civil servant; b) The illicit deed is circumscribed to the sphere of

disciplinary misconduct; c) The dangerous outcome is often an inalienable result, so the causal link between the dangerous outcome and the illicit act is presumed. [4].

Depending on the nature of the offense, a civil servant may be subject to disciplinary, contraventional, criminal, material liability[5]. As regards the form of liability, it may be engaged if the civil servant concerned fulfills two conditions, as follows:

- The civil servant must violate at least one of his/ her duties;
- The civil servant must act with guilty.

According to the Article 14, of the Law “On state civil service” “Illegal actions (inaction) of a state civil servant, as well as the improper performance of official duties, entail liability in accordance with the law”[6].

In the absence of a special law regulating the activities of civil servants, the procedure for bringing them to disciplinary responsibility is carried out in accordance with the Law “On state civil service”. Non-observance by a civil servant of the job description and the Rules of Ethical Conduct of Civil Servants, as well as the restrictions established by Article 13 of this Law “On state civil service”, is the basis for applying disciplinary sanctions against him.

Pursuant to Article 46 of this Law, the following disciplinary measures may be applied to a civil servant:

- reprimand;
- a fine of no more than thirty percent of the average monthly salary;
- demotion in the qualification rank;
- demotion of the state civil service;
- dismissal from the position of the state civil service.

Disciplinary measures are applied by the head of the state body. Only one disciplinary sanction may be applied for each disciplinary offence. The right to choose a disciplinary sanction belongs to the head of the state body. When applying a disciplinary sanction, the severity of the misconduct, its circumstances and the behaviour of a public civil servant are taken into account.

The measure of disciplinary sanction is applied immediately, but not later than one month from the date of discovery of the disciplinary offence.

Disciplinary measures cannot be applied during the period:

- temporary disability of a public civil servant;
- being a public civil servant on vacation or business trip;
- release of a public civil servant from the performance of his official duties for the duration of the performance of duties related to an emergency situation or military service;
- of the presence of a state civil servant in retraining, advanced training and education.

According to the Article 48, of the Law “On state civil service” a disciplinary sanction may be applied no later than six months from the day the disciplinary offense was committed, and based on the results of an audit or audit of financial and economic activities or an audit, no later than two years from the day it was committed. The above time limits do not include the time of criminal proceedings.

A disciplinary sanction is valid for one year from the date of its application. If during this period a new measure of disciplinary sanction is not applied to a civil servant, he is considered not to have a

disciplinary sanction. At the same time, the term of the disciplinary sanction expires automatically without the relevant decision of the head of the state body.

The head of the state body has the right to remove the disciplinary sanction ahead of schedule on his own initiative, at the request of the immediate head of the state civil servant, trade union (if any), as well as at the request of the state civil servant.

In my practice, there were cases when the head of a state body removed him ahead of schedule the day after the imposition of a disciplinary sanction. In my opinion, the minimum terms of stay in disciplinary responsibility should be determined. This determines the seriousness of the appointment of this measure.

According to Article 15 of the Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan "About administrative responsibility", Officials are subject to administrative liability for committing administrative offences related to non-compliance with established rules in the field of protection of management order, state and public order, the natural environment, public health and other rules, the enforcement of which is part of their official duties[7].

If a civil servant is found guilty of a crime, he/she will be prosecuted. The procedure for prosecuting a civil servant is established by the Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan. This is reflected in Chapter 15 of the Code, entitled "Crimes against the order of government, administration and public associations."

The issue of financial responsibility of a civil servant is provided for in Chapter 19. Named "Material responsibility of the parties to the employment contract" of the Labor Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan. According to Article 318 of this Code, the material liability of a party to an employment contract occurs for damage caused to the other party to this contract as a result of its culpable unlawful act (actions or inactions), and the presence of a cause-and-effect relationship between the culpable unlawful act and the damage caused, unless otherwise provided by Labor Code or other laws. Each party to the employment contract is obliged to prove the amount of material damage caused to it.

According to the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On state civil service" Article 14 "an individual or legal entity who believes that the actions (inaction) of a state civil servant have led to a violation of his rights, freedoms and legitimate interests, has the right to appeal against such actions (inaction) to a higher authority or court.

The damage caused to individuals or legal entities by illegal actions (inaction) of a state civil servant is compensated by a state body with subsequent recovery of harm from the guilty civil servant in the manner prescribed by law.

The damage caused by a civil servant as a result of the execution of an illegal order by the head of a state body or officials shall be compensated by the state body in the manner prescribed by law. The amount of damage shall be recovered by way of recourse from the head or official of the state body that gave the illegal order". By the above norm, the state guarantees human rights to compensation for damages attributed to officials for unlawful decisions and actions.

DSc, Professor N.Said-Gazieva's research focuses on the issue of constitutional liability of civil servants. She suggested, that a constitutional offence is an illegal, culpable act (action or omission) of a public authority or civil servant that harms or threatens to damage social relations in the exercise of public power, for which the legislation provides for constitutional liability[8].

In research of DSc, Professor M.Ahmadshaeva suggests that the issue of moral responsibility for civil servants should be considered in the context of modern requirements. According to her, "the issue of legal, material and moral responsibility of governors who do not justify the high level of self-

confidence, who put their own interests above the interests of the people and the state, should be considered in the context of today's requirements"[9].

In addition to the above, several resolutions and decrees of the President and the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan are adopted every year regarding increasing the responsibility of civil servants. Following the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated May 24, 2024, No. 80 "On further increasing responsibility and forming a compact system of management of justice bodies and institutions within the framework of administrative reforms", the Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan November 27, 2023, No.200 "On measures to further improve the anti-corruption system and increase the effectiveness of the public control system over the activities of government agencies and organizations", March 13, 2024 No. 49 "On measures to improve the system for assessing the effectiveness of the activities of republican and local executive bodies, as well as government business associations", May 31, 2021, No. 5132 "On additional measures aimed to ensure the efficient activity of the unified interdepartmental electronic system of the executive discipline "ijro.gov.uz", Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated April 11, 2017 No. 2881 "On personal responsibility of State Advisers to the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Cabinet of Ministers and its complexes, heads of state and economic bodies and khokimiyats at all levels for the effective and efficient implementation of documents and instructions of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, as well as strengthening executive discipline", Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated October 5, 2018 No. 3962 "On measures to further strengthen executive discipline in government agencies and organizations",

Based on the above, the state has established comprehensive control over the proper performance of its duties by civil servants. However, such measures will not be useful if every civil servant does not approach their duties conscientiously and professionally. As Otto von Bismarck puts it: "With bad laws and good civil servants, it's still possible to govern, But with bad civil servants, even the best possible laws can't help"[10].

Based on the above, to strengthen the accountability and discipline of civil servants, it is proposed to introduce minimum periods for maintaining disciplinary sanctions, which will prevent the premature lifting of sanctions, ensuring that civil servants understand the seriousness of their actions. One of the key ways to improve the efficiency and professionalism of civil servants is through regular training and development programs. This can be aimed at improving their understanding of legal requirements, ethical behaviour and professional responsibilities. Providing continuous education in the field of administrative law and human rights will help civil servants stay abreast of legislative changes and uphold the rule of law.

Conclusion: The reforms being undertaken in Uzbekistan to improve the public administration system and the accountability of civil servants are commendable and necessary. The adoption of the Law on State Civil Service (2022) has provided a solid foundation for defining the responsibilities and liabilities of civil servants. However, to build on these reforms, further actions are needed to ensure that all forms of accountability—disciplinary, civil, administrative, and criminal—are effectively enforced and transparent. Additionally, a focus on moral responsibility and ethical behaviour should complement legal obligations. By expanding training programs, reinforcing the importance of ethical conduct, and making better use of digital tools for oversight, Uzbekistan can create a more efficient, transparent, and accountable civil service. The ultimate goal of these reforms should be to ensure that civil servants truly serve the public interest and contribute to building a just, democratic state in line with the principle that "human interests are above all."

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