

## **A CHRONICLE OF FORCED CHILD LABOUR: REPORTS FROM THE UZBEKISTAN COTTON HARVEST 2010**

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### **The annual quota has been fulfilled but children are still in the fields.**

Two weeks have passed since the annual cotton quota of Uzbekistan was fulfilled. However, using threats and lies, schoolchildren are forced to remain in the fields.

One of our listeners who called us said that his daughter was called to school for class, but instead she was sent to pick cotton.

“I haven’t permitted her to go to the cotton fields, but today they called her saying that class has started. When she went there, they told her to go pick cotton. So she came back, changed her clothes and left to pick cotton”, says the father of the 9th grade schoolchild.

All of the callers say that there is no cotton left in the fields and the weather has cooled down seriously.

Mamurjon Azimov, who worked as a farmer for many years, notes that if the farmers had the freedom of pricing the cotton they grow and selling it for the amount they wanted and if they were independent from state control, cotton could have been harvested easily without the labour of children.

“If the farmers pay 200 soms instead of 100 per kilo, everyone will go and pick cotton. But the farmers cannot afford that, because the cost of the cotton is priced from above” he says.

In order to earn one dollar at the rate of the black market, an Uzbek schoolchild has to pick 22 kilos of cotton.

Source: [BBC](#), 29.10.2010

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/uzbek/uzbekistan/2010/10/101029\\_cy\\_cotton\\_child\\_labor.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/uzbek/uzbekistan/2010/10/101029_cy_cotton_child_labor.shtml)

### **“Find the nonexistent cotton”**

The director of school number 42 in the Khiva district of Khorezm, obligated 4th grade schoolchildren to pick one kilo of cotton per day and the higher grades to find 5 kilos a day. A father of one of the 4th grade children told this to the Radio Liberty’s “Free microphone” programme.

“The cotton season has ended for 4th grade schoolchildren. But still the school authorities are demanding a kilo per day from each child. Children are wandering around the fields trying to find cotton that is not there. They cry and say that they don’t want to go to school, because the teachers would demand cotton from them.”

The 4th grade child Mahbuba told Radio Liberty that her teachers told her either to bring cotton herself, or they would send her to pick it in the field.

Radio Liberty: Where did they tell you to bring the cotton from?

- From the field.

Radio Liberty: Is there cotton in the field?

- No, but they told us to go there during class time

Radio Liberty: Do you then take the picked cotton to school?

- Yes, says the 4th grade schoolchild Mahbuba.

## **Do not leave cotton in its hull.**

In the Denov district of Surkhandarya the cotton season has officially ended on the 1st of November. However, after this date, it has restarted unofficially for the schoolchildren of the area. According to one of our speakers from Denov:

“The school was opened today. The teachers shouted at children saying why they came in new uniforms and they were asked to come in their old clothes so they could go to pick cotton in the fields. The teachers all have to find 500 kilo of cotton or else pay 50 thousand soms. If they don’t do that, they will all be sacked.”

He believes that the cotton quota has only been fulfilled on paper and now the local authorities are trying to fill the gap.

“Denov district’s quota was 41 tons of cotton. They filled it, and then they were given extra 10 tons to fulfill. They filled that too. I think it has all only been done on paper and now they want them to do it for real.”

“Now neither teachers nor children will be able to rest during the day or at night until they finish the season”, says Abdulla from Denov.

## **“So the President’s eyes could enjoy the view”**

Last year during the cotton harvest season, when Islom Karimov visited Ferghana, the local authorities forced teachers and students to put the already picked cotton back into their hull in the fields so that the President could enjoy the view of the fields full of cotton.

In Sirdarya, this year there were rumors that the president would come to visit. The local authorities found an original way of pleasing him with the look of the cotton fields. Abdurakhmon from Guliston reported this to Radio Liberty:

“There is a land called Jdanov in Guliston. New houses are being built there. The President is being expected to come to see the new constructions. So the children were made to pick the extra leaves from the cotton bushes so that the fields would look very white and full of cotton and when the President sees that, he would think that there is a lot of cotton crop in the fields.”

Source: [Ozodlik](http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/2209714.html), 3.11.2010.

<http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/2209714.html>

## **A soldier has lost his life not in battle, but in the cotton field.**

In this year’s cotton harvest season even soldiers have been involved.

On the 2nd of October in the Chinoz district, the soldier of the 1903 battalion couldn't meet the daily cotton target for which his commander clubbed him. According to an eyewitness, he died right at the scene. After that, the commander hung the soldier from one of the trees nearby with the help of others, so that it would look like he committed suicide.

This event happened in Boyevut district of the Surkhandarya province. At the moment this farm is under the control of the Republic's Military Prosecutor's office personnel. Activists from the human rights society "Ezgulik" are not given any access to the medical investigations conclusions nor are they able to study the case.

19 years old Inom Yuldoshev was called to serve in the Army from Andijan province.

Source: [Press release of "Ezgulik" Uzbek human rights society](#), 01.11.2010

[www.ezgulik.org](http://www.ezgulik.org)

## **It still remains unknown when the schoolchildren will return from the cotton fields.**

Due to the cold weather in Karshi, some colleges have brought back their students from the cotton fields. But the schoolchildren of the village schools are still remaining in the fields picking cotton.

In the Denov village there is only one school: # 26. The children of this school are still working in the fields and it is unknown when they will be returned.

According to the people in the village, there is still a lot of cotton in the fields and children will only be brought back when all the cotton has been harvested and the rainy season begins.

Source: [Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan](#), 30.10.2010

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HR-Uzbekistan/messages>

## **How to dodge the fists of the Uzbek governor?**

Cursing and insults have become the norm in which, in Uzbek regions, managers deal with their subordinates.

An observer who wrote a letter to the editor of uznews.net told that he witnessed a District hokim swearing at a group of old-Hajji, who came to a wedding from a nearby Syr Darya region.

Honourable old men got over the fact that they roamed the street as on the field the battle for the cotton crop took place. Interlocutor "Uznews.net" was outraged, not due to governor's hurtful words, but from the observation of the way in which the old men heard the insults with humility, and then even more hunched over they dragged along the street.

"They're old, they are also from other areas, they are the same - Haji. Who can do something with them? Hokim is double younger than them!"

To what degree is a laborer with a bent back responsible for the expansion of being kicked?

Every citizen of Uzbekistan, who turns out to be dependent on the chief, neglecting professional ethics and morality, should be an extra savage and the prank of their leader.

Millions of Uzbeks have mobile phones with cameras; shoot anything that you think is beyond what is permitted and share it on youtube.com; submit to independent publications.

The emergence of online video and audio recordings documenting the ways in which Uzbek khokims and other heads treat ordinary people, may change their behavior.

Source: [Uznews.net](http://uznews.net), 28.10.2010

[http://www.uznews.net/article\\_single.php?lng=ru&cid=24&aid=746](http://www.uznews.net/article_single.php?lng=ru&cid=24&aid=746)

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Feel free to disseminate these reports further and post them on your websites.

More reading:

FAQ: <http://www.cottoncampaign.org/frequently-asked-questions/>

Academic view of the subject: <http://www.soas.ac.uk/ccac/events/cotton-sector-in-central-asia-2005/file49842.pdf>

Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights, 2010, <http://www.uzbekgermanforum.org/>