

## **A CHRONICLE OF FORCED CHILD LABOUR: REPORTS FROM THE UZBEKISTAN COTTON HARVEST 2009**

### **Week 8**

### **Uzbek Children and College Students Will Remain in the Cotton Fields until the End of November**

**Synopsis:** Though the cotton season is largely over, children are still working in the cotton fields in Uzbekistan, Radio Ozodlik, the Uzbek language service of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, reported last week. The khokim [local governor] of Jizak region ordered the students to gather the harvest until November 20. In other regions, the harvest will continue until December 1.



Both schoolchildren and college students were at first allowed to return home, but then sent back into the fields, according to a resident of Kattakurgan district of Samarkand region who did not provide his name. They are to work there until December 1.

A teacher from Ferghana said students would remain in the fields until November 15; they had been working since October 6. A teacher in Karakalpakstan, who gave his name as Abudlla-aka, said he did not know when the harvest might be finished; although no cotton remained in the fields, students were still being sent to the fields in the cold weather.

According to an informant in Kashkadarya region, although teachers and schoolchildren have returned home from the fields, the harvest is not yet finished, so they are going back to work. He told Radio Ozodlik that students as young as from the sixth-grade were still working, the weather was good, and cotton remained.

Faranguz, 13, of Ferghana said that she and her fellow classmates have been picking cotton since September 20. She was finding it difficult to meet the quota because of the cold weather and had only picked two kilograms the previous day.

In Syrdarya region, Hazratkul Ernazarov said school had reopened and students had returned to classes, and now the unemployed and housewives were picking cotton. Teachers, doctors, and college instructors had returned to work.

*Source: Radio Ozodlik, 11/11/09.*

*Full version: <http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/1875163.html>*

### **Go Pick Cotton, or Lose Your Welfare!!!**

**Synopsis:** Local residents in Kattakurgan district of Samarkand region who receive social assistance are being sent to pick cotton. If they refuse, their welfare payments are cut by 20,000 soums per child; for two children it is 30-40,000 soums.

*Source: Radio Ozodlik, 11/11/09.*

*Full version: <http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/1875163.html>*

## Uzbek Cotton Fields Still Using Child Labour – BBC World

**Synopsis:** Cotton is big business in Uzbekistan, and a vital source of hard currency in a country which is chronically underdeveloped and where many live below the poverty line.

But last year, some Western clothes retailers threatened to boycott Uzbekistan - one of the world's leading cotton producers - if it did not stop using schoolchildren to pick this vital harvest.

As a result, the Uzbeks officially banned the use of child labour, but they now seem to have reneged on their promise, with children as young as 11 or 12 working in the fields.

"Everybody is out in the cotton fields, including schoolchildren," one woman told the BBC by phone - the BBC is not allowed to report on the ground in Uzbekistan.

The woman, who did not want to give her name, said the streets and markets in her area were almost empty because everyone was in the fields.

According to other residents, streets are festooned with slogans dating back to the Soviet era calling on everyone to help with the harvest. Government activists with loudspeakers are driving around reminding people to do their bit.

"My daughter is anaemic and has been taken to a cotton-growing area far away with her college. I couldn't do anything," one mother from a rural area in central Uzbekistan said. "I myself am disabled and my husband works in Russia. I can't visit her and don't know how she is now."

"Fourteen- and 15-year-old school pupils have been taken to the cotton fields," added Bakhtiyar Hamrayev, a human rights activist, describing the situation in the central Jizzakh region.

"In rural areas, children as young as 11 or 12 have been forced to leave their classrooms and help to pick cotton in nearby farms."

There is immense pressure on families to ensure their children take part in the harvest, and most people are afraid to resist.

Schools and colleges are also under pressure to support the harvest, and Bakhtiyar Hamrayev says this sometimes leads to them taking tough measures against children whose parents try to keep them at home.

"In one recent example, a boy fell ill and went to see the doctor," he said. "By the time he brought back the doctor's certificate, his teachers had informed the parents he'd been expelled."

Many Uzbek farmers do not want to use child labour, but they are powerless to negotiate the price paid by the state and the extremely low wages on offer put adults off picking cotton. "The government forces us to produce cotton while we want to plant fruits or vegetables," one Uzbek farmer said. "And again it's the government who decides the price for our cotton and who decides who will pick the cotton."

The BBC Uzbek Service asked government officials, including the Ministry of Education, to comment on allegations that Uzbekistan is still using child labour, but the authorities have declined to comment.

In the meantime, it seems that thousands of children are once again being forced to spend valuable school time toiling away in Uzbekistan's cotton fields until the end of the harvest in December.

Source: *BBC World*, 11/11/09

Full version: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8340630.stm>

## **Activist Beaten After BBC Story**

Synopsis: Within hours of the appearance of a story [see above] he helped BBC reporters investigate about the use of child labor in Uzbekistan's cotton fields, human rights activist Bakhtiyar Hamrayev was attacked and beaten, the BBC reported.

Hamrayev told the BBC that the children were forced to drink and wash in irrigation ditches from the nearby cotton fields. They were fed inadequately, with bread and tea for breakfast and macaroni soup for dinner. Children were forced to pay even for these meagre rations which often put them in debt after the harvest.

Source: *BBC World*, 11/11/09.

Full version: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8355585.stm>

## **Growing Persecution of Farmers' Rights Activists in Uzbekistan - Human Rights Watch**

Synopsis: The human rights defender and farmers' rights activist Ganikhon Mamatkhanov is facing a trial on politically motivated charges, Human Rights Watch said in a statement published on its website November 16.

Mamatkhanov has regularly provided commentary on the human rights situation in Ferghana, in eastern Uzbekistan, to Radio Ozodlik, the Uzbek language service of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL). Local human rights defenders believe that Mamatkhanov's arrest is in retaliation for his human rights work and public criticism of the government.

"Activists who fight for farmers' rights are a growing target of government persecution," said Holly Cartner, Europe and Central Asia director for Human Rights Watch.

Mamatkhanov faces charges of fraud and bribery [a standard accusation brought against many other human rights activists who are not state officials. In the 1990s, law enforcements agencies used to plant narcotics in activists' houses to justify criminal persecution against them – *our comment*]. He was detained on October 9, 2009, under circumstances that appeared to have been staged to frame him.

The Mamatkhanov case is one of a growing number of cases of Uzbek activists arrested for working for farmers' rights, including that of Sayyid and Oyazimhon Hidirova, chairman of the Arnasai Branch of the International Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan, arrested in August for her efforts to expose corruption by agricultural officials in Arnasai.

Source: *Human Rights Watch*, 16/11/09.

Full version: <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/11/15/uzbekistan-free-human-rights-defender>

## **Is Uzbekistan Involved in the Creation of a Grey Market for Cotton? Full List of Participants of the Tashkent Cotton Fair Published – Ferghana.ru**

Synopsis: The correspondents Ferghana.Ru managed to obtain the full list of participants of the Tashkent Cotton Fair [The list is posted [here](#)]. According to this document, the fair was attended by 252 companies, including 38 from Europe (excluding Turkey), and six from America.

At the fair, from the European Union, there was one company each representing the

Netherlands, Poland, and Italy, two companies each from Lithuania, Belgium, and France, three from Latvia, eight from Switzerland, nine from the UK and from Germany, and 41 companies from Turkey (listed in this paragraph as being closely associated with Europe). From Russia there were reps from 33 companies.

From the countries of Central and South East Asia, we note that Iran's interest in the fair was demonstrated by Iran sending 34 representatives from its companies, from China, 31, from the United Arab Emirates - 10 companies, Pakistan - eight, South Korea - five, Japan - three, Singapore - two, and Hong Kong and India - one each, Ferghana.ru reports.

Even in 2007, a press leak revealed that a Bangladeshi company was wavering whether or not to buy Uzbek cotton. Tashkent would immediately have to deal with the issue of using child labor, as even Bangladeshi firms would have to find other suppliers. But it seems that commercial interests won out, and they sent representatives from 21 Bangladeshi companies.

The majority of those companies attending the fair in Tashkent have identified the cotton trade as their sphere of activity. Among the participants were quite a lot of companies which themselves offer their products or services -- financial, logistics and transport, equipment supply, production of fertilizers.

It is somewhat amusing to read the list of last names of the people participating in the fair. As a rule, the last names are Uzbek --even if you read the list of German, French, Italian, Japanese, Belgian, British, or American participating companies. Several companies, such as the British *Agex Commerce Ltd.*, which was represented only by four people from Uzbekistan, is typical of many such companies. It seems that natives of Uzbekistan make up about 85 percent of the list. The exception is the Chinese list, in which the majority were Chinese.

There are no sufficient grounds to assert that the companies which they represent are affiliated with Tashkent and Tashkent-based monopolies involved in the sale of cotton. The majority of Uzbeks in the delegations may simply say that Uzbeks have an easier time conducting business with other Uzbeks. It is clear that the authorities are closely watching any transaction involved in selling cotton, as well as those involved in these transactions. That is why, obviously, firms prefer to send to Tashkent their representatives, who, at the very least, are trustworthy in the eyes of the officials.

From an analysis of the list of participants, one may assume that the more people a company sends, the more that company is interested in the resulting trade. For example, the Swiss company *Paul Reinhart* sent 10 delegates; *Super Perfect Investments Ltd* (Hong Kong) sent six, *Xiang Gang jia ji You Xian Gong Si* (China) - one dozen, *Iran Rise Alborz* (Iran) - nine, *Donovan Invest trading* (Russia) - five, and so forth.

According to expert Yelena Kuzmina, at the Tashkent Cotton Fair, only a certain percent of Uzbek cotton is sold, whereas the bulk is sold by intermediaries at the European and Arab cotton exchanges.

The main buyer of Uzbek cotton in one way or another is Russia. It has been so for over one hundred years, ever since the days of the Russian Empire. Uzbekistan has grown exactly the sort of cotton, with the length of fiber, that is appropriate for Russia's textile industry, as Uzbek cotton is less suitable for European machinery. Recently, Tashkent claims that farmers began to grow new varieties of cotton, however for these new types to become suitable for industry takes at least ten to fifteen years. So it is too early to talk about genuine variety. And although the intergovernmental commission on economic cooperation has attempted, it seems, from its inception, to resolve the issue of direct shipments of cotton from Uzbekistan to Russia, while this remains unresolved - it seems that the resale of cotton through intermediaries is too lucrative," says Kuzmina.

So we decided to ring up Russia's companies participating in the Tashkent fair, to find out where else, besides the capital of Uzbekistan, they can buy Uzbek cotton, and how successful the fair this year in Tashkent was for Russian companies.

Here we discovered some interesting things, Fergana.ru reports. Quite a few Russian companies which have registered for the fair have absolutely no information about them on the Internet. Nothing on the search engines confirmed the existence of these companies whatsoever, or these companies were mixed in with the many companies with similar or the same names, that had nothing specifically to do with cotton. Or, if one could find these companies on the internet, there was little contact information for them, no phone number (one could only be contacted by email, such as the company "Proxiium"), or the contacts lead you to Tajikistan, like the company *Mercot AG*, or to Iran, like the company *Ferdows Textile Co.*

And there were some companies that traced back to Uzbekistan, such as the company *Alfa Invest* or *Evrometall Azia*. Some of the companies registered at the fair under one name, but in Russia exist under a different one - for example, "*Yaroslavl Bolshaya Manufaktura*," which sent to one representative Tashkent, though the company is officially known as the Yaroslavl technical fabric factory "*Krasni Perekop*."

Fergana.ru managed to call the CEO of "*Primteks*" Vadim Bakarinov, who went to Tashkent. "*Primteks*" has cooperated with Uzbekistan for 15 years. Asked whether some companies in Russia represented at the fair are real, Bakarinov answered that yes, these are real companies. Just as a company may have a trademark, known to all, and under which it registers at these gatherings, it may sign its contracts through another company or legal entity, "We've been in this business for 15 years, and we are known by the brand '*Primtex*,' even though our contracts are under the company '*Uniontex*'".

"In Tashkent, we meet with our overseas colleagues from England, from Germany; we will learn about their plans, and sometimes we do not buy cotton directly from the Uzbek companies but through their intermediaries, because their offers may be more favourable. For example, when some of these firms recorded a lower price, the prices later began to rise; the intermediaries, nevertheless, offered prices below the current ones. Or they offer a deferred payment or discounts ... For example, you can buy cotton from the Swiss company *Paul Reinhart AG*, which imports to Russia and keeps quantities of cotton in customs warehouses; and you need not travel far, but just go, for example, to Ivanovo, to examine the cotton. I like that, the price suits me – just pay and take..."

Source: *Ferghana.Ru*, 12/11/09

Full version: <http://www.ferghana.ru/article.php?id=6367>

## Elyor Ganiev Named Vice Premier of Uzbekistan

Synopsis: President Karimov has named Elyor Ganiev Deputy Prime Minister of the Government of Uzbekistan, Regnum news agency reported. Ganiev had previously served as Minister of External Economic Relations [the ministry which organizes the annual cotton fair in Tashkent and hosts three major companies trading Uzbek cotton abroad. The Ministry has claimed that one million tons of cotton fibre was sold at the Cotton Fair held in Tashkent this year, of which 600 thousand tons are from the 2009 harvest and 400 thousand tons from the 2010 harvest – our comments].

Uzmetronom.com reports that Ganiev came from the security services division specializing in combating transnational economic crimes. In the early nineties, he had been delegated to strengthen the Agency of Foreign Economic Relations, where he worked under the direct supervision Utkir Sultanov, who later headed the government of the republic. In 1997, Ganiev headed this agency.

From 2002-2005, Ganiev worked as Deputy Prime Minister on Foreign Economic Relations and in 2005 he was Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, serving as Minister of External Economic Relations from 2006, a government source told Regnum.

Source: *Regnum.ru*, 15/11/09; *Uzmetronom.com*, 15/11/09.

Full version: <http://www.regnum.ru/news/1225199.html>

[http://www.uzmetronom.com/2009/11/15/priklad\\_ganieva\\_zvonok\\_dlja\\_azimova.html](http://www.uzmetronom.com/2009/11/15/priklad_ganieva_zvonok_dlja_azimova.html)

## How export revenues are being spent

### ... Chasing Western Celebrities

**Synopsis:** Lola Karimova-Tillyaeva, President Karimov's youngest daughter, paid the famous actress Monica Bellucci 190,000 euro for a four-hour event with dinner and a brief speech, ferghana.ru reported, citing infox.ru and the French site rue98.com.

The charity dinner was held on April 8 this year at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Paris in honour of the opening of Karimova-Tillyaeva's foundation, Uzbekistan 2020.

French actors Alain Delon and Edouard Baer as well as Bernadette Chirac, wife of former President Chirac, also attended and were photographed with Karimova-Tillyaeva, 31, who has a degree in international law from the University of World Economy and Diplomacy in Tashkent and also a Ph.D. in psychology from Tashkent State Economics University.

The president's daughter has founded two large charities in Uzbekistan, Sen Yolg'iz Emassan [You are Not Alone], an orphans' foundation, and also the Republican Center for Social Adaptation for Children. She is currently deputy director of the Tashkent branch of Lomonosov State University of Moscow and is Uzbekistan's permanent representative to UNESCO.

The satirical French website Bakchich Hebdo, which takes its name from the Arabic word for "bribe" and the French word for "weekly," said that President Karimov's daughter was following in her father's footsteps, chasing stars.

Source: *Ferghana.ru*, 11/11/09.

Full version: <http://www.ferghana.ru/news.php?id=13409&mode=snews>  
<http://www.rue89.com/2009/11/10/quand-monica-bellucci-se-vend-a-la-dictature-ouzbek-125516>

### ... Landing a Prestigious Soccer Coach

**Synopsis:** The Portuguese edition of *Futebol Finance* newspaper compiled a list of the highest paid football coaches in 2009. The list was headed by the Brazilian head coach of Uzbekistan's Bunyodkor football club, Luiz Felipe Scolari. The newspaper reports that Scolari earned 16,6 million euro in Uzbekistan this past season. [This was previously reported as an annual salary of 13 million euro – *our comment*],

The top three highest paid include Jose Mourinho, coach of Italy's Inter, at 11.3 million euro, and the head coach of England's national team, Fabio Capello at 8.8 million euro.

Among the top ten highest paid coaches includes head trainer of Russia's national team Guus Hiddink, earning 5 million euro.

Source: *CA-NEWS.org*, 10/11/09

Full version: <http://ca-news.org/news/256621>

### .. illustrated by some comparative statistics

	Highest Paid Soccer Coach	Annual Salary in EURO	GDP per capita, World Bank 2008, US\$	Under-5 mortality rate, UNICEF 2007, per 1000 births,
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Uzbekistan	Luiz Felipe Scolari, 'Bunyedkor' club	16,6 mln	1,032	41
Britain	Fabio Capello, England's national team	8,8 mln	43,089	6
Italy	Jose Mourinho, 'Inter'	11,3 mln	38,309	4
Russia	Guus Hiddink, national team, 2006- 2009	5 mln	11,339	15