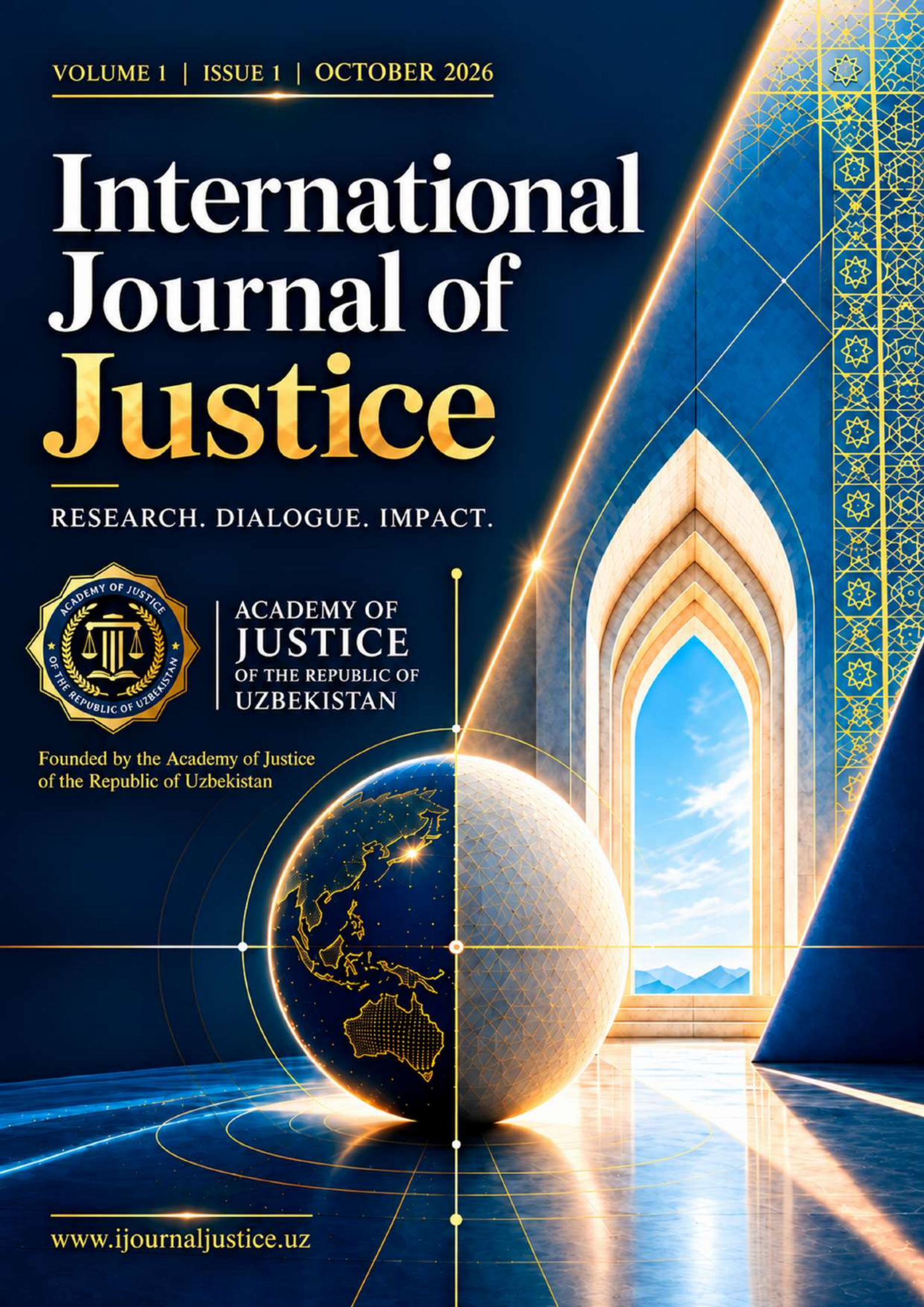
VOLUME 1 | ISSUE 1 | OCTOBER 2026

International Journal of Justice

RESEARCH. DIALOGUE. IMPACT.

ACADEMY OF JUSTICE OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN

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International Journal of Justice

ACTIVITIES OF INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS

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Abstract. *This article analysed the legal nature, concept, and role of non-governmental non-profit organizations (NGOs) in the protection of human rights. The relevance of the study is determined by the growing role of NGOs as important institutions of civil society in ensuring and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms. The research employs comparative-legal, historical-legal, and analytical methods to examine the activities and legal foundations of human rights NGOs in Uzbekistan and internationally. The study analyzes the organizational structures and protection mechanisms of major international organizations, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Civil Rights Defenders, Global Rights, UN Watch, and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH). It also considers the importance of international legal instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The findings may contribute to improving the legal and organizational framework of human rights NGOs in Uzbekistan and strengthening their cooperation with international organizations. The study concludes that human rights NGOs play an important role in identifying violations, promoting legal awareness, providing protection, and strengthening civil society.*

Keywords**:** *international NGO, human rights NGO, international organization, UN, DHRF, human rights defender.*

Introduction. Ensuring human rights and freedoms is a primary objective of any democratic, rule-of-law-based state, and in this sphere, non-governmental non-profit organizations (NGOs) emerge as a vital social institution.

The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organizations" stipulates: "A non-governmental non-profit organization is a self-governing organization voluntarily established by individuals and (or) legal entities, which does not have the primary objective of generating income (profit) from its activities, nor does it distribute any income (profit) received among its participants (members).

A non-governmental non-profit organization is formed to protect the rights and legitimate interests of individuals and legal entities, to uphold other democratic values, to achieve social, cultural, and educational goals, to satisfy spiritual and other non-material needs, to conduct charitable activities, and for other socially beneficial purposes (1999)".

The protection of human rights is among the functions of non-governmental non-profit organizations (NGOs). In addition, there are NGOs that specifically focus on the protection of human rights, established to support and strengthen individuals' rights and legitimate interests and to promote respect for human dignity and honor.

There is no precise definition of a human rights NGO in national legal sources. However, the concepts of a human rights advocacy group or human rights organization are used in the research and scholarly works of foreign academics.

Scholars have also examined the legal status and role of human rights NGOs under international law. Idowu Mopelola Ajibade emphasizes that human rights NGOs have become increasingly important actors at both the international and national levels, particularly through their contribution to the development of human rights treaties, principles, and standards[1, pp. 13]. However, he notes that their legal status under international law remains largely informal and insufficiently defined. William Korey similarly highlights the significant role of NGOs in the development of the international human rights system, particularly their contribution to the creation of international human rights standards, the development of legally binding treaties, and the dissemination of information concerning human rights violations [2, pp. 151–174].

A human rights advocacy group or human rights organization is a non-governmental organization (NGO) engaged in the protection of human rights. It operates by identifying human rights violations, collecting and analyzing information on such violations, and increasing public awareness through the dissemination of this information.

An international NGO is an NGO whose activities, in accordance with its charter and the legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan, may be carried out within the territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan and in one or more foreign states (2014).

Accordingly, based on national legislation, an international NGO may be defined as: "an independent institution of civil society that is not established by states, is created voluntarily on the initiative of individuals and/or legal entities, does not pursue profit as its primary objective, operates on the principle of self-governance, and carries out activities in the field of human rights, social welfare, culture, education, and other public interests in the territories of two or more states."

Although the concept of NGOs engaged in the protection of human rights is not explicitly defined in international law, the concept of human rights defenders exists and may be considered consistent in substance with the role of such NGOs.

Article 1 of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders (DHRF), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 9 December 1998, provides that: "Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms"[3, pp 1-2].

Accordingly, such an individual or a group of individuals may be regarded as human rights defenders. Any person or organization that promotes and protects rights, including NGOs, may be considered a human rights defender.

The documents of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the decisions of the Council of Europe also support the activities of civil society and NGOs in the field of human rights.

Methods. This study employs a combination of comparative-legal, historical-legal, and analytical research methods to examine the activities of international non-governmental organizations in the field of human rights protection.

Results and Discussions. Based on the research findings discussed above, we will examine several international organizations engaged in the protection of human rights, as well as some NGOs operating in Uzbekistan

that work in the field of human rights protection.

Amnesty International was founded in 1961 in London, United Kingdom. It is a non-governmental organization that operates independently of any political ideology, religion, or economic interest. Today, Amnesty International is a global movement comprising more than 10 million people.

The primary objective of Amnesty International is to protect and promote human rights. The organization also performs a number of important functions, including:

• Building a society in which the dignity and rights of every individual are protected;

• Ensuring the practical implementation of the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international legal instruments;

• Combating torture, unlawful detention, political persecution, and restrictions on freedom of expression [4].

Amnesty International carries out its activities on the basis of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), the Convention against Torture (1984), and other international and regional treaties, particularly those relating to the rights of children, women, and migrants.

Thus, Amnesty International is a major human rights organization whose work covers a broad spectrum of human rights issues, ranging from securing the release of prisoners to protecting sexual and reproductive rights.

Human Rights Watch is an independent international non-governmental organization dedicated to the protection of human rights. It was established in 1978. Initially known as Helsinki Watch, it was created to monitor governments' compliance with the 1975 Helsinki Accords in Soviet bloc countries and to support civil society groups.

The organization publicly exposed cases of human rights violations through the media by "naming and shaming" those responsible. By drawing the attention of the international community to human rights abuses in the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries, the organization contributed to the powerful democratization processes that took place in the late 1980s.

In 1981, during the period of bloody civil wars in Central America, Americas Watch was established. Relying on extensive fact-finding missions, it investigated and publicized not only human rights violations committed by governments but also war crimes committed by insurgent groups, in accordance with international law.

During the 1980s, Asia Watch (1985), Africa Watch (1988), and Middle East Watch (1989) were established and, together with the earlier committees, became known as The Watch Committees. In 1988, the organization officially adopted the name Human Rights Watch. It subsequently expanded its scope of activities and actively cooperated with international and regional organizations, including the United Nations and the European Union[5].

The organization broadened its work to include the protection of the rights of women, children, refugees, and migrant workers. It has sought to identify and address human rights violations such as domestic violence, human trafficking, rape, and the forced recruitment of children into military service.

Thus, Human Rights Watch is an international non-governmental organization dedicated to protecting human rights, monitoring human rights abuses worldwide,

and preparing reports on such violations. Today, the organization employs approximately 450 experts, lawyers, journalists, and human rights advocates.

Civil Rights Defenders is an independent international human rights organization that was originally established in 1982 under the name Swedish Helsinki Committee for Human Rights. It is currently based in Stockholm, Sweden.

Its primary mission is to cooperate with and support human rights defenders operating in some of the world's most repressive states[6].

Accordingly, the organization works closely with human rights defenders who advocate for civil and political rights, protects the rights of individuals suffering under highly oppressive regimes, and provides support to those engaged in human rights advocacy.

It is also worth noting that the organization currently conducts monitoring activities in some of the world's most repressive regions and collaborates with more than 200 local partners, focusing on innovation and sustainable change. The organization is also actively engaged in expanding and strengthening citizens' access to justice and freedom through the promotion and protection of civil and political rights.

Global Rights is an international non-governmental human rights organization founded in Washington, D.C., in 1978. In 2014, the organization relocated its headquarters to Nigeria and currently works with local activists across Africa, Asia, and Latin America to protect the rights of communities and individuals. The organization focuses on providing assistance to disadvantaged and marginalized populations. It also trains other organizations and communities to document and expose human rights violations and to provide legal services to those in need[7].

Thus, Global Rights primarily concentrates on interconnected issues such as women's rights, human rights security, and the governance of natural resources.

UN Watch is a non-governmental organization based in Geneva, Switzerland. It was founded in 1993 by the prominent civil rights advocate Morris B. Abram, who served as the United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva.

The organization operates as an NGO accredited with special consultative status to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and as an associated NGO with the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI).

Its principal objective is to help "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" and to contribute to the creation of a more just world[8].

Thus, this organization was established to promote the protection of the universal rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to monitor the activities of the United Nations in accordance with the principles and objectives of the UN Charter.

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) is an international non-governmental human rights organization that brings together 188 member organizations and maintains a presence in 116 countries. Since 1922, it has actively worked to protect and promote respect for the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The organization operates through close cooperation with its member organizations[9].

To prevent human rights violations, the organization employs various mechanisms,

including rapid response actions, fact-finding missions, legal protection and advocacy, dialogue, litigation support, and public awareness campaigns. The primary objective of the organization is to assist victims of human rights violations and to ensure accountability for those responsible for international crimes[10].

International legal instruments also constitute an important foundation for the establishment and development of NGOs. In particular, reliance is placed on such instruments as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)[11], adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) [12], and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) [13]. Therefore, NGOs engaged in the protection of human rights are required to operate not only in accordance with national legislation but also in compliance with international legal standards.

As an important mechanism connecting society and the state, NGOs continue to contribute significantly to the development of civil society.

Conclusion. As noted above, NGOs that protect human rights may also operate on the basis of international legal norms. In particular, the fact that the Republic of Uzbekistan accepted the principles contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1994 and acceded to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1995 indicates the existence of international obligations in this field. These commitments provide a legal basis for NGOs to cooperate with international organizations, conduct legal monitoring, and promote the principle of equality.

By enhancing legal awareness, identifying instances of human rights violations, monitoring judicial and legal reforms, and ensuring legal protection for the population, NGOs in the field of human rights contribute not only to the development of the rule of law but also to the strengthening of civil society. In this regard, their organizational and legal foundations occupy an important place not only within national legal systems but also within the framework of international legal norms.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be proposed. First, a distinct legal status for human rights NGOs should be established within the national legal framework, clearly defining their rights, responsibilities, and guarantees for carrying out human rights activities. Second, institutional cooperation and public monitoring mechanisms between government authorities and NGOs should be strengthened to facilitate their participation in human rights monitoring, legislative processes, and the implementation of human rights policies. Third, legal monitoring, advocacy, and legal assistance mechanisms should be further developed by drawing on the best practices of international human rights NGOs and adapting them to the national context of Uzbekistan.

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