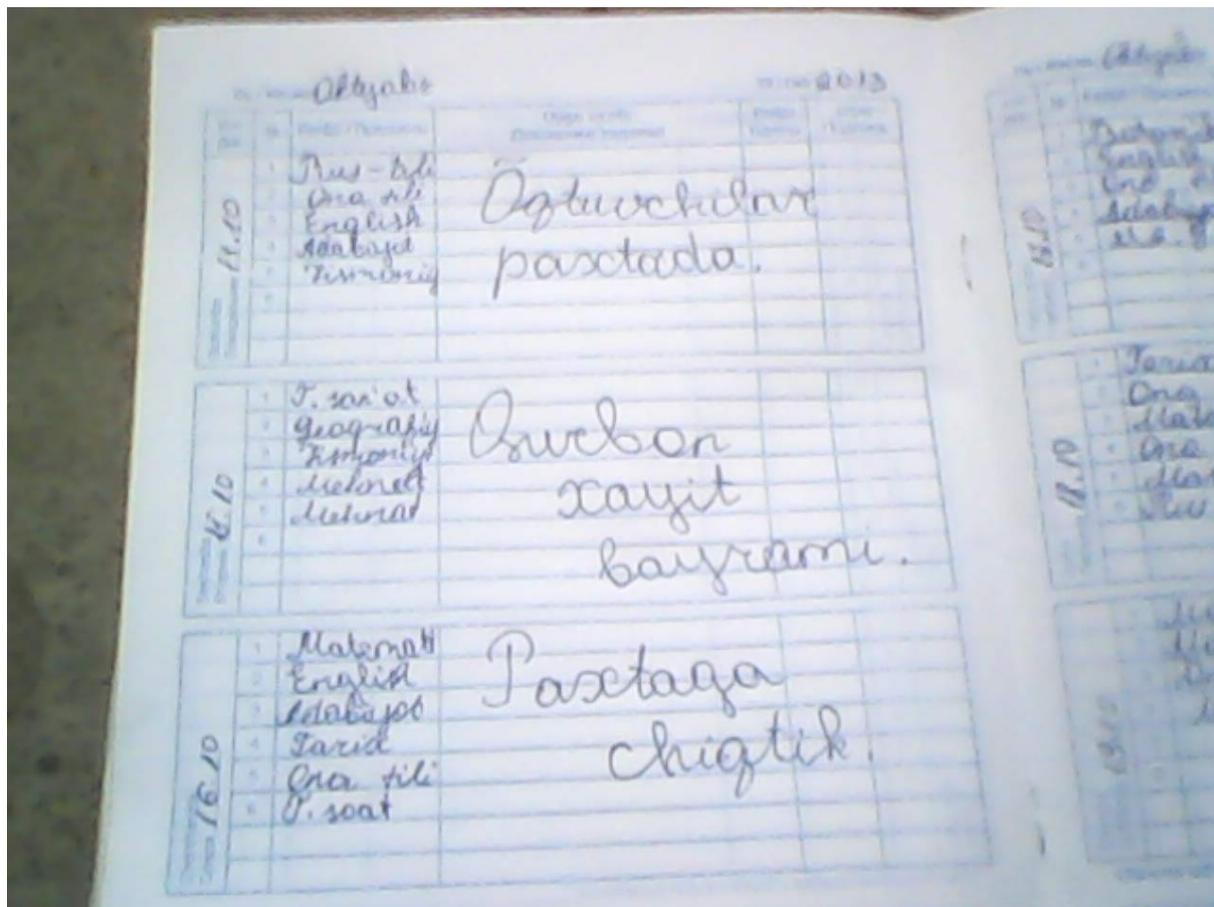


## A CHRONICLE OF FORCED LABOUR OF CHILDREN AND ADULTS

Issue 8, November 7, 2013



Starting 2012, the Uzbek government stopped sending schoolchildren under the age of 15 to pick cotton on a mass scale. Nevertheless, this year (as in 2012) in some regions, schools sent children to work for a few days at a time or after the classes.

Photo from the diary of schoolgirl:

14.10.2013 - Teachers went to (pick) cotton

15.10.2013 - "Kurban hayit" holiday

16.10.2013 - We went to (pick) cotton

### UGF Monitoring Team Observations:

Starting October 24, authorities will begin dismissing students from the cotton fields. As of November 1, only students of Tashkent universities have returned. The students of high schools and universities in the regions continue to pick cotton.

#### Syrdarya

- Between October 21-22, due to the recent wave of cold and rain, college (high school) and university students in the area were returned home from the cotton fields. Studies are scheduled to resume beginning October 24. However, on November 2, students from most colleges and universities were once again sent to the fields to pick cotton.

#### Syrdarya

- During the school holidays starting November 3, school teachers were obliged to go out every day to pick cotton. Teachers from several schools reported that they could choose between joining the daily collection of cotton or quitting their job. In an interview one teacher said: "I feel very ill, I have a terrible flu, but still, in the morning I had to go out to pick cotton. I called

the director to tell her about my illness and ask for a day off. She didn't even listen to me and began shouting at me: you're not dying, now take a taxi and go work in the field. If you don't go, then tomorrow you can write a letter of resignation from work ... I felt so bad that even under the threat of dismissal I did not go to the field. I do not know what will happen now..."

*Djizzak*

- From an interview with a high school teacher on November 4, 2013: "Today I went to pick cotton. There is very little cotton left. In addition to teachers, many employers of different organizations were sent to the fields. It was very cold. Now, it's impossible to hire worker to pick cotton, even for money. Therefore, everyone had to go to the field themselves. 30 people fit in one bus, but instead 50 people were stuffed inside. Awful. I could barely breath. Coming back it was even worse. Cotton pickers who are able to collect more than 20 kg of cotton per day, were given one liter of oil as a reward. But this oil was of terrible quality and flavor and not suitable for eating.
- Interview with an employee of the company «GM Uzbekistan». Asaka, Andijan region, Male, 31 years old, October 30, 2013.

I have worked for the company for more than 6 years. This year, we were sent to the harvest starting September 10 and worked in the Boz district, Andijan region. I spent 50 days on the field. We returned when the last gram of cotton was harvested.

**How many of you went with the company?**

With me it was like 32 people from our company, of which 9 were actual employees and the rest were hired workers.

**How much does it cost to hire a worker?**

From the beginning to the end of the season, \$100. Well, he can also earn money for the cotton picked, 200 sum per 1 kg.

**Have you earned anything?**

No, nothing. At first, I was collecting 35-40 kg per day, followed by 15 kg. At the end 3-4 kg. Money was spent on food.

**Are you going to fields every year? And how do you feel about this?**

Yes, this "feast" comes to all of us every year. You have to go. I do not like it, of course, but you can stand up to this.

**Do you know how many workers went (to pick cotton) from your company?**

From the factory every year about 1-1.5 thousand people. Last year, we were taken to the Syrdarya region, but this year, they said that they do not need pickers, they needed specialists from us to help farmers repair their equipment.

**What will happen if you refuse to go to collect cotton?**

Well, those who don't want to go can send somebody in their place. Refuse ...? No one would even think of it.

**What were the working conditions in the field?**

At 8:00am we were already in the fields. Picking cotton until 5:00 pm, then the cotton is weighed and then comes the tractor. Then we return, have dinner and sleep. We could take off once a week to go home.

**Is there other public work you are involved in?**

No, only cotton. Well, cotton because it's policy.

**Media Reports:**

[Uzbek student imprisoned for knifing down peers on cotton field](#)

28.10.2013

Kashkadarya Regional Criminal Court sentenced the 23-year-old Akram Urolov to 10 years and seven months of imprisonment based on Article 97 Part 2 (homicide) of the Uzbek Crime Code, Ozodlik Radio reports. On 16 Sep 2013 at a cotton field in Kashkadarya, Mr. Urolov got into a fistfight with four students who were trying to make him to collect cotton for them to fulfil their quotas.

Mr. Urolov was a second-year student at the history department of Karshi State University, and the other students were fourth-year students of the same department. During the fight, Mr. Urolov used a knife. A 22-year-old died on the scene, and a 23-year-old died in the emergency room of a local hospital. The other two students, ages 24 and 25, are still hospitalized.

It is noteworthy that all of these students have chosen to major in "National Ideology." As a rule, the National Security Service of Uzbekistan—the successor of the Soviet KGB and the most influential state institution in Uzbekistan—usually employs students graduating with this degree.

Fergana News,

<http://enews.fergananews.com/news.php?id=2750&mode=snews>

### **A hired cotton picker kills a female student and injures her mother**

31.10.2013

In Andijan on October 23, a mardikor (hired laborer) who was sent to the cotton fields in place of a local high-school student, killed the young girl who had hired him and injured her mother, reported Ozodlik (Uzbek Service of Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty).

According to Ozodlik, Zulfira Akhmedova, a third-year student at Andijan State University, refused to go to pick cotton due to poor health. Despite the medical reports submitted by her, the dean's office ordered her to go the cotton fields or send someone else in her place. So Zulfira hired a markidor, a man from Dzhalolkuduka named Botir.

"When Botir returned from cotton, he went to Zulfira for the promised money. Whether she paid him a smaller amount than was initially agreed, or didn't pay him at all, there was a conflict in which Botir attacked Zulfira and her mother with a knife," reported the Ozodlik source.

Zulfira died on the spot. Her mother was hospitalized.

According the Ozodlik source, the police in Andijan confirmed the incident. He said, "on October 23, 25-year old Botir Yulboev, resident of Jalakuduk district, killed 21-year-old Zulfira Akhmedov and her mother, 44-year-old Zarifa Akhmedova, residents of Olamushuk village of the same district.

The initial investigation reports prove that Botir Yulboev was hired by Zulfira to pick cotton in her place, and didn't received the promised money at the end of the specified period."

A University of Andijan teacher (who did not want to be named) confirmed that „Zulfira had a medical certificate from the MAB (medical advisory board) that indicates her health problems for which she should not pick cotton." „But this year the requirements were very strict. Even those with doctor's medical certificate had to hire somebody in his/her place," said the teacher.

Zulfira Akhmedov was the tenth victim of the 2013 cotton campaign reported by the media.

Fergana News,

<http://www.fergananews.com/news/21431>

### **Students in Samarqand were returned back to the cotton fields**

28.10.2013

On October 27 the university students of Samarqand were permitted to go back home, but on October 28th the authorities sent them back to the cotton fields.

“Yesterday a special convoy of busses arrived to take students back. We all collected and packed our stuff and got on the busses. But almost as soon as we sat in the busses, we had to get off again and were told that we would be picking more cotton. The same situation was repeated in the Samarqand Institute of Foreign Languages!”, stated a letter to Radio Liberty from students of Samarqand Institute of Economics and Service.

A similar report arrived from the students of Samarqand Institute of Medicine.

“Yesterday we were supposed to go back. But today, October 28, we were awoken at 6:00 in the morning and sent to pick cotton again,” said the letter from the future doctors.

An official in charge of the cotton harvest mobilization at Samarkand Institute of Economics and Service confirmed this information to Radio Liberty.

„All the universities of Samarqand region stayed to harvest cotton. At the moment it is not known for how long. The governor's office knows it,“ said the university official.

An official from the Samarqand region governor's office said the arrival of cold weather forced them to bring back the students, but in the following days the temperature picked up, so they decided to return the students to pick cotton for few more days.

Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty „Ozodlik,“  
<http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/25150655.html>

### **University teacher: I picked cotton for 40 days. I brought my lunch with me from home.** 25.10.2013

University students were sent home from cotton harvest, reported a teacher from Guliston State University who introduced himself as Bobur, to Radio Liberty's „open microphone.“

According to Bobur, students who had been picking cotton since September 15 left the cotton fields and started their classes on Monday, October 28. Alongside the students of Guliston State University, a group of teachers also picked cotton.

We asked Bobur how much cotton he picked during the cotton season and how much money he was paid.

„I picked cotton for 40 days. I went from home to the cotton fields everyday. On average I picked 30 - 40 kilos a day. During the whole season I picked more than 1 ton of cotton. The pay didn't even reach 200,000 soums (\$94c). What they paid didn't even cover the transport fees. There was no profit. I only went in order to avoid losing my salary from my work place. I went so the management wouldn't blame me for not helping with ‚public works‘.“

Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty „Ozodlik,“  
<http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/25148101.html>

### **International Monitors are still in Uzbekistan: Authorities are instructing students what to say to them** 23.10.2013

A father whose child studies at Yangier Construction and Communal Services Vocational high school in Syrdarya region, called Radio Liberty. After requesting anonymity, he reported on a meeting between the international monitors and students of his child's high school on October 22.

Prior to the meeting, all the first-year students (ages 15-16), who recently returned from one month picking cotton, received special training on what to say to the visitors and were thoroughly coached.

„My daughter told me that her teacher told them that a commission is coming to visit, so they need to

teach the students what to say to the commission. The director himself came and taught the students what to answer if they are asked questions. While in the cotton fields, these children were taught what to say to anyone who asked. Back at the school, they were taught to say that they didn't go to pick cotton, that they studied, that their facilities are great and warm and they don't have any difficulties," said the father.

On October 22 a commission accompanied by government officials arrived to meet with students and schoolchildren in the Syrdarya region. Residents assume that the commission members were the international monitors, because since September these international observers have been monitoring across the country and researching the situation with child labour and forced labour.

Despite efforts by officials in Tashkent to keep children under the age of 18 from participating in cotton harvesting, the many fatal incidents involving students and schoolchildren who were forced to pick cotton is reflecting the real situation. Particularly, on October 21, 16-year old Yuldoshev Erkaboy died. He had been forced to go to pick cotton and stay in Galaba village, Urganch district of Khorezm region.

Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty „Ozodlik,“  
<http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/25145763.html>