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	JIF	= 1.500	SJIF (Morocco)	= 6.004	OAJI (USA)	= 0.350

SOI: [1.1/TAS](#) DOI: [10.15863/TAS](#)
International Scientific Journal
Theoretical & Applied Science

p-ISSN: 2308-4944 (print) e-ISSN: 2409-0085 (online)

Year: 2026 Issue: 06 Volume: 158

Received: 30.05.2026
Accepted/Published: 30.06.2026 <https://T-Science.org>



Numonjon Nasibjonovich Turaev
International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan
Associate Professor of the ISESCO Chair for Islamic Studies and Islamic Civilization, PhD
+99897 4700403
numonjon1989@gmail.com

MAHALLA: A FORTRESS OF SOLIDARITY

Abstract: This study investigates the profound socioeconomic and spiritual dimensions of the Mahalla and the concept of good neighborliness as articulated in the presidential address of the Republic of Uzbekistan, aligning these modern initiatives with classical Islamic source principles. The paper systematically analyzes the spiritual, educational, and protective roles of the Mahalla institution, its functional utility in poverty reduction through traditional systems of mutual aid, and the jurisprudential ethics of neighborly obligations. By conducting a comparative analysis between traditional Islamic social values and state-led civic reforms, this paper highlights the institutionalized framework of neighborhood networks as a vital stabilizer of social cohesion, humanitarian equity, and structural development within a rapidly globalizing environment.

Key words: mahalla, neighborly rights, social solidarity, Islamic values, Presidential Address, social cohesion.

Language: English

Citation: Turaev, N.N. (2026). Mahalla: a fortress of solidarity. *ISJ Theoretical & Applied Science*, 06 (158), 271-273.

Soi: <https://s-o-i.org/1.1/TAS-06-158-14>

Doi: <https://dx.doi.org/10.15863/TAS.2026.06.158.14>

Scopus ASCC: 3300.

Introduction

The ongoing processes of globalization, urbanization, rapid acceleration of information technologies, and the escalating complexity of socioeconomic relations render the preservation of societal stability an increasingly vital imperative in the contemporary era. As individualism intensifies within modern societies, the structural integrity of civic bonds faces noticeable fragmentation, heightening the structural risks of public apathy and social irresponsibility. Under these transformative conditions, the functional significance of traditional institutions that reinforce social solidarity, most notably the system of the *mahalla*, becomes profoundly manifest.

Throughout the historical evolution of Uzbekistan, the *mahalla* has operated not merely as a territorial administrative unit, but as a pivotal framework for local self-governance, spiritual education, mutual socioeconomic assistance, and informal social control. Within the civic fabric of the Uzbek people, the *mahalla* evolved as the primary domain for validating marriages, raising youth,

coordinating collective labor actions, conducting communal rituals, and resolving local disputes. Consequently, the structural reform and strategic invigoration of the *mahalla* institution occupies a central position within the modern development strategies of New Uzbekistan.

In his conceptual address to the Oliy Majlis and the people of Uzbekistan, Head of State Shavkat Mirziyoyev proclaimed the year 2026 as the "Year of Mahalla Development and Societal Invigoration" [1]. This strategic initiative represents far more than a nominal designation; it constitutes a calculated jurisprudential and political return to the deep historical roots and ancestral values of the nation, systematically harmonizing them with the functional demands of modern socioeconomic progress.

As observed by the President in his discourse: "The *mahalla* and the concept of good neighborliness are intrinsically intertwined values. They uniquely contribute to the enrichment of human and social capital within the community". Analyzing the profound substance of this premise, alongside its deep historical, theological, and sociological

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underpinnings, carries paramount relevance for preserving national identity and guaranteeing public stability during this era of globalization.

Main section

An enduring aphorism of our people states: "Those who unite will prosper; those who divide will perish". This piece of ancestral wisdom forms the core axis of the presidential address and aligns perfectly with the foundational tenets of Islamic ethical theology. The *mahalla* functions as the primary, yet highly impactful, social institution of modern society. Its principal objective involves cultivating mutual trust, solidarity, and civic responsibility among community members. Through the *mahalla* network, structural vulnerabilities and community challenges are detected and resolved at their earliest stages of development.

The *mahalla* is fundamentally a spiritual domain rather than a mere geographically bounded territory. Within its framework, core humanitarian virtues, such as altruism, benevolence, compassion, and communal tolerance are systematically transmitted across generations. In this regard, upgrading the infrastructure of the *mahalla* is functionally equivalent to fortifying the spiritual and ethical foundations of the entire state.

As explicitly underscored in the presidential address, transforming the *mahalla* into a "sanctuary of compassion, solidarity, justice, and education" serves as the primary objective of the national state program. This conceptual framework is ideally aligned with the scriptural directives of the Holy Qur'an and the Prophetic traditions (*hadith*). For instance, in Surah al-Nisa (4:36), the divine decree commands individuals to extend benevolence to neighbors in immediate proximity to parents and kinfolk. The Almighty declares: "*Worship Allah and associate nothing with Him, and to parents do good, and to relatives, orphans, the needy, the near neighbor, and the distant neighbor...*"

Within this scriptural context, fulfilling the ethical obligations of neighborliness is elevated to a rank parallel to the worship of God. The specific textual distinction between the "near neighbor" and the "distant neighbor" demonstrates that regardless of an individual's lineage, creed, or kinship status, the shared territoriality of a neighborhood grid (the *mahalla*) binds all residents within an interconnected web of reciprocal rights and moral duties.

Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) commands the practice of benevolence toward neighbors independent of their religious affiliation, ethnic background, or social status. Classical jurists interpreted the geographical perimeter of neighborly responsibility broadly, establishing a radius extending up to forty households as the definitive boundary of a single neighborhood unit. This legal precedent rests upon the tradition transmitted by Aisha: "The right of

neighborliness extends across forty houses," a report compiled by *al-Bayhaqi* in his *as-Sunan al-Kubra* [2:3:497]. Relying upon this and auxiliary traditions, jurists concluded that forty households to the front, forty to the rear, forty to the right, and forty to the left collectively constitute the definitive zone of neighborly proximity.

The rights governing neighborly relations occupy a position of distinct prominence within the recorded statements of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). The Archangel Gabriel emphasized the rights of the neighbor with such frequency that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) noted: "Gabriel continued to enjoin upon me the rights of the neighbor to such an extent that I seriously entertained the premise that he would include them among my legal heirs" [3:1508]. This foundational tradition deeply enriches the modern political concept of "The *Mahalla* as a Parental Guardian" articulated in the state address. As the President observed: "The cultivation of a high sense of individual accountability toward the *mahalla* which acts as both a father and a mother to us all and consequently toward the collective destiny of the Fatherland, clearly demonstrates that this institution serves as the primary engine of social solidarity" [1].

Furthermore, the presidential address designates poverty reduction as a paramount nationwide movement, reporting substantial empirical success across the country. In this specific socio-political context, the assertion that "Families have historically sustained themselves by offering direct assistance from household to household, and neighbor to neighbor; we must remain perpetually faithful to this exceptionally unique cultural asset" serves as the ideological baseline of modern state social policy. Within Islamic social ethics, the active preservation of public justice and communal solidarity is viewed as a direct metric of an individual's theological faith. The well-known Prophetic warning "He is not a complete believer who sleeps satiated while his immediate neighbor remains hungry beside him" [4:52] unequivocally condemns public apathy toward localized poverty.

The institutionalization of poverty reduction as a nationwide mandate requires localized precision. Consequently, initiatives designed to identify vulnerable households at the *mahalla* level, supply targeted financial and social relief, and generate local employment opportunities reflect the functional implementation of Islamic principles of public equity and distributive justice [10:305].

In evaluating state strategies for wealth generation and social security, the underlying ethics can be clearly seen within the smallest micro-actions of daily communal life. For example, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) instructed his companion *Abu Dharr* with the following practical maxim: "Whenever you prepare a broth, increase its liquid content, then look to the households of your neighbors

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and distribute a portion among them according to their numbers" [4:53]. This classical ethical directive serves as the historical foundation for contemporary state initiatives like the "Generosity and Assistance" (*Saxovat va ko'mak*) foundations, alongside longstanding traditions of communal mutual aid. Within the modern economic framework outlined in the presidential address, the active participation of local entrepreneurs in creating jobs within their respective neighborhoods and driving poverty reduction constitutes the direct modern structural translation of this classical neighborly assistance principle.

The President forcefully declared: "Regardless of ethnicity, language, or creed, there exists a supreme, unifying idea that binds our entire citizenry together: the sovereign interest of the Motherland" [1]. Historically, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) vigorously defended the civic and human rights of non-Muslim neighbors. It is recorded that whenever Abdullah ibn Amr slaughtered a sheep, he would

repeatedly inquire of his servants: "Have you distributed a portion to our Jewish neighbor?" [4:57] consistently citing the Prophet's strict commands regarding the absolute sanctity of neighborly rights.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the presidential address of the Republic of Uzbekistan outlines a comprehensive paradigm for deep societal transformation, within which the *mahalla* institution serves as the primary institutional axis. Utilizing national-religious values and classical neighborly ethics to safeguard localized social stability directly accelerates the expansion of human capital within the modern state.

The contemporary state strategies enacted by the Republic of Uzbekistan regarding neighborhood optimization are deeply integrated with long-standing national and ethical traditions. The *mahalla* remains an indispensable foundation for guaranteeing structural stability, public solidarity, and the ongoing spiritual development of the modern commonwealth.

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