

CRIMINAL-LEGAL AND CRIMINOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF COUNTERACTING THE CRIME OF EXTORTION IN THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN**Shukurov Islom Aminovich**

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Annotation: This scientific article analyzes the criminal-legal and criminological aspects of combating the crime of extortion in the Republic of Uzbekistan. The study examines the legal nature of extortion, its objective and subjective elements, aggravating circumstances, and issues related to the qualification of crimes under the Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan. In addition, criminological factors contributing to the commission of extortion crimes, including socio-economic conditions, organized criminal activity, corruption risks, and modern forms of digital extortion, are studied. The article also evaluates preventive measures implemented by law enforcement agencies and proposes recommendations for improving criminal legislation and crime prevention mechanisms. The research is based on the norms of national legislation, scientific literature, and international legal documents.

Keywords: Extortion, criminal law, criminology, crime prevention, organized crime, violence, property crimes, criminal liability, Uzbekistan, criminal legislation, cyber extortion, law enforcement agencies.

Introduction

The protection of property rights, personal security, and public order is among the fundamental tasks of criminal legislation in every state. In modern legal systems, extortion represents one of the most socially dangerous crimes against property and personal freedom because it combines unlawful demands with threats, intimidation, psychological pressure, or violence. In the Republic of Uzbekistan, the issue of combating extortion remains relevant due to the emergence of new forms of criminal activity related to organized crime and digital technologies [1].

According to the Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan, extortion is recognized as a socially dangerous act involving the unlawful demand to transfer property, property rights, or perform actions of a property nature under the threat of violence, destruction of property, dissemination of defamatory information, or other actions capable of harming the victim or their relatives [2].

The modernization of the legal system of Uzbekistan and the implementation of judicial reforms have significantly strengthened criminal policy in the sphere of combating crimes against property. In recent years, the country has undertaken comprehensive reforms aimed at ensuring the rule of law, improving law enforcement activities, and enhancing mechanisms for the protection of citizens' rights and freedoms [3].

The criminological analysis of extortion demonstrates that such crimes are often committed by organized groups and are characterized by a high degree of latency. Victims frequently avoid contacting law enforcement agencies because of fear of retaliation or distrust in legal institutions [4]. Therefore, the development of effective legal and preventive mechanisms for combating extortion is one of the important priorities of criminal justice policy.

Methodology

The methodological basis of this research includes general scientific and special legal research methods. Comparative legal analysis was used to study the provisions of the criminal

legislation of Uzbekistan regulating liability for extortion. Formal-legal methods were applied to analyze the elements of the crime and interpret legislative norms [5].

The criminological method was employed to identify the determinants and causes contributing to extortion crimes. Statistical and analytical approaches were also used to examine trends in crimes against property and the activities of law enforcement agencies aimed at preventing extortion [6].

In addition, the study utilized doctrinal analysis of scientific works by Uzbek and foreign scholars specializing in criminal law and criminology. International legal standards concerning the protection of property rights and combating organized crime were also considered during the research process [7].

Results

The conducted research demonstrates that extortion occupies a special place among crimes against property because it infringes not only upon property relations but also upon personal security, honor, dignity, and psychological integrity of the victim [8].

Under Article 165 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan, extortion involves unlawful demands accompanied by threats of violence, destruction of property, disclosure of defamatory information, or other forms of coercion [2]. The objective element of the crime is expressed through the unlawful demand itself and the method of intimidation used by the offender. The subjective element is characterized by direct intent and mercenary motives.

The analysis of judicial practice indicates that extortion crimes are frequently committed in the following forms:

- demands for money under threats of violence;
- extortion committed by organized criminal groups;
- cyber extortion involving digital technologies;
- extortion related to disclosure of confidential information;
- extortion in entrepreneurial activities and business relations [9].

One of the important criminological characteristics of extortion is its latent nature. Many victims refuse to report crimes to law enforcement agencies because they fear retaliation from offenders. This significantly complicates the detection and investigation of extortion cases [10].

The study also reveals that socio-economic instability, unemployment, low legal awareness, corruption, and the influence of criminal subculture contribute to the spread of extortion crimes. Young people are especially vulnerable both as perpetrators and victims due to insufficient social protection and lack of stable income opportunities [11].

Modern technological development has also transformed traditional forms of extortion. Cyber extortion, including blackmail through social networks, hacking of personal data, and threats related to digital information, has become increasingly widespread in many countries, including Uzbekistan [12]

Analysis and Discussion

The crime of extortion occupies a distinctive position within the system of crimes against property due to its dual nature, combining encroachment upon economic relations with psychological violence against the individual. Unlike theft, robbery, or fraud, extortion is characterized not merely by the unlawful acquisition of property but by the use of intimidation, threats, coercion, and emotional pressure aimed at compelling the victim to voluntarily transfer property or perform actions of a material nature [5]. In the legal doctrine of criminal law, this characteristic is regarded as the primary feature distinguishing extortion from other acquisitive crimes.

The criminal legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan recognizes extortion as a socially dangerous act because it threatens both property security and personal freedom. Article 165 of the Criminal Code establishes criminal liability for demanding another person's property, property rights, or the commission of actions of a material nature under the threat of violence, destruction of property, dissemination of defamatory information, or other acts capable of

causing substantial harm to the rights and legitimate interests of the victim [2]. Such legislative construction reflects the understanding that extortion affects not only material relations but also the psychological integrity and dignity of the victim.

A detailed legal analysis demonstrates that extortion contains several mandatory elements that must be established during criminal proceedings. The objective side of the crime includes an unlawful demand combined with threats or intimidation. The subjective side is characterized by direct intent and mercenary motives. The offender consciously seeks unlawful enrichment through coercive influence on the victim's behavior [8]. Unlike robbery, where property is seized immediately through open violence, extortion frequently involves a delayed transfer of property because the offender expects the victim to comply with the demand voluntarily due to fear of negative consequences.

The distinction between extortion and related criminal offenses has significant practical importance for law enforcement and judicial authorities. In practice, difficulties often arise when qualifying criminal acts involving violence or threats. For example, robbery involves direct appropriation of property through violent assault, whereas extortion is aimed at compelling the victim to surrender property in the future under psychological pressure [5]. Fraud differs from extortion because fraud is based upon deception and abuse of trust rather than intimidation. Similarly, coercion may involve forcing a person to perform certain actions, but it does not always pursue unlawful material gain. Therefore, the accurate qualification of extortion requires comprehensive analysis of the offender's intent, methods, and objectives.

The criminological characteristics of extortion reveal that the crime possesses a relatively high degree of latency. Victims frequently avoid contacting law enforcement agencies because they fear retaliation, reputational damage, or repeated victimization [10]. This problem becomes particularly serious in cases involving organized criminal groups, where offenders intentionally cultivate fear and psychological dependency among victims. In some cases, entrepreneurs and business owners prefer to satisfy unlawful demands rather than cooperate with authorities, especially when offenders threaten family members or business operations.

Organized criminal groups often use extortion as a stable and systematic source of illegal income. Criminological studies indicate that extortion activities are frequently connected with broader criminal structures engaged in corruption, illegal financial operations, smuggling, or drug trafficking [4]. Such criminal organizations exploit weaknesses in economic regulation, deficiencies in law enforcement mechanisms, and vulnerabilities in business environments. Entrepreneurs engaged in small and medium-sized businesses are particularly vulnerable because they may lack sufficient legal protection and resources to resist criminal pressure.

The economic consequences of extortion are substantial. Extortion negatively affects the investment climate, reduces business confidence, and undermines fair competition within the market economy. When criminal groups systematically target commercial entities, entrepreneurs may reduce business activity, avoid formal economic participation, or transfer resources into informal sectors [11]. Consequently, extortion not only harms individual victims but also creates broader threats to economic stability and public trust in legal institutions.

The ongoing judicial and legal reforms implemented in the Republic of Uzbekistan have contributed to strengthening mechanisms aimed at combating organized crime and protecting citizens' rights. Legislative modernization, increased transparency in judicial proceedings, and institutional reforms within law enforcement agencies have improved the effectiveness of criminal justice mechanisms [3]. In recent years, particular attention has been devoted to enhancing guarantees of human rights protection, improving prosecutorial supervision, and increasing public accountability of state institutions. These reforms have created more favorable conditions for investigating and prosecuting extortion offenses.

Nevertheless, significant practical challenges remain unresolved. One of the central difficulties concerns the evidentiary process in extortion cases. Because extortion often relies upon verbal threats, psychological pressure, or indirect intimidation, obtaining reliable evidence

may be difficult [9]. Victims may lack audio recordings, written communications, or eyewitness testimony capable of confirming unlawful demands. In many cases, threats are communicated privately or through anonymous means, which complicates investigative activities and judicial evaluation of evidence.

The problem becomes even more complex in cases involving cyber extortion. Technological development and widespread internet access have transformed traditional forms of criminal activity. Cyber extortion involves threats related to the dissemination of confidential information, unauthorized publication of personal photographs, hacking of private accounts, or blocking access to digital systems unless victims transfer money or other valuables [12]. Such crimes are often committed through anonymous communication channels, encrypted messaging applications, or foreign digital platforms, which significantly complicates the identification of offenders.

Cyber extortion represents one of the fastest-growing forms of criminal activity in the digital era. Modern offenders increasingly exploit social networks, online payment systems, and information technologies to exert psychological pressure on victims. Young people, minors, entrepreneurs, and public officials are among the categories most vulnerable to digital blackmail [12]. In some cases, offenders unlawfully obtain personal data and threaten public disclosure unless victims comply with financial demands. Such acts create not only financial losses but also serious psychological trauma for victims.

The transnational nature of cyber extortion requires enhanced international cooperation in criminal justice. Criminal groups frequently operate across borders, using foreign servers, international payment systems, and anonymous online infrastructures [7]. Therefore, effective prevention and investigation of cyber extortion require cooperation between national law enforcement agencies, international organizations, and foreign governments. Exchange of information, harmonization of legal standards, and joint investigative operations are essential components of modern anti-crime policy.

Another important criminological factor associated with extortion is social inequality and economic instability. Many researchers emphasize that unemployment, low living standards, lack of educational opportunities, and social marginalization contribute to the growth of acquisitive crimes [11]. Young individuals experiencing economic hardship may become involved in organized criminal activity due to lack of legitimate employment opportunities. At the same time, socially vulnerable individuals often become targets of extortion because offenders perceive them as incapable of resisting unlawful demands effectively.

The influence of criminal subculture also plays a significant role in the spread of extortion. In certain social environments, criminal authority, violence, and intimidation may be perceived as acceptable mechanisms for obtaining financial benefits or resolving disputes [4]. Such attitudes undermine respect for legal norms and contribute to the normalization of criminal behavior. Consequently, criminological prevention should focus not only on punitive measures but also on transforming social attitudes and strengthening legal culture among citizens.

Preventive measures aimed at combating extortion must include both general social prevention and special criminological prevention. General social prevention involves improving socio-economic conditions, increasing educational opportunities, strengthening youth employment programs, and reducing social inequality [11]. Effective social policy may significantly reduce the criminogenic factors contributing to property crimes. Educational institutions also play an important role in promoting legal awareness and developing intolerance toward criminal behavior.

Special criminological prevention includes operational-search activities, intelligence gathering, preventive monitoring, and proactive law enforcement measures [10]. Timely identification of organized criminal groups and persons inclined toward violent acquisitive crimes allows authorities to prevent offenses before substantial harm occurs. Undercover

operations, surveillance measures, and confidential cooperation with informants are often essential for detecting organized extortion networks.

Witness and victim protection mechanisms constitute another important component of anti-extortion policy. Victims may refuse to cooperate with law enforcement agencies if they fear retaliation from offenders [9]. Therefore, effective legal guarantees ensuring confidentiality, physical protection, and psychological support are necessary for encouraging victims to report crimes. International experience demonstrates that witness protection programs significantly improve the effectiveness of criminal investigations involving organized crime.

An important direction of legal development concerns the modernization of criminal legislation in response to technological changes. Existing legal norms must adapt to emerging forms of cyber extortion, digital blackmail, and online intimidation [12]. Legislative reforms should clarify issues related to digital evidence, electronic communications, cryptocurrency transactions, and jurisdiction over transnational cybercrimes. At the same time, procedural legislation must ensure balance between effective investigation and protection of constitutional rights and freedoms.

The role of public awareness campaigns should also not be underestimated. Many citizens lack sufficient knowledge concerning methods of legal protection against extortion and cyber threats. Public education programs may help individuals recognize criminal risks, protect confidential information, and cooperate effectively with law enforcement agencies [7]. Digital literacy programs are particularly important for young people who actively use social networks and online communication platforms.

Furthermore, corruption remains a serious factor undermining effective counteraction to extortion. Corrupt relationships between criminal groups and individual public officials may obstruct investigations, reduce public trust in legal institutions, and facilitate criminal impunity [3]. Therefore, anti-corruption reforms constitute an essential element of comprehensive anti-extortion policy. Strengthening institutional accountability, judicial independence, and transparency in public administration may significantly improve the effectiveness of crime prevention mechanisms.

The analysis confirms that successful counteraction to extortion requires an integrated and multidisciplinary approach. Criminal-law sanctions alone cannot eliminate the social, economic, and technological determinants contributing to the spread of extortion offenses. Effective prevention requires coordination between criminal justice institutions, educational organizations, civil society structures, media institutions, and international partners [7].

Conclusion

The conducted research allows concluding that extortion constitutes one of the most dangerous crimes against property and personal freedom in the Republic of Uzbekistan. The crime combines unlawful property demands with threats, violence, psychological coercion, and intimidation, thereby causing significant harm to individuals, society, and economic relations.

The analysis of criminal legislation demonstrates that the Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan establishes legal mechanisms for prosecuting extortion offenses. However, the development of organized crime and digital technologies creates new challenges requiring further improvement of legislation and law enforcement practice.

The criminological analysis reveals that socio-economic instability, organized criminal activity, corruption, unemployment, and insufficient legal awareness contribute to the spread of extortion crimes. Modern forms of cyber extortion represent an especially serious threat in the context of digital transformation.

Effective counteraction to extortion should include improvement of criminal legislation, strengthening operational-search measures, protection of victims and witnesses, enhancement of cybercrime investigation capacities, and implementation of comprehensive preventive programs aimed at increasing legal culture and social stability.

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