



FAMILIES OF REPRESSION VICTIMS: SOCIAL SANCTITY AND INTERGENERATIONAL MEMORY

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Abstract: This article explores the long-term socio-cultural and psychological impact of Stalinist political repressions on the families of the victims in Central Asia, particularly Uzbekistan. Drawing from oral histories, archival documents, and sociological studies, the research examines how the trauma of repression has shaped collective memory and identity across generations. The study also investigates the concept of "social sanctity" as attributed to the victims' families and their role in preserving national historical consciousness.

Keywords: repression, memory, family trauma, social sanctity, intergenerational legacy, Stalinism, Uzbekistan, historical justice

The Stalinist era left a profound scar on the social and political fabric of Soviet republics. In Uzbekistan and other parts of Central Asia, tens of thousands were arrested, exiled, or executed during the Great Terror (1937–1938). These repressions did not only affect the direct victims; they devastated entire families—stigmatized, marginalized, and stripped of social rights for decades.

The legacy of political terror is not confined to historical texts; it survives vividly in the memories and narratives passed down through generations. Families of the repressed have carried the burden of unjust persecution, navigating life as “enemies’ offspring,” often facing limited access to education, employment, and political participation. Yet, in post-Soviet societies, these families have come to symbolize resilience and the sacred memory of historical injustice. This research examines how their memory is preserved and what role it plays in contemporary Uzbek society.

This study applies a multidisciplinary qualitative approach, incorporating:

- **Oral history analysis:** Testimonies collected from descendants of repression victims in Uzbekistan between 2020 and 2024;





• **Archival research:** Review of NKVD records, trial documents, and rehabilitation papers stored in Uzbekistan's national archives;

• **Sociocultural analysis:** Examination of literature, films, and public commemorations related to repression victims;

• **Comparative analysis:** Juxtaposition of Uzbekistan's memory politics with those in other post-Soviet countries (e.g., Kazakhstan, Georgia, Russia).

Ethnographic data and narrative interviews were analyzed using discourse and memory studies frameworks.

The study yielded several significant findings:

• **Intergenerational trauma is real and persistent:** Many descendants of repression victims report a strong psychological connection to their ancestors' suffering, often shaping their identity, worldview, and moral values.

• **Social sanctity is a powerful symbolic construct:** Victims' families are often perceived as custodians of national dignity. Their pain has become a collective symbol of resistance against tyranny and injustice.

• **Institutional recognition remains limited:** Despite official efforts like the annual Day of Remembrance (August 31) and the establishment of museums, many families feel state acknowledgment is symbolic rather than substantial.

• **Personal memory bridges the historical gap:** In many families, stories of repression are told privately, passed from grandparents to grandchildren, often filling the silence left by state narratives.

The concept of **social sanctity** surrounding the families of repression victims is closely tied to the national search for identity and justice. These families are seen not merely as victims but as moral witnesses to history. Their survival and dignity have become a quiet but powerful protest against historical erasure.

In the post-Soviet context, memory politics is central to state-building. However, in Uzbekistan, while there have been significant moves toward historical rehabilitation, many descendants still struggle with the inherited stigma of repression. This indicates a need for more inclusive education and commemoration efforts.

Moreover, the privatization of memory—where personal family stories replace state-sanctioned history—points to a critical gap in public history. It underscores the importance of intergenerational storytelling as a method of preserving truth and fostering resilience.

The families of repression victims in Uzbekistan hold a unique place in the nation's historical consciousness. Their stories are not only testimonies of pain but also





of dignity, resistance, and continuity. Recognizing their role in shaping collective memory is essential for ensuring a more just and humane society.

State policies must move beyond symbolic gestures to provide real platforms for remembrance, support, and education. Only through acknowledging and honoring these familial legacies can society begin to heal and protect itself against future injustices.

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