

STABILIZING THE CRIMINOGENIC SITUATION IN MAHALLAS: THE EXPERIENCE OF UZBEKISTAN AND INDIA



Prof (Dr.) Purvi Pokhariyal

Professor & Dean
School of Law, Forensic Justice & Policy Studies,
National Forensic Sciences University



Turayev Akmal Pandjiyevich

Scientific Researcher, Institute of Criminology Research
of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Abstract. This article analyzes the reforms implemented in the Republic of Uzbekistan aimed at stabilizing the criminogenic situation in mahallas, systemic changes, and aspects related to increasing the role of the mahalla institution in this direction. Also, the article examines the problems of stabilizing the criminogenic situation in the "mahallas" or neighborhoods of India from the perspective of community governance, local self-help institutions, and restorative practices. It explores how local governance mechanisms (mahalla forums, Gram Sabha, community policing, traditional village councils like Kebang in Arunachal Pradesh) intervene in criminogenic processes (poverty, unemployment, substance abuse, family disputes, social exclusion).

Keywords: mahalla, "yellow," "red," "green" categories, social prevention, criminogenic situation, India, community policing, Kebang, Panchayati Raj, social control, local governance, criminology, restorative justice.

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada O'zbekiston Respublikasida mahallarda kriminogen vaziyatni barqarorlashtirish yo'nalishida amalga oshirilgan islohotlar, tizimdagi o'zgarishlar, mazkur yo'nalishda mahalla instituti rolining oshirilishi bilan bog'liq jihatlar tahlil qilingan. Shuningdek, Hindistonning mahalliy boshqaruv mexanizmlari (mahalla forumlari, gram sabha, jamoat politsiyasi, Arunachal-Pradeshdagi Kebang kabi an'anaviy qishloq kengashlari) o'rganilib, kriminogen vaziyatga kambag'allik, ishsizlik, giyohvandlik moddalarini iste'mol qilish, oilaviy nizolar, ijtimoiy muammolarning ta'siri tahlil qilingan.

Kalit so'zlar: mahalla, "sariq", "qizil" "yashil" toifalar, ijtimoiy profilaktika, kriminogen vaziyat, Hindiston, jamoat politsiyasi, Kebang, Panchayati Raj, ijtimoiy nazorat, mahalliy boshqaruv, kriminologiya, odil sudlov.

Аннотация. В данной статье анализируются реформы, проведенные в Республике Узбекистан для стабилизации криминогенной ситуации в махаллах, изменения в системе и аспекты, связанные с повышением роли института махалли в этом направлении. Также изучаются механизмы местного самоуправления в Индии (форумы махалли, грам сабха, общинная полиция, традиционные сельские советы, такие как Кебанг в Аруначал-Прадеше), и анализируется влияние бедности, безработицы, употребления наркотиков, семейных конфликтов и социальных проблем на криминогенную ситуацию.

Ключевые слова: махалля, «желтая», «красная» и «зеленая» категории, социальная профилактика, криминогенная ситуация, Индия, общинная полиция, Кебанг, Панчаяти Радж, социальный контроль, местное самоуправление, криминология, правосудие.

In Uzbekistan, the mahalla, which holds a special place in the system of national values and traditions, is not just an administrative territory where the population lives, but an important social institution that ensures social stability, harmony, and a spiritual environment in society, possessing a strong legal status as a self-governing body of citizens. Article 127 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan establishes that citizens' gatherings in towns, villages, and auls, as well as in mahallas in cities, towns, villages, and auls, are self-governing bodies that elect a chairman. It is enshrined that citizens' self-governing bodies are not part of the system of state power bodies and are entitled to independently resolve issues of local significance in accordance with the law, proceeding from the interests of citizens, historical specifics of development, as well as national values, local customs, and traditions [1].

The citizens' gathering of the mahalla performs important tasks in protecting the rights and interests of citizens, improving the social condition of the population, including the prevention of crime. It should be noted that to date, nearly 50 normative-legal acts related to crime prevention activities have been adopted to prevent crime in mahallas. The increasing role of the mahalla in the field of crime prevention has become an important foundation of reforms in ensuring security and public order. Consistent reforms implemented in this direction have turned the mahalla institution into a main link ensuring not only social but also legal stability. The latest wave of reforms in this direction can be analyzed by dividing it into several stages.

First Stage (2020-2022). Starting from 2020, reforms in the field of ensuring citizens' security have risen to a new level. According to the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures to improve the socio-spiritual environment in society, further support the mahalla institution, and bring the system of working with families and women to a new level" [2], the activities of the mahalla chairman and the prevention inspector were coordinated. The prevention inspector, as the deputy chairman of the mahalla, was transformed into a subject ensuring

legal measures aimed at ensuring citizens' security, while the mahalla chairman was transformed into a subject ensuring the social aspect of crime prevention by resolving social problems of the population. This cooperation led to a new stage of preventive activity in society. Identifying the causes and conditions of crimes committed in the mahalla and discussing them among citizens is of particular importance in preventing the recurrence of crimes. This serves to call citizens to vigilance while also establishing the principle of the inevitability of punishment in practice. For this purpose, on September 10, 2021, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted the Resolution "On approving the Regulation on the procedure for discussing the causes of crimes and the conditions that allowed their commission" [3]. With this resolution, the "Regulation on the procedure for discussing the causes of crimes and the conditions that allowed their commission" was approved. According to the requirements of the Regulation, the procedure was established for holding crime discussions regarding the committed crime: within three days from the day the criminal case was initiated, in the territory of the mahalla where the crime was committed; regarding the person who committed the crime: within three days from the day the court's guilty verdict entered into legal force and was received by the internal affairs bodies, in the mahalla where the person who committed the crime resides. In the discussions, proposals are determined for applying disciplinary liability measures to the heads or employees of responsible organizations who did not take measures to prevent the origin of the crime early, as well as specific measures and tasks aimed at preventing the crime in the future, along with their implementation deadlines and responsible executors.

Second Stage (2023). Starting from 2023, a new stage was entered in the direction of ensuring public safety in mahallas. On March 30, 2023, the joint decision of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Ministry of Poverty Reduction and Employment, and the Ministry of Youth Policy and Sports "On determining the mechanisms for creating a safe environment in the republic's mahallas based on the 'Prosperous and Safe Mahalla' principle" was adopted, and the

"Mahalla Seven" system was introduced in more than 9,000 mahallas across the country. The "Mahalla Seven" includes the mahalla chairman, prevention inspector, women's activist, assistant to the hokim, youth leader, tax inspector, and social worker. The mahalla chairman is elected by citizens every 5 years, while the remaining members are appointed to the position by the relevant ministries and agencies. With the Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated December 21, 2023 "On measures to radically increase the role of the mahalla institution in society and ensure its operation as the first link in solving population problems" [4], the functions of the "Seven" were clearly defined. The independence and powers of the "Mahalla Seven" in solving population problems were expanded. They obtained the right to make decisions on allocating preferential loans and subsidies to needy families, supporting business initiatives of youth and women, ensuring employment, and providing social and material assistance. According to the new procedure, the mahalla chairman exercises general leadership over the activities of the assistant to the hokim, women's activist, youth leader, prevention and tax inspectors, and social worker operating in the mahalla, and effectively uses their capabilities in the comprehensive development of the mahalla. Every week, the mahalla chairman hears the reports of the assistant to the hokim, women's activist, youth leader, prevention and tax inspectors, and social workers in the mahalla and takes control of each of them solving at least 10 problematic issues every month.

Third Stage (2024). As a result of the consistent continuation of reforms in this direction, on November 30, 2024, the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures to increase the efficiency of the social prevention system in mahallas based on the 'Prosperous and Safe Mahalla' principle" was adopted. With this resolution, a social prevention system was introduced in mahallas based on the "Prosperous and Safe Mahalla" principle. Social prevention measures are a set of measures implemented to provide legal, social, psychological, medical, pedagogical, and other types of assistance to persons with a high probability of

committing an offense or becoming a victim of one. According to the new procedure, the prevention inspector identifies 14 categories of persons with a probability of committing an offense and 2 categories of persons with a probability of becoming a victim of an offense through the "E-ijtimoiy profilaktika" information system introduced into practice, and prepares a special "conclusion" about this. After that, the conclusion is directed to the "Mahalla Seven" according to relevance. The Seven take measures to solve the family, social, material, and legal problems of these citizens and to adapt them to society. After the conclusion is given by the prevention inspector to the representative of the "Seven" implementing social prevention, they draw up a social adaptation program to implement necessary preventive measures with persons who are objects of social prevention. After the measures specified in the program are implemented, social prevention measures are concluded based on a joint conclusion with the prevention inspector and the relevant representative of the Seven. The introduction of this system serves, on one hand, to support socially vulnerable layers of the population, and on the other hand, to create a peaceful and safe environment in mahallas.

Fourth Stage (from 2025). In order to bring the activities of responsible state bodies and organizations in the field of crime prevention in the republic's mahallas to a qualitatively new level in 2025, the Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated January 3, 2025 "On measures to create a safe environment in the republic's mahallas in 2025 and further increase the efficiency of the system of early prevention of offenses" [5] was adopted. According to the resolution, "Early prevention of offenses in every mahalla" was defined as a priority task for responsible agencies and institutions in 2025. Also, a number of "roadmaps" aimed at preventing offenses in mahallas and a program of targeted measures to increase the efficiency of the system for creating a safe environment and early prevention of offenses in the republic's mahallas in 2025 were approved. A Republican Interdepartmental Coordination Working Group was established under the General Prosecutor's Office to monitor

the execution of early prevention of offenses, the Program, and the "roadmaps". Mahallas with a difficult criminogenic situation in 2025 were assigned by name to all district (city) leaders, heads of the National Guard security service, and deputy heads of internal affairs bodies. A procedure was established whereby the activities of those responsible are critically discussed at the end of each month under the Minister of Internal Affairs, at the end of each quarter under the Prosecutor General, and every half year under the Prime Minister. In this regard, "roadmaps" are developed every quarter in the context of mahallas, districts, and regions, and necessary measures to stabilize the criminogenic situation are being implemented in a targeted manner. In the process of these reforms, the potential of the Criminology Research Institute, the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the University of Public Safety, and the Law Enforcement Academy is widely and actively used to introduce scientific approaches.

On August 18, 2025, the Resolution "On introducing amendments and additions to certain decisions of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan aimed at further increasing the effectiveness of the system of early prevention of crime in mahallas" [6] was adopted. The resolution approved the concept of targeted measures for preventing crimes in mahallas with a complex criminogenic situation. The main goal of the Concept is to stabilize the criminogenic situation and create a safe environment in mahallas by combining special organizational-preventive measures and targeted measures with scientific-practical approaches. With the instruction on classifying mahallas based on their criminogenic situation and organizing cooperative preventive measures, approved by the decision of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the General Prosecutor's Office, the National Guard, the Mahalla Association, and the Tax Committee dated August 8, 2025, the types of preventable crimes committed in the mahalla territory envisaged in 47 articles of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan were determined. Criteria for dividing mahallas into "red," "yellow," and "green" categories based on their criminogenic situation were developed and introduced into practice. According to it:

- **"Green"**: No preventable crime committed during the reporting period (remains green even with one crime of low social danger) - a mahalla where no preventable crime was committed in its territory during the reporting period (even if one crime of low social danger is committed in the territory, the mahalla remains in the "green" category);

- **"Yellow"**: The index of preventable crimes is equal to or lower than the district (city) index (remains yellow even with one less serious, serious, or especially serious crime) - a mahalla where the indicator of preventable crimes committed in the mahalla territory during the reporting period is equal to or lower than the district (city) indicator (even if one less serious, serious, or especially serious crime is committed in the territory, the mahalla remains in the "yellow" category);

- **"Red"**: The index of preventable crimes is higher than the district (city) index - mahallas where the indicator of preventable crimes committed in the mahalla territory during the reporting period is higher than the district (city) indicator are designated as "red" category mahallas.

The list of mahallas according to these three categories is prepared by the Main Center for Legal Statistics and Operational-Accounting Information of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. According to the new procedure, each committed crime is given points according to its degree of social danger:

- crime of low social danger – 5 points;
- less serious crime – 10 points;
- serious crime – 15 points;
- especially serious crime – 20 points.

This procedure helps identify mahallas with a difficult criminogenic situation and allocate resources effectively.

The systematic measures have resulted in a significant decrease in the crime rate in mahallas.

The district (city) indicator of crimes committed in the mahalla territory is determined by multiplying the points accumulated for preventable crimes committed in the mahalla territory in the district (city) by the population number of the specified territory category, and dividing by the total population number of the mahallas where crimes were committed. The indicator of crimes committed in

the mahalla territory is determined by multiplying the points accumulated for preventable crimes committed in the mahalla territory by 1000 population, and dividing by the number of residents living in the mahalla. This procedure is of great importance in making management decisions on identifying mahallas with a difficult criminogenic situation and directing necessary forces and means. As a result of the systematic measures implemented, the crime rate in mahallas has significantly decreased.

The measures being implemented in Uzbekistan to stabilize the criminogenic situation in mahallas are yielding results, and public control and preventive work play an important role in this direction. At the same time, studying international experience in this field is also significant. In particular, the example of India also has a number of positive experiences in reducing crime at the local level and ensuring citizen security. In India's urban and rural areas, the term "mahalla" historically evokes communal life: clusters of households, roads, common spaces, social networks, and informal institutions of solidarity and control. In the context of criminology, "criminogenic situation" refers to structural and dynamic conditions that allow for crime: social disorder, exclusion, poverty, youth alienation, substance abuse, weak guardianship, and fragmented normative order. Stabilizing such situations is crucial for sustainable security and social order. This article explores how the experience of India's local governance and informal justice institutions contributes to this stabilization. The specific aim is to investigate how community-based governance in India mitigates criminogenic factors, examine case studies of local institutions like *Kebang*, and theoretically analyze the policy implications for integrating such systems into the mainstream criminal justice system. The article proceeds as follows. First, the theoretical foundations of criminogenic situations, community governance, and social control are outlined. Second, the Indian context is addressed by analyzing the role of mahallas, local self-governance, and community policing. Third, empirical case studies are presented (*Kebang* in Arunachal Pradesh; community policing in Mumbai). Fourth, the challenges and limitations of stabilizing the crimino-

genic situation on the ground are analyzed. The article provides recommendations for policy and legal reforms and concludes.

Theoretical background: Criminogenic situations and community governance

Criminogenic conditions are social, economic, and environmental factors that pose a risk of crime and hinder informal and formal social control. Literature emphasizes that neighborhoods characterized by poverty, social fragmentation, weak institutions, and limited guardianship are more prone to crime (Shaw & McKay, 1942; Bursik & Grasmick, 1993). To mitigate these tendencies, forms of community governance such as self-help, solidarity, participatory decision-making, and informal social control are used (Sampson, Raudenbush & Earls, 1997). According to this view, local mechanisms of social control (neighborhood watch, community councils, informal dispute resolution) help stabilize normative order, strengthen guardianship, and reduce the environmental criminogenic potential. From a criminological perspective, restorative and community justice models emphasize repairing harm, engaging neighborhood subjects, and relying on local structures of authority and legitimacy (Zehr, 2002). Thus, the intersection of local governance and criminology becomes significant: can structures like neighborhood councils or village assemblies act as agents of normative repair, guardianship, and social integration in criminogenic contexts? The concept of mahalla, especially from Central Asian and Middle Eastern contexts (e.g., Uzbekistan, Tajikistan), emerges as neighborhood-level self-governing units suggesting social solidarity, local mediation, and informal justice. The Indian analogy (mahalla in urban/slum context, mahila committees, mohalla sabhas) encourages the study of how mahalla-like Indian institutions contribute to crime prevention. In short, the theoretical proposition is that mahalla-based local governance institutions can intervene in the chain causing crime by: (i) increasing social cohesion and trust; (ii) providing informal mediation and dispute resolution; (iii) improving guardianship and local control; (iv) linking formal justice systems with community norms; (v) offering a participation platform for youth and marginalized groups. The

article tests these considerations in the Indian context.

Indian Context: Mahallas, local self-governance and crime prevention The Asian legal system often operates at the intersection of formal state law and local community norms. India's local governance system traces back to the panchayat system, a unique institution of Indian civilization, where village elders or panch (council of five) traditionally resolved disputes and managed local affairs. In the pre-colonial era, these local structures played an important role in adjudication, where recourse to the ruler's court was rare. The main principle was to prioritize reconciliation and social harmony over punitive sanctions, later termed panchayat justice, an approach aimed at informal dispute resolution understandable to the masses (Baxi & Galanter, 1979). But British rule disrupted this legal pluralism by installing formal courts, uniform criminal laws, and police forces as part of colonial state-building. In post-independence India, constitution makers idealized justice; including a directive principle obligating the state to establish the gram panchayat as a unit of local self-governance for social, economic, and political justice for all (Article 40 of the Constitution of India) (Islam, 2020). This mandate led to the inclusion of panchayats in governance and judicial work.

In the 1950s, various states established Nyaya Panchayats for petty civil and criminal cases, which was part of India's extensive experiment to expand legal opportunities in villages (Baxi & Galanter, 1979). The Nyaya Panchayat program was theoretically provocative, aiming to combine access to customary forums with legal protection, but remained understudied and unevenly implemented, resulting in many Nyaya Panchayats being weakened due to capture by elites at the village level and lack of state support. Formal courts and police remained the main system, but were often practically non-existent or ineffective in remote and poor areas. This justice gap meant that informal or customary dispute resolution continued out of necessity in many Indian villages (Islam, 2020). Later, in 1992, a significant reform was implemented with the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, giving panchayats constitutional status. This reform recognized the potential role of

panchayats in doorstep justice. Village councils are today elected bodies with certain administrative powers; in some states, they have the authority to facilitate alternative resolution of disputes through nyaya committees or mediation cells, resolving issues like family disputes, petty assaults, and property matters through consensus. Parallel to this, urban mahalla committees, often called neighborhood committees or peace committees, emerged to help maintain order and inter-community harmony, especially in communally vulnerable areas. One of the early models was the Mohalla Committee movement in Mumbai in the 1990s, which engaged local citizens and police to work together to mitigate communal tension after riots (Deshpande, 2022). Today, India has a rich ecology of local governance: urban neighborhood structures, rural community committees, rural gram sabha under the Panchayati Raj system, and traditional tribal councils. These institutions often perform governance, dispute resolution, welfare, and informal social control functions. In many cities, neighborhood citizens' gatherings or resident welfare associations provide a neighborhood platform for monitoring, reporting, and taking collective measures against crime and disorder. In India's rural areas, gram sabha, panchayat, village police committees, and community police boards are increasingly cooperating in crime prevention (Eckert, 2004). However, India's criminal justice system is mainly formal, consisting of police, courts, and prisons. The problem lies in how to integrate informal/mahalla-level governance with the formal system to stabilize the criminogenic situation. For example, empowering mahalla committees to intervene early in youth disputes, substance abuse, family separations, or communal conflicts can reduce the demand on formal police and courts. Urban mahallas often suffer from criminogenic stress factors such as high density, migrant population, anonymity, weak social networks, unemployment, and substance abuse. If informal governance structures (mahalla committees) that mobilize the population and work in agreement with the police are introduced into the system, they can better provide guardianship, surveillance, and early warning. For instance, community policing initiatives in various Indian

cities emphasize cooperation between residents and police. Such cooperation not only increases reported crime but can also reduce fear and increase local control capability. Local self-governance under Panchayati Raj also intersects with crime prevention. Gram Sabhas, village development committees, youth clubs, women's self-help groups - all these can be platforms for social control, local dispute resolution, and social reintegration. However, the problem lies in capacity, legitimacy, resources, and intervention boundaries. For example, khap panchayats (caste-based councils in North India) are known to have imposed honor punishments on young couples marrying outside traditional norms, conflicting with the formal system and violating fundamental rights. The Supreme Court of India in *Shakti Vahini v. Union of India* (2018) was forced to intervene, declaring that no self-appointed khap court can interfere in marriages between consenting adults (Taneja, 2018). The court even issued instructions to police and district officials to prevent and prosecute any khap meetings attempting to establish such illegal justice. Thus, stabilizing the criminogenic situation at the mahalla level in the Indian context involves: strengthening mahalla governance platforms; linking them with mahalla police; encouraging local dispute resolution; integrating welfare and development works; strengthening guardianship; developing social capital; ensuring formal/informal justice. The next section illustrates this through case studies.

Kebang Council of Arunachal Pradesh: local customs Kebang is a traditional village council system in the Adi tribe in Arunachal Pradesh. As explained by Koyu & Singh (2020), Kebang functions as a non-adversarial forum for dispute resolution of the Adi tribe, involves itself in daily village affairs, and resolves disputes peacefully (Koyu & Singh, 2020). Kebang is a village gathering of village elders and clan chiefs, which meets in the village dormitory (dere). It deals with individual and clan disputes, property disputes, social norms, regulation of festivals, customs, land use, and welfare functions. It has the power of sanction, fine, mediation, and custom-based adjudication (Mibang, 2019). In Adi society, Kebang has historically served as a main

mechanism of social control that defines normative behavior, resolves disputes before escalation, and maintains local harmony. Community recognition of Kebang authority strengthens guardianship: community members know that violations (adultery, theft, debt, violence) will be considered publicly. The social integration aspect (public meetings, rituals) strengthens networks and thereby reduces anomie. Various studies show - Kebang helps decentralization and self-governance in Arunachal villages. One analysis indicates that new crimes unprecedented in tribal society, such as corruption, juvenile delinquency, changes in women's status, immigration, and multiculturalism, are not finding solutions in Kebang today (Dai, 2000). The informal nature of sanctions, lack of codification, and lack of connection with the formal justice system create gaps; furthermore, some crimes (serious violence, cybercrime, human trafficking) are outside the Kebang domain. Changing socio-economic reality, migration, youth unemployment, and drug addiction are affecting its capacity. Kebang's strengths are community legitimacy, immediacy of response, established guardianship and social sanction, low cost, and maintenance of social order. These are valuable features for criminogenic stabilization in mahalla-type conditions. However, to combat modern criminogenic threats (drugs, organized crime, youth gangs), Kebang needs to be linked with formal justice, legal literacy, capacity building, and empowerment of vulnerable groups (women, migrants). The Kebang council offers a model of mahalla governance and social control that stabilizes criminogenic conditions through local mediation, social sanctions, and community guardianship.

Community policing and mahalla governance in India While traditional institutions like Kebang operate in tribal environments, India increasingly relies on community policing and local mahalla governance to stabilize the criminogenic situation in urban and rural areas. One of the early models was the Mohalla Committee movement in Mumbai in the 1990s, which engaged local citizens and police to work together to mitigate communal tension after riots (Deshpande, 2022). These committees held regular meetings, informing

police about potential conflicts and mediating before conflicts escalated. The success of such efforts in reducing communal violence led to the introduction of similar problem-solving mechanisms in other cities for issues like disputes over loudspeakers, fights among youth, and joint celebration of festivals to strengthen harmony (Sinha & Dutta, 2025). The YUVA initiative launched by Delhi Police in 2017 in partnership with the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and the National Skill Development Corporation serves as an example of a community policing model adapted to urban criminogenic conditions. Its goal was to teach systemic skills to at-risk youth (17-25 years old) and connect them with jobs to prevent them from engaging in criminal or delinquent behavior. The program evolved through several phases, YUVA 1.0 (2017-2020), YUVA 2.0 Phase I (2021), and YUVA 2.0 Phase II (2022-2024), training a total of more than 14,000 youth across 70 police stations in Delhi. By 2024, more than 10,000 participants were certified in vocational fields, of which 3,410 were placed in jobs (Delhi Police, 2024). The project's emphasis on skills-based rehabilitation, women's participation, and entrepreneurship support through partnership with NIESBUD signifies a shift from reactive policing to active community stabilization by addressing structural causes of crime like unemployment, marginality, and lack of social support (Delhi Police, n.d.). Thus, the YUVA model shows that community policing can act as a socio-economic stabilizer in local "mahallas" by turning potential offenders into contributors, thereby lowering the criminogenic potential of urban neighborhoods. In many Indian cities, RWAs and neighborhood committees collaborate with police on "beat policing," intelligence sharing, rapid response, working with youth, and women's safety. These forums provide local knowledge on social networks, mobilize neighborhoods for surveillance, resolve petty disputes, and establish links with formal justice. Although concrete major studies are fewer, anecdotal evidence shows the importance of such forums in stabilizing mahallas.

Stabilization mechanisms. These mahalla governance mechanisms contribute to criminogenic stabilization in several ways: **Early**

intervention: local committees identify signs of delinquency, family separation, and conflict among youth and intervene before escalation.

- **Extending guardianship:** neighbors, mahalla leaders, panchayat members act as informal guards, strengthening control.

- **Social integration:** regular meetings and participatory governance strengthen trust, social capital, and reduce isolation - a known risk for crime.

- **Dispute resolution:** rapid mediation reduces demand on courts, reduces anger and repeat offense commission.

- **Connection with formal system:** if these bodies are connected with police/panchayat/registration of complaints, escalation to the level of formal justice becomes easier.

Limitations and gaps in evidence. Empirical research on the results of mahalla governance models in India (crime reduction, recidivism) remains limited. Furthermore, most such forums suffer from lack of preparation, resources, and vulnerability to local politics. The interface with formal justice (police/courts) often remains weak or ad-hoc.

Comparative Analysis: Indian and Central Asian mahalla systems To deepen our opinion, it is useful to briefly touch upon the concept of mahalla in Central Asia. In Uzbekistan, the mahalla is a neighborhood council responsible for social security, mediation, local governance, and informal social control. These institutions have been studied for their role in ensuring community cohesion and local security. Although India differs with its colonial history and governance structure, this similarity is instructive: integration of local governance, welfare, and security at the mahalla level, informal dispute resolution, and a culture of participation. Applying the mahalla model in India means strengthening connections with resident committees, community policing, traditional councils, and the formal justice system. Kebang works as a mahalla council for the village; urban mahalla forums work similarly. **Key conclusion:** successful mahalla governance requires legitimacy, community participation, connection with formal state institutions, and resources for early intervention and guardianship. Indian experiences often fail in

the connection between the local forum and formal justice, gender and social inclusion, as well as with modern criminogenic threats (digital crime, criminal groups, substance networks).

Challenges of stabilizing criminogenic situation at mahalla level in India While the potential is high, a number of interconnected problems hinder effective stabilization of the criminogenic situation through local governance:

Legitimacy and Authority: Traditional institutions like Kebang, mahalla committees sometimes lack formal legal sanction. Their decisions may not be enforceable under statutory criminal law, reducing their deterrent effect. For example, Kebang faces loss of prestige in the face of modern crimes.

Scale and complexity of modern crime: Many modern crimes (cybercrime, human trafficking, organized crime, drug networks) go beyond the "mahalla" scope and require a formal specialized response. Local forums may not have the capacity.

Gender and social coverage: Men dominate in many local governance forums, and women, migrants, and Dalits may be underrepresented. For instance, in the Arunachal tribal setting, women have expressed reluctance to appeal to Kebang with domestic violence complaints.

Gaps in resources and capacities: Local forums often lack training, financial support, and coordination with police and courts. For example, legal literacy programs for village elders in Arunachal in 2020 highlighted the need for capacity building.

Politics and cooption: Local committees can be captured by local elites, politicized, or used to suppress dissent rather than performing restorative/social control functions. This lowers trust and undermines effectiveness.

Interface with formal justice system: Formal police and courts may not recognize or coordinate with local forums, leading to duplication, confusion, or neglect. The Kebang example shows how lack of integration undermines effectiveness.

Urban stress and migration: Urban mahallas have high migrant inflow, weak social networks, anonymity, and heterogeneity. Local governance forums struggle to form cohesion and guardianship in such conditions. Taking these into account, stabilizing the criminogenic situation requires not only organizing local governance but also providing it with legal provision, resources,

training, adaptation to modern crime, inclusivity, and a coordinated architecture with formal justice.

Proposals for policy and legal reforms Based on the above analyses, the following policy and legal reform proposals are suggested:

Legal recognition of mahalla citizens' gatherings: The state should identify and legally recognize mahalla councils, village councils, and traditional institutions like Kebang as part of the crime prevention architecture. This improves legitimacy and enforcement capability.

Personnel qualification improvement and training: Local forum members (elders, residents, RWA office staff, panchayat members) need to undergo training on dispute resolution, working with youth, identifying substance abuse, early warning signs of crime, and coordination with police. Legal literacy programs (as in Arunachal) should be expanded.

Formal and informal justice links: Establishing formal redirection mechanisms between mahalla forums and police, juvenile justice boards, and diversion programs. For example: if a forum mediates a conflict among youth, but it turns into violence, the case should be handed over to formal bodies with documents.

Resource distribution: Municipalities and state governments should allocate budgets (microgrants) to mahalla committees/RWAs and village councils for security-related activities (lighting, youth clubs, public control).

Inclusivity and gender sensitivity: Ensuring representation of women, migrants, marginalized castes, and Dalits in mahalla governance. Special cells/committees should be formed for gender-based violence, youth rehabilitation, and informal mediation.

Data-driven local governance: Community forums should keep a simple account of disputes, youth appeals, substance abuse cases, and anti-social behaviors. Linking them with district crime records (e.g., National Crime Records Bureau) allows for targeted impact.

Adaptation to urban mahalla: Developing tailored "mahalla" structures for high-density mahallas for urban conditions where social networks are weak: block-level population safety committees, coordination with local police station, CCTV/lighting assessment, youth mentors, migrant support groups.

Monitoring and evaluation: States should implement periodic evaluation of

mahalla governance interventions and mahalla police results: whether crime rates, fear of crime, recidivism, and social cohesion are improving.

Conclusion. Stabilizing the criminogenic situation at the mahalla or guzar level in India is a promising but complex issue. Institutions like Kebang in Arunachal Pradesh offer a culturally grounded, community-based model of social control, guardianship, and mediation. Urban and rural mahalla governance systems once again show that localized structures can reduce crime, strengthen social integration, and improve security. However, modern criminogenic threats, gender and inclusive problems, legitimacy issues, limited resources, and weak links with formal justice

systems limit their effectiveness. Incorporating mahalla governance for India's criminal justice system, especially in the era of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (2023) and developing judicial-legal systems, means more than just symbolic recognition: it requires institutionalization, training, coordination, resources, and evaluation. Only then can the idea of community-oriented crime prevention based on local participation, guardianship, and social harmony become a robust reality in India's various mahallas. Future research should empirically measure the results of mahalla governance interventions in reducing crime, recidivism, fear of crime, and social cohesion across different Indian states and mahalla types.

References

1. Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan. URL:<https://lex.uz/docs/6445145>.
2. Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures to improve the socio-spiritual environment in society, further support the mahalla institution, and bring the system of working with families and women to a new level". URL:<https://lex.uz/docs/4740345#4743311>.
3. Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. 565 "On approving the Regulation on the procedure for discussing the causes of crimes and the conditions that allowed their commission". URL:<https://lex.uz/ru/docs/5623688#5630345>.
4. Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. PF-209 "On measures to radically increase the role of the mahalla institution in society and ensure its operation as the first link in solving population problems". URL:<https://lex.uz/docs/6705763>.
5. Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. DP-1 "On measures to create a safe environment in the republic's mahallas in 2025 and further increase the efficiency of the system of early prevention of offenses". URL:<https://www.lex.uz/docs/7330260>.
6. Resolution No. DP-253 "On introducing amendments and additions to certain decisions of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan aimed at further increasing the effectiveness of the system of early prevention of crime in mahallas". URL:<https://lex.uz/docs/7690026>.
7. Baxi, U., & Galanter, M. (1979). Panchayat justice: An Indian experiment in legal access. In M. Cappelletti & B. Garth (Eds.), *Access to justice* (Vol. 3). Sijthoff and Noordhoff.
8. Behera, M. C. (2024). Deliberative democracy in traditional village councils of Arunachal Pradesh. SSRN.
9. Bursik, R. J., Jr., & Grasmick, H. G. (1993). *Neighborhoods and crime: The dimensions of effective community control*. New York, NY: Lexington Books.
10. Dai, M. (2000, May). Arunachal Pradesh: The myth of tranquillity. *Faultlines: Writings on Conflict & Resolution* (Vol. 5). South Asia Terrorism Portal. <https://old.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume5/Fault5-5mdhai.htm>
11. Delhi Police. (n.d.). "YUVA", Community policing initiative of Delhi Police: About us. <https://yuva.delhipolice.gov.in/about-us.html?utm>
12. Deshpande, H. (2022, July 4). Mumbai's Mohalla Committees: The keepers of faith. *Outlook India*. <https://www.outlookindia.com/national/mumbai-mohalla-committees-the-keepers-of-faith-news-206645?>
13. Eckert, J. (2004). URBAN GOVERNANCE AND EMERGENT FORMS OF LEGAL PLURALISM IN MUMBAI. In *JOURNAL OF LEGAL PLURALISM*: Vol. nr. 50 (pp. 29–31). <https://commission-on-legal-pluralism.com/system/commission-on-legal-pluralism/volumes/50/eckert-art.pdf>
14. Islam, M. T. (2020, June 8). Access to justice for marginalised rural victims across South Asia: Issues and challenges. *South Asia @ LSE*. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/southasia/2020/06/08/access-to-justice-for-the-marginalised-rural-people-across-south-asia-issues-and-challenges/?>