

Human Rights
Violations
in Uzbekistan's
2014 Cotton
Harvest

**The Government's
Riches,
the People's
Burden**

The Uzbek-German
Forum for Human Rights
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Executive Summary

For decades, the government of Uzbekistan has used popular slogans such as “Cotton is the people’s riches!” to impart a sense not only of pride, but also of duty to support cotton production. Officials sometimes refer to cotton work as *khashar*, a traditional concept that refers to communal work. But propaganda does not mask the sinister reality of cotton production in Uzbekistan. Far from being the “people’s” riches, the cotton industry in Uzbekistan brings wealth to a tiny government elite while contributing to the impoverishment of millions. Cotton production, which nets the government more than \$1 billion USD a year in revenues, is paid for by extorting money directly from millions of people, who are forced to pick cotton and, in many cases, to make mandatory “contributions” to pay for labor, transportation, and other costs related to the harvest. And far from being *khashar*, or “communal” work for which people willingly contribute their time and labor for the betterment of all, the government orders the forced labor of millions of people to grow and pick cotton under duress.



In 2014 the government of Uzbekistan carried out a program of mass extortion and increased its use of systematic, mass forced mobilization of labor to harvest cotton. Government officials used coercive means to ensure that farmers met state quotas for cotton production and to force millions of people across the country into the fields to pick cotton, or to buy their way out of picking with undocumented payments to government officials. In 2014, this system took an even greater toll as the government mobilized more public sector workers than in previous years, decimating the provision of essential public services such as health care and education during the two months of the cotton harvest. The government forced private employers to send their employees to pick cotton and make mandatory contributions to support the harvest.

The increased number of public sector workers forced into the fields was apparently to compensate for fewer children forced to pick cotton. In continuation of developments initiated in 2012, the government reduced the use of children to harvest cotton in 2014 by not forcibly mobilizing first- and second-year college students, who are generally 16-17 years old, and schoolchildren, on a mass scale. However, the government did mobilize third-year students, including many 17-year olds, and in some regions local authorities forcibly mobilized younger children, particularly in the later weeks of the harvest, to meet quotas assigned by the same central government authorities that simultaneously decreed children should not pick cotton.

The harvest also came at a high human cost. At least 17 people died and numerous people were injured as a result of the cotton harvest and poor or unsafe working and living conditions, a disturbing increase from previous years. The stresses of forced labor, including humiliation, debt, and threats, apparently led to at least four suicides and at least five others died from heart attacks or other health problems while picking cotton or immediately upon their return from the fields. Vehicle crashes killed several people and injured many more. Workers were forced to work for long hours with little rest and no days off. Living conditions were poor, often unheated, overcrowded, and with insufficient access to safe water and washing facilities. Food provided to workers was monotonous and of poor quality.

Rampant, widespread and systematic corruption underpinned the cotton production system in 2014. Furthermore, the system allowed local administration and tax officials, university, college, and school directors, cotton officials and many others to extort and skim money from individuals, institutions, and businesses. Even while cotton income is not added to national budgets, unregulated extortion lines officials’ pockets at every level and every part of the system. Forced contributions from businesses, payments from individuals for field labor, and payments by millions of forced laborers for food and transportation costs, plus fines and payments for unmet quotas, amounted to a massive, unregulated, and unaccounted for direct subsidy to the government and masked the true cost of cotton production in Uzbekistan.



The enrichment of officials creates a powerful disincentive to enact real reforms of the cotton sector. Corruption also undermines the rule of law in Uzbekistan, nurturing an environment in which the government denies that it uses forced labor and impunity for serious human rights violations, such as forced labor, prevails. Two multinational companies – Telia Sonera and Telenor – have publicly acknowledged supporting the forced labor system through contributions in 2014, claiming it is a prerequisite for conducting business in Uzbekistan, and employees of a third, General Motors, reported that they were again sent to pick cotton.



Cotton production in Uzbekistan is underpinned by one of the largest state-orchestrated forced labor systems in the world, undermines access to health, education and other social services, and fosters widespread corruption. The Uzbek-German Forum urges the government of Uzbekistan to urgently undertake fundamental reforms of the cotton sector and calls on Uzbekistan's international partners, including governments, intergovernmental organizations, multinational companies operating in Uzbekistan, and international financial institutions, to use their influence to impress upon Uzbekistan the necessity of these reforms.

Key Recommendations:

To the Government of Uzbekistan

- Allow independent human rights organizations, activists, and journalists unfettered access to investigate and report on conditions in the cotton production sector and for the International Labor Organization (ILO) to survey and monitor labor practices with the participation of the International Organization of Employers (IOE), International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), and local independent civil society.
- Reform the cotton sector including by:
 - o enforcing national laws that prohibit the use of forced and child labor and vigorously prosecute non-compliance
 - o ensuring financial transparency of expenditures and revenues,
 - o ending mandatory cotton production and harvest quotas while ceasing in the meantime to penalize farmers who do not fulfill cotton quotas,
 - o raising and eventually freeing procurement prices, and de-monopolizing agricultural inputs and the cotton sales markets.
- Grant access to the country to the Special Procedures of the UN Human Rights Council and issue an invitation to the UN special rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery.

To the International Labor Organization

- Establish, monitor and report on clear benchmarks for the government of Uzbekistan to fulfill its commitments to implement the fundamental labor conventions of the ILO. This includes the elimination of state-orchestrated forced labor of children and adults in the cotton sector, starting with the 2015 cotton production cycle.
- Ensure the participation of the IOE and ITUC and regular consultation with independent Uzbek civil society groups in the development and implementation of all monitoring and technical assistance activities in Uzbekistan.
- Publicly report findings, activities, and recommendations concerning fundamental labor standards in Uzbekistan.

To the United States and European Union

- Exclude cotton from Uzbekistan from benefitting from trade preferences under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) until the government of Uzbekistan ends its forced-labor system of cotton production.
- Exercise 'voice and vote' at the World Bank and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to prevent any investment that would benefit the Uzbek Government's forced-labor system for cotton production.
- Investigate and prosecute companies that are benefitting from or contributing to the forced labor system of cotton production that are in violation of international and national laws.
- Require the government of Uzbekistan to demonstrate financial transparency and accountability around cotton production as a condition for bilateral development finance, and consult independent civil society groups during development and monitoring of projects.
- Continue to defer the signature of Textile Protocol between the EU and Uzbekistan until concrete reforms of the forced labor system are implemented and effectively, demonstrably eradicating forced labor.

To the World Bank and Asian Development Bank

- Require that the Uzbek government demonstrate financial transparency and accountability around cotton production as a condition for releasing project loans and publicly report on progress.
- Ensure robust and fully independent third-party monitoring of compliance with core labor conventions in the project areas, including a grievance system that provides remedies to victims, and immediately cease financing projects if forced labor occurs in the project areas.

To International Companies Operating in Uzbekistan

- Refuse demands to contribute personnel, cash, or in-kind to the cotton harvest and report requests for such contributions publicly and to home-country governments.
- Establish an independent monitoring and public reporting program of the company's operations and supply chain in Uzbekistan.
- Divest from Uzbekistan if forced labor continues even after using all available leverage with the Uzbek government to convey that continued investment requires an end of state-sponsored forced labor.

To Companies That Use Cotton

- Sign and implement the Cotton Pledge "to not knowingly source Uzbek cotton for the manufacturing of any of our products until the Government of Uzbekistan ends the practice of forced child and adult labor in its cotton sector."



Methodology

Monitors from the Uzbek-German Forum conducted research on the cotton harvest and labor practices in the capital, Tashkent, and in six regions in Uzbekistan.

As in previous years, research was carried out by experienced monitors. In every case, the monitors are fluent in Uzbek and in most cases also speak Russian. They have received extensive training on research methodology by an expert in labor law with more than 20 years' experience working with the ILO. Monitors have a thorough knowledge of Uzbek labor law as well as international laws and regulations concerning forced labor. Researchers live in the regions that they monitor and have a deep understanding of the local context. Several of the Uzbek-German Forum's monitors themselves participated in the cotton harvest. Monitors include farmers, teachers, and journalists from local agricultural publications. Their own information, supported by photographs and video, provided an additional key source of information about the harvest. All monitors who documented the 2014 harvest had conducted similar research during past harvests. On average, the monitors had previously worked with the Uzbek-German Forum for four years.



Research for this report consisted of three main parts:

Monitors conducted field visits to the cotton fields, housing for cotton pickers, colleges, and lyceums. Monitors documented working conditions and the mass mobilization of students and employees through video and photography. Monitors conducted 30 short interviews with people picking cotton and recorded several hours of video testimony of cotton pickers. Researchers took necessary precautions to ensure that interviewees were safe during the interviews and did not face reprisals for speaking to researchers.

During the cotton harvest, the Uzbek-German Forum conducted a review and analysis of local press related to the cotton harvest. This review provided information for the Uzbek-German Forum's weekly Chronicle of Forced Labor.¹ In advance of the cotton harvest, the director of the Uzbek-German Forum, Umida Niyazova, spoke on Radio Ozodlik, and requested listeners to provide information about labor recruitment and working conditions. The Uzbek-German Forum received 12 letters from listeners detailing their experiences with forced recruitment.

At the conclusion of the cotton harvest, monitors conducted 130 interviews using detailed questionnaires.² Monitors interviewed students of colleges and universities, school teachers (mobilized to harvest cotton), school pupils, instructors at colleges and universities accompanying students to the harvest, residents of mahallas (traditional neighborhood structures), mardikors (day or seasonal laborers), farmers, medical workers, employees of public agencies, private entrepreneurs, and employees of multinational enterprises.

Although all interviews for this report were conducted with the knowledge and consent of the interviewees, we have not revealed their identities in this report out of concern that they could face reprisals. In some cases specific identifying details have been omitted and the faces of interviewees in our video interviews have been obscured to protect their identities. During interviews monitors distributed copies of Uzbek laws prohibiting the use of child and forced labor.

Introduction

Cotton is undoubtedly a national symbol in Uzbekistan. Motifs of cotton adorn fence tops, public buildings, and the most ubiquitous tea set in the country. The logo of the national soccer team, Pakhtakor (“Cotton Growers”) is a cotton ball. For decades, the government has used popular slogans such as “Cotton is the people’s riches!” to impart a sense not only of pride, but also of duty to support cotton production. Sometimes officials refer to cotton work as *khashar*, a traditional concept that refers to communal work. But propaganda does not mask the sinister reality of cotton production in Uzbekistan. Far from being the “people’s” riches, in Uzbekistan cotton brings wealth to a tiny government elite while contributing to the impoverishment of millions. Cotton production, which nets the government more than \$1 billion USD a year in revenues, is paid for by extorting money and labor directly from ordinary people, who are forced to work and, in many cases, to make mandatory “contributions” to pay for labor, transportation, and other costs related to the harvest. And far from being *khashar*, or “communal” work, for which people willingly contribute their time and labor for the betterment of all, the government orders the forced labor of millions of people to grow and pick cotton under duress. Farmers must plant cotton even though within the confines of government-set pricing for both inputs and cotton it is rarely in their economic interest to do so, and the cotton harvest drains the country of workers and resources in other sectors for two months each year. In 2014, this system took an even greater toll as the government forced more people into the fields than in previous years and carried out mass extortion.

Human Rights Context

Forced labor in Uzbekistan occurs against a backdrop of deep repression and entrenched, widespread human rights violations and a pervasive climate of fear. Uzbekistan has an atrocious human rights record, consistently ranked as among the worst in the world.³ Torture is widespread and systematic.⁴ Courts are not independent. Violations of due process and other protections are endemic in the criminal justice system. Uzbekistan severely and unduly restricts the freedoms of religion, speech, assembly, and association as well as other fundamental freedoms. Journalists, civil society activists and human rights defenders are subjected to harassment, surveillance, and interference in their work, and in some cases imprisonment, ill-treatment, or torture.⁵ On numerous occasions the government has refused to grant exit visas to human rights activists and journalists, preventing them from travel abroad.⁶ The government has only granted registration to one independent national human rights organization, whose members are subjected to harassment and imprisonment.



Over the past decade, Uzbekistan has increasingly closed itself to any independent scrutiny, becoming one of the world’s most closed countries. The government has a long-standing record of non-cooperation with independent international monitoring and investigation mechanisms and regularly rejects or fails to comply with recommendations made by international bodies. As of 2014, Uzbekistan had failed to respond to outstanding invitations by 11 United Nations special human rights monitors, one of the worst records of non-cooperation in the world.⁷ In 2013 the government did, for the first time, accept a limited ILO mission to monitor the use of child labor during the harvest, and in 2014 signed a Decent Work Country Program.⁸ Yet the government steadfastly denies that it uses forced labor in its cotton production system.⁹ Furthermore, in 2014, the government continued to harass, threaten, intimidate, and detain activists and journalists who attempted to research or report on labor practices in cotton production. In just one example, authorities twice detained Elena Urlaeva, head of the Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan, as she was attempting to document labor violations in the cotton fields. Police demanded her camera and documents, strip searched her, and held her for several hours.¹⁰ Uktam Pardaev, a human rights activist from Jizzakh, received threats from local police and security services for his work documenting human rights violations

in connection with the 2014 cotton harvest. At a meeting on the harvest that took place in October 2014, the hokim of the Jizzakh region publicly called Pardaev “a traitor to the motherland.”¹¹

Cotton Production System in Uzbekistan

As an export crop considered a strategic resource, cotton production policy is centralized and controlled by the highest levels of government, starting at the very top.¹² The president of Uzbekistan, works with his Cabinet of Ministers to establish the national cotton policy for the country and the prime minister directs the regional and local hokims (heads of regional and district administrations), who bear personal responsibility for fulfilling cotton production quotas in their areas.¹³ The prime minister conducts conference calls with local authorities and farmers throughout the country during all phases of the cotton production cycle to ensure compliance with the government’s cotton production plan and to reprimand farmers for shortfalls in daily harvesting quotas.¹⁴



The government commands every aspect of the production, processing, sale, and export of raw cotton and cotton fiber. Forced labor underpins this system, not just for picking cotton and preparatory field work such as sowing and weeding, but also for farmers, who are coerced to meet government cotton production quotas.¹⁵ The government dictates what varieties of cotton they must plant. Farmers must use inputs and agricultural services sold by government-controlled monopolies and must sell their crops to government-monopoly processors at government-established procurement prices. The government sets the procurement price for cotton below its own estimate of the costs of production, relegating the majority of farmers to a position of chronic debt.¹⁶ The government also manages a cashless financial system with bank accounts in farmers’ names, and establishes the rates paid to workers for harvesting, which are substantially lower than market wages. With control of all sales of cotton, revenues, estimated at \$1 billion USD annually, return directly to the central government, and disappear into the Selkhozfond, an extra-budgetary fund of the Ministry of Finance that exists outside of any public oversight or accountability.¹⁷ Despite the government’s tight orchestration of the cotton production system, one analysis concludes, “These draconian methods do not result in increased efficiency of cotton production....”¹⁸

Government Policy on Forced Child Labor and Forced Labor in the Cotton Sector

If this isn't forced labor, then what is it?¹⁹

-- Student in the Andijan region

International law absolutely prohibits forced labor, defined as “all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself [or herself] voluntarily.”²⁰ The government persistently denies that it uses forced labor in its cotton production system, arguing in 2013 that people pick cotton under contract,²¹ and in 2014 that workers “are free to terminate their employment at any time.”²² But these arguments don't withstand scrutiny. According to the ILO Committee of Experts,²³ “under menace of penalty” should be understood broadly, covering “penal sanctions, as well as various forms of coercion, such as physical violence, psychological coercion, retention of identity documents, etc. The penalty here in question might also take the form of a loss of rights or privileges.”²⁴ In its 2015 report on Uzbekistan, the Committee of Experts clarified that even though a government may claim that work is part of a civic obligation and therefore exempted from the forced labor conventions, “these exceptions are limited to minor works or services performed in the direct interest of the population, and...work for purposes of economic development...is explicitly prohibited by the present Convention.”²⁵ Furthermore, the Committee noted the existence of a contract does not negate the possibility of forced labor, and that transfers of workers to tasks unrelated to their ordinary occupations raise a concern of contracts being used as a tool for compulsory labor.²⁶ Even in cases where employment is originally the result of a freely concluded agreement, the right of workers to free choice of employment remains inalienable.”²⁷ The Committee urged the government to “ensure the complete elimination of the use of compulsory labour of public and private sector workers, as well as students, in cotton farming.”



The government of Uzbekistan has used forced labor to produce cotton for decades, and the widespread forced mobilization of the population to harvest cotton has existed since the Soviet period. In 2014 the government continued to direct and control the use of forced labor. For example, a directive signed by the mayor of Tashkent on August 28, 2014 ordered the “mass mobilization of workers” from the capital to pick cotton in the Jizzakh and Syrdarya regions.²⁸ This order implemented the national plan for the harvest established by the Cabinet of Ministers in July. The directive assigns tasks to all levels of the Tashkent city bureaucracy, including law enforcement, the department of health, deputy mayors, and mahalla (neighborhood) councils, for the mass mobilization and transport of workers from the capital.²⁹ A nurse from Tashkent forced to harvest cotton reported “A man named Iskander who was sent from the Cabinet of Ministers oversaw the control of our cotton headquarters. A minister also often visited the field. He was very sharp and agitated, and yelled at us for any mistake or a few unharvested kilograms.”³⁰

Until recently, the government mobilized schoolchildren age 11-15 on a mass scale to pick cotton, leaving schools throughout much of the country effectively closed during the harvest season as pupils from the fifth grade and older and teachers from all grades worked in the fields.³¹ Due to sustained pressure from local and international organizations and foreign governments over many years, in 2012 the Uzbek government began to shift the demographics of its forced labor policies.³² Beginning with the 2012 harvest the government of Uzbekistan adopted a policy not to mobilize children younger than 16 on a mass scale.³³ In 2013, the government extended this to first-year college students who are usually 16 years old, but continued the mass mobilization of second- and third-year students. In 2014 only third-year students were mobilized on a mass scale, including, in many cases, 17 year olds. Thousands of children were still sent to the fields in at least three regions in 2014, where local officials mobilized them in order to avoid stiff penalties for failing to meet production targets. Moreover these shifts did not signify systemic reform or a fundamental repudiation of or move away from forced labor. The coercive, administ-

rative-command nature of the cotton production system did not change; instead, the government largely replaced child labor by shifting the labor burden, forcing university students, employees of state-funded organizations and agencies, and private businesses to pick cotton or contribute money in greater numbers in 2014 than in past years. Schools and colleges across the country were paralyzed due to the absence of hundreds of thousands of teachers who were sent to the cotton fields.

Forced Labor of Farmers

The government establishes annual production targets for each region of the country with regional and district hokims overseeing implementation of the production plan and reporting directly to the prime minister. Hokims and other local officials, including police and prosecutors, risk losing their jobs if the areas under their oversight fail to meet the targets, while farmers who fail to meet their quotas are subjected to a range of sanctions—economic, administrative, and even criminal prosecution. Farmers told the Uzbek-German Forum that they risked losing their land if they did not meet the production quota.³⁴ For example, a farmer from the Tashkent region told us “if you don’t fulfill the plan, they’ll take your land and give it to someone else. They reprimand you all the time and threaten to put you in jail. That’s why from the beginning to the end of the cotton season the prosecutors are in the fields. They can fail to catch criminals but they’ve been given control over us.”³⁵ Authorities enforced quotas, including with financial and other penalties, beatings, and public humiliation, the severity of which apparently led at least two farmers to commit suicide.³⁶ Radio Ozodlik reported that on December 29, 2014, Dilshod Murodillaev, a 40-year old farmer from the Samarkand region hanged himself after local authorities announced that they would confiscate his land as a penalty for failing to fulfill his cotton production quota, and that he owed 90 million soum (approximately \$32,000 USD) in debts from the cost of growing cotton.³⁷

During the harvest season local authorities convene daily meetings, often in the middle of the night, at which farmers report how much cotton they harvested and field supervisors report whether picking quotas were met. One farmer told us “every evening reports are given at the headquarters. Who turned in how much [cotton]. And some were cursed and yelled at. And some were beaten on their backs with a stick.”³⁸ A farmer from the Syrdarya region described what can happen to farmers who fail to meet production targets:



There are meetings, conference calls [with the prime minister], and endless nighttime gatherings. Every day at midnight or 3 a.m. there is a meeting. The district hokim, police, prosecutor, and a representative of the regional hokim all participate. If you haven’t turned in your target amount to the cotton headquarters the prosecutor can take any action he wants against a farmer. If he wants he can beat him, yell at him, insult him, or if necessary, lock him up for a day. Because if the plan isn’t met the regional hokim will remove the prosecutor from his position. The farmer must put up with all of this. His only hope is for some profit from his vegetables. In my garden I have other crops. With the profit from my garden I want to pay for my son’s wedding and my daughter’s university tuition. Farmers only profit from selling their [vegetables]. We have no money left over from cotton. We just become debtors to the banks. In reality the government doesn’t allow farmers to have [vegetable crops]. We have gardens secretly. The bosses know about this and if farmers don’t meet the cotton plan they take away our gardens. There is nothing worse for a farmer. Even if they beat us, humiliate us, swear at us, or lock us up for a day, it is nothing in comparison.³⁹

A farmer in Andijan said “If you don’t meet the plan there is no way out. We’ll find the cotton [to fulfill the plan], whatever it takes. We’ll fulfill the plan, either with money or with cotton. If the plan isn’t met the farmer will be ruined. He’ll be choked by debt and his farm will be confiscated. And the debts will remain until they are all paid.”⁴⁰ Another Andijan farmer underscored the difficulties of growing cotton, “The system is such that if a farmer says he

earned however-much profit from cotton, then he's a pure liar. Remember: no one earns profit from cotton. There are expenses from spring to autumn: diesel fuel, chemicals.....Any remaining money is also taken under various pretexts...."⁴¹

Forced Mobilization of Cotton Pickers



The [school] director himself comes into the classes and says 'the government educates you for free, gives you books for free. If you don't harvest cotton we'll take away your books and you'll have to buy them yourselves to study.' And to the older classes he even said 'you are enemies. You who don't pick cotton are enemies because the government does everything for you. You live in peace, in your own homes, study peacefully. You won't die if you spend three or four days at the harvest when the government needs this.'"⁴²

-- Seventh-grade pupil, Kashkadarya region

Forced mobilization of adult workers in 2014 was widespread and systematic across all the regions investigated by the Uzbek-German Forum. A woman in Andijan commented "This year in schools and kindergartens they are forcing the parents to pick cotton. My son is in 4th grade and his teacher said 'So we aren't taking children to the harvest but someone has to pick the cotton.' So tomorrow I am going to pick in place of my 10-year old son."⁴³ Researchers documented many such instances of parents being forced to pick cotton for schools and kindergartens in place of their children⁴⁴ or collecting money to pay for a worker to harvest cotton in place of their child's teacher to limit school disruptions.⁴⁵ In one case, a grandfather picking cotton in place of his grandson died in the fields.⁴⁶



If adults could not or did not want to pick cotton they were forced to hire replacement workers at their own cost to fulfill the harvest quota in their names, or to bribe their way out of the harvest. An employee of a public agency in the Kashkadarya region told the Uzbek-German Forum that he was sent by his employer to harvest cotton for a 25-day shift under threat that he would lose his job if he refused. He picked cotton for 15 days and returned after paying 100,000 soum (approximately \$36 USD) to his boss in exchange for the unworked days. It is unclear what the money was used for. The employee told the Uzbek-German Forum that he could have avoided the harvest entirely if he paid but that employees were pressured to pick cotton for at least some of their prescribed shifts. "If you pay money anything is possible. I could have stayed [out of the field] if I paid 300,000-400,000 soum (approximately \$107 - \$143 USD). But in the beginning they told us it is better to go [to the field] for 5-6 days to mark your name."⁴⁷

The government organized every aspect of the forced deployment of people to harvest cotton, mandating the number of workers that institutions must provide and dictating to farmers how many and which workers they must accept. A farmer in the Andijan region explained that the hokimiat [local administration] determines how pickers are deployed, when the cotton season is over and when to send workers home.

Before the cotton [season] it is determined who and how many people will pick cotton. They don't just send them wherever. And therefore farmers are required to accept workers by order of the hokimiat....I can't refuse [the workers], as I said, before the start of the season it is determined who goes where. A farmer can't refuse that.... I can't refuse, could I really object to the bosses?!"⁴⁸



Local police and representatives from mahalla committees used pressure and threats to coercively mobilize people in their districts, including pensioners, people with health problems, and single mothers. In particular, they threatened that people would face consequences such as the loss of their maternity, child, or other social payments if they refused to pick cotton. The authorities did not make exceptions for breastfeeding mothers or people caring for young children or the elderly. The breastfeeding mother of an infant told Radio Ozodlik that she either had to take her baby to the cotton fields or pay for a worker to replace her under threat of losing her maternity benefits.⁴⁹ In the Jizzakh region, even people visiting from other regions were forced to harvest cotton. One person told Radio Ozodlik, “Recently my brothers-in-law came to visit us from Samarkand. They were taken on a bus from the street and made to pick 40 kilos of cotton.”⁵⁰ A local human rights group reported that mahalla committee representatives in the Andijan region attempted to force a blind man to pick cotton.⁵¹

An unemployed woman forcibly mobilized to harvest cotton by her mahalla committee in the Kashkadarya region recounted that the committee not only deployed pickers but also supervised their work: “the secretary of the mahalla is always standing over us [in the fields]. He writes in his notebook who comes. He’s always with us, unless his other work doesn’t allow it. The chairperson of the mahalla also comes to field often.”⁵² A nurse in Andijan was forced to flee the cotton fields after permission to leave was refused so she could care for her two-year old son who was seriously ill.⁵³

Use of Coercion to Enforce Quotas

Regional and local authorities imposed and enforced harvesting quotas on institutions in their areas. Heads of institutions, such as college and university directors, school principals, and heads of hospitals and clinics were tasked with ensuring students and/or staff picked enough to meet the demands. They experienced tremendous pressure to meet these institutional quotas or they risked humiliation, being berated, physical violence, and the loss of their jobs as well as financial liability for the amount of the shortfall. Therefore, during the harvest season heads of public institutions such as schools and hospitals were forced to take on the role not only of recruiting but also supervising forced labor. In turn they used threats, intimidation, and humiliation to force the staff or students under their control to go to the fields and meet harvest quotas. A teacher in the Syrdarya region said

Of course there is a [cotton production] plan. On the basis of that plan, we set a quota for the [students] and demand it. Do we really gain from yelling at them, cursing them, and sometimes beating them, the students with unfulfilled quotas, seeing their tears? It’s all done to fulfill that plan. The director answers for the plan with his head. As I said before, even if he has to buy the cotton he will meet the plan. Otherwise, he falls under the hand of the local and regional hokims, under their insults.⁵⁴

A student from Tashkent said that students who didn’t harvest the required amount were “strongly reprimanded, even sometimes beaten. That’s why we immediately bought cotton to make up the difference to meet the quota.”⁵⁵ A teacher from Syrdarya confirmed

The hokim gives every college a specific quota. For example during the first part of the harvest, when only the third-year students were picking we were responsible for 12-15 tons of cotton. If we did not meet this we received a reprimand from the director. The director accounts to the hokim every day. I've heard that the hokims scolds, swears at, and can even kick those bosses whose institutions who don't meet the quota. That's why there's no messing around with this.⁵⁶

Workers from public institutions and private companies also had to meet daily picking quotas. At the beginning of the season, the harvesting quota for individuals ranged from 60 to 80 kilograms/day, declining to 50 kilograms in the middle of the harvest and 30-40 kilograms at the end, when little cotton remained in the fields. A student from Syrdarya region described the coercion used on students to enforce harvesting quotas.



The quotas are strictly enforced. To be honest, to increase the weight of the cotton we stuck wet leaves, dirt in there. If you want to harvest cleanly you won't meet the quota. Cotton is light after all. Everyone who fulfills the quota does this, there's no other way. If you want the quota—there's your quota! With students who don't harvest the quotas they talk to you "in a manly way." At first they warn you. If the violations increase, they have a "special talk." The teachers do this. But if things get to the next level, they give you to the fourth-year students. They deal with you. They take you into a circle. That means they yell at you, swear at you, and even beat you. They make you do hard labor. They don't let you sleep at night and "re-educate" you. They don't do this for themselves but on the instructors' orders.⁵⁷

Some students reported being forced to pay to make up their institution's unmet quota if they were bad pickers. A student in Jizzakh said, "at first we picked 60-70 kilos each. When they started withholding money [for poor quality] or under-weighting our cotton, many students started picking only for show. Then the dean punished those who didn't meet the quota by making them pay to make up the difference."⁵⁸ In some other cases teachers said that the head of the institution made up the difference, although it was not clear where the money was from.⁵⁹

Mass Forced Mobilization of Public Sector Employees

In 2014, the government forced unprecedented numbers of public sector employees, teachers and health care workers in particular, to contribute to the national cotton plan, decimating the provision of essential public services such as health care and education during the more than two months of the cotton harvest. As a teacher in Tashkent said, "Well, for these kinds of things the government uses that category of people it can require [to work], who are afraid of losing their jobs. And so it sends doctors and teachers."⁶⁰ A teacher in Andijan commented that the government used teachers and other public employees to compensate for the reduced use of child labor, "I heard that, you know, foreign governments stopped buying Uzbek cotton because in Uzbekistan children are forced to pick cotton. Probably after that they stopped sending children to the fields. But we pick it, teachers pick it. All the difficulties were dumped on us."⁶¹

In past years, monitors from the Uzbek-German Forum documented that public organizations were required to send up to 16% of their entire staff to pick cotton.⁶² Our monitors in every region reported that the percentage of staff members required to pick cotton increased significantly in 2014, with public organizations obligated to provide as much as 30-60% of their personnel for the duration of the harvest.⁶³ Overall data on the numbers of staff who bought their way out of the harvest were not available, and our monitors observed variation from institution to institution. In some cases, organizations provided up to 80% of their staff. In one example, in early October, a private manufacturer in the Andijan region was ordered to send all its 1000 employees to pick cotton.⁶⁴

Use of Education System to Mobilize Forced Labor

Schools bear a significant burden for the harvest. Officials demand that schools provide teachers and other staff to work in the fields and impose quotas on schools based on the number of staff. With the recent attention to child labor and the government's efforts to limit the number of children forcibly mobilized to harvest cotton, teachers also faced pressure to show that schools remained functioning during the harvest, even where many teachers were absent and some school facilities, such as gymnasiums, were being used to house cotton pickers brought in to work from other districts. While the Global Partnership for Education is investing nearly \$50 million in Uzbekistan's Ministry of Education, the government continues to exploit the education system as a tool for the illegal mass mobilization of teachers and students.⁶⁵



Teachers, many of whom were also forcibly mobilized for spring preparatory work including planting cotton and weeding cotton fields, were brought to the field in droves to harvest cotton. In many regions, teachers were divided into two groups, with one group mobilized to pick cotton for shifts of 15-25 days at a time, often in districts far from their homes, and the other group ostensibly required to continue classes and compensate for their colleagues in the fields so that schools could function. However, in many cases the teachers who remained at school were also mobilized for daily picking and either had to abandon teaching entirely or teach for just three hours per day and spend the rest in the cotton fields. Some teachers covering for their colleagues in the fields sometimes taught two classes simultaneously, going back and forth between two classrooms during the lesson, teaching different subjects and often teaching subjects in which they were not qualified, all in an effort to show that the harvest did not disrupt education. In some cases schoolchildren from the 7th-9th grades (age 13-15) were also mobilized for daily shifts. In such cases children attended classes for a few hours each day and spent the rest of the day in the cotton fields and the whole day on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays (the regular school week is Monday-Saturday).

If our college has 90 teachers, then when all the students went to the fields, they [the teachers], along with all other employees, were in the fields. When the first- and second-years had classes, 45-50 teachers gave classes until midday and then went to the fields in the afternoon. Together with our students we were in the fields 45 days. We, and especially young teachers like me, picked cotton without rest and without breaks.⁶⁶

The teacher explained that any teacher who refused to pick cotton could face disciplinary measures, such as being written up for an unexcused absence from work or fired. She cited the case of a colleague who was fired the previous year for refusing to participate in the cotton harvest.⁶⁷ One teacher from the Tashkent region explained:

The Hokim demands it like this: In your school you have 65 teachers and 10 technical staff so you need to send 75 people to the harvest. And if you're sick or attending professional development courses, that's your problem. The quota is set for 75 people. And the fewer people who go to the fields, the greater the quota [for each]. If there is little cotton to be picked and the quota isn't fulfilled then you have debts to pay. All of our teachers, 100%, do cotton work.⁶⁸

One student described the importance of teachers' power over students for the cotton harvest:

Not everyone can hire someone in his place. Only students who have reasons. Because hired workers aren't afraid of the teachers and don't always fulfill their orders. If they [hired workers] want to, they pick. If they don't want to, they don't. If they want to they leave for three or four days. It's hard to manage them. We [students] think about tomorrow. During the semester we have to deal with the teachers and, therefore, silently do what they tell us. Hired workers don't care. At the end or at the beginning of the harvest they can take their money, and no one will see them again.⁶⁹

Many teachers, who are responsible for getting their students into the fields, said they use the police to intimidate students and parents. A teacher from Jizzakh explained that if parents try to refuse to allow their sons or daughters to be forcibly mobilized with their class, "the local police officers and the teachers go house to house and forcibly take them to the fields."⁷⁰ A 17-year old girl from Nukus in Karakalpakstan told us that although she is formally enrolled in college she rarely attends classes. This year she was forced to pick cotton with her college because teachers harassed and threatened her.⁷¹ A college teacher from the Tashkent region said that his director orders teachers to create academic difficulties for students who refuse to pick cotton or buy their way out. "I was directly told to create problems for one girl to pass her graduation exams... The director also personally told me that during the year I should give him a written report every time she [the student] missed a class. He said 'I'll show them the children's rights convention!'"⁷²

Another student described the institutionalized coercion at universities to pick cotton. Students face the high stakes of risking expulsion for refusing to harvest.

No one refuses the harvest. Back in our first year [in university] they warned us about that. If a student doesn't go to the harvest he will get expelled from university. If you want to go or don't want to go—that's how it was in school or in college. But in university it's different. It's a high-level institution. We went through so much to get accepted. How many people dream of studying at a university? After all that can we really refuse to pick cotton? No one wants to risk it and get kicked out. Of course no one.⁷³

In a September 11, 2014, letter to the Uzbek-German Forum, a student at the Automotive Institute of Tashkent wrote:

A few days ago they called us all into the auditorium and said that on the 17th we would all be sent to the regions to pick cotton. No one would be excused, and anyone who tried would be put on academic suspension. They also said that anyone who refused to go pick would be suspended for a year. The person who was telling us all this had a paper in his hand, ostensibly a decree of the prime minister ordering 5,000 students from Tashkent to be forcibly sent to the cotton fields and anyone who disobeyed would be expelled without reinstatement. It became known not long ago that you can buy your way out of picking for 1 million soum (about \$360 USD). What should I do?⁷⁴

Another student described that refusal to pick cotton may also result in expulsion through indirect means. "Well, if [a student] says directly that 'I'm not going [to the harvest],' he can be kicked out of college. He won't be directly expelled from classes, but he won't get grades, or they'll say that he didn't attend classes. They'll say that he didn't attend more than a certain number of times and kick him out."⁷⁵ A college teacher confirmed the teacher's role in coercing students without parental permission.

Permission? From parents? No, I've never heard that we need to ask parents' permission to send their children to the harvest. Where is such a college that asks parents' permission? As far as I know there are no such niceties in our region or in others. Of course with or without parents' permission a student must go to the fields. Such actions [as asking parental permission] would only reduce the number of children in the fields.⁷⁶

Forced Child Labor

The government failed to end forced child labor in 2014, although the authorities significantly reduced the number of children forcibly mobilized to harvest cotton. As in 2012 and 2013, the government appears not to have forcibly mobilized school-aged children to harvest cotton on a widespread or mass scale. It also appears to have taken

steps to reduce the number of first- and second-year college and lyceum students, who are usually under age 18, forced to harvest cotton. However, the government continued to mobilize third-year students, some of whom were under 18. Moreover, the Uzbek-German Forum's monitors did document numerous cases of state-sponsored forced labor of school-aged children, mostly from 7th-9th grades (13-15 years old) as well as first- and second-year students (16-17 years old), to harvest cotton in various regions. Additionally, many people interviewed by the Uzbek-German Forum indicated that they had heard that children would not be used in the harvest this year but that they still saw children in the fields. A teacher in Syrdarya said "This year they said that children younger than 18 would not go to the harvest because of protection of children's rights. But they went anyway."⁷⁷

The cases of child labor indicate that the government of Uzbekistan has not undertaken the necessary reforms to eliminate child labor in Uzbekistan. Nor has the government made it clear to local officials that enforcing laws prohibiting child labor is a higher priority than fulfilling cotton quotas. Rather, local officials' orchestration of forced child labor clearly indicate that they believe the central authorities still care more about their fulfillment of production and harvesting quotas than about their adherence to the ban on the use of child labor. By failing to enforce the prohibition of child labor, the central government remains complicit in the forced mobilization of children. A meaningful commitment to ending child labor would require the government to make it clear to local officials — including through education, outreach, accountability, and sanctions for breaches — that no children should participate in the cotton harvest. A commitment to ending child labor would also mean that officials must underscore that fulfilling the legal obligation of protecting children's rights must take precedence over concerns about fulfilling state-imposed quotas. With farmers forced to meet harvest quotas and officials under pressure to oversee labor and force people into the fields, as well as their entrenched interests in the payoff system, pressures will continue to exist to use forced adult and forced child labor. As long as the coercive production system, including penalty-enforced quotas, remains in place, children remain at risk of forced labor. One woman forcibly mobilized to harvest cotton by her local mahalla committee picked cotton next to children and observed

The farmer doesn't send [the children] home. They are ordered to the fields from above. And that's why the farmer doesn't say anything to them. They are sent to the fields to gather the leftover [cotton] after the adults. It's beneficial to the farmer. He sends them to the field where adults were picking the day before and tells them to gather [the remainder].⁷⁸

Schoolchildren

We documented children harvesting cotton in several regions. In some cases, children picked cotton on family farms or with their parents, on weekends, or after school. However our researchers also documented local government officials using the education system to forcibly mobilize children, especially toward the later part of the harvest. In Kashkadarya region, for example, schoolchildren in the 6th-9th grades (age 12-15) harvested cotton on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. In some cases, such as in the Nishon district of Kashkadarya, children also picked cotton after school.⁷⁹

We received two reports from the Shahrizabz district of Kashkadarya region of officials attempting to cover up the forced mobilization of children to pick cotton. A teacher reported

And so in the beginning they said that children in the first- and second-year of college would not be sent to the harvest. They even made the students sign a form. But they were sent anyway. No one said anything. They [officials] created a document as if they aren't going to use children. They even made children sign documents that they wouldn't pick cotton after school. It was a simple cover-up. In reality they sent them. The 7th-9th grades picked cotton for our farmers.⁸⁰

Another woman said "There was a rumor that this year children would not be sent to the cotton fields. They even made the children sign agreements that they would not pick cotton. They made all classes sign them; even my daughter in third grade signed a statement. But they sent [children] to the harvest anyway."⁸¹

A woman in the Yakkobog district of Kashkadarya region told us that her two children, in 5th grade and 8th grade, were forced to harvest cotton starting around September 20, and that few classes were held during the cotton harvest.⁸² A pupil in the same region reported that he and other children in his school from the 6th-9th grades were

sent to the cotton fields daily after just two hours of class and on the weekends, “at first it was just Fridays and Saturdays. After that classes nearly stopped altogether. It was like that until holidays began on November 1.”⁸³ A mother of two school children who were forced to harvest cotton in the Kashkadarya region said school essentially stopped during the harvest season:

At first they said [the children would only pick] on Fridays and Saturdays. They had classes for two hours and then were taken to the fields. Probably around October 10, they started taking them to the cotton and held no classes. And the classes stopped in school. There were no concrete classes. But before [the children were sent to pick cotton] there were no classes, and the children were playing in the street because half the teachers were taken to pick cotton overnight and the other half was sent for daily picking work. I would ask ‘isn’t there school today?’ And they would say ‘our teacher is picking cotton.’”⁸⁴

Beginning on October 15, local authorities in the Bukhara and Kashkadarya regions ordered schoolchildren from upper grades to pick cotton. In one case in the Syrdarya region, teachers stated that the order came from the hokimiat (local administration) that teachers must go to pick cotton during the school break from November 3-10 and must organize their classes to pick cotton during this time as well.⁸⁵ A parent in the Jizzakh region reported to Radio Liberty that for two weeks all classes for 7th-9th grades had stopped and the children were in the fields picking cotton.⁸⁶ A parent in the Samarkand region reported that school children were sent to the fields at the end of the harvest to gather any remaining cotton and that classes that had not picked 10 kilograms per child were not allowed to return to school.⁸⁷



College and Lyceum Students

The Uzbek-German Forum’s researchers found that third-year students, including 17-year olds, were forcibly mobilized on a mass scale across the country. In every region monitored by the Uzbek-German Forum the government forcibly mobilized third-year students from every college to pick cotton for 30-45 days. Uzbek-German Forum researchers reviewed more than 10 college registration journals where students’ names and ages are recorded in six different regions and surveyed eight college teachers about the ages of their third-year students. According to this review, approximately 8% on average of all third-year students were younger than age 18,

although in some regions, such as Bukhara, the number of 17-year olds in the third year was much higher. If this percentage is valid nationwide, that would mean that approximately 40,000 17-year olds were systematically and forcibly mobilized for the cotton harvest in 2014. A father in the Tashkent region told us “My daughter [name withheld] went to the harvest. She’s a third-year student at the technical college. She should not have been in the fields. She’s 17. And this year they were only supposed to take those who are already 18.”⁸⁸

A teacher in Syrdarya said

This year the cotton [harvest] began on September 7. In a departure from previous years, this year only third-year students were supposed to participate in the harvest. Before the harvest our [college] director told us that only the third-years would participate [in the harvest] and that students younger than 18 were forbidden. And therefore, at first only the third-years went to the fields. If you’ve heard, Bayavut is the most productive cotton growing region. So as not to lose time and to harvest our national wealth [cotton] on time, first- and second-year students came to help. They were only in classes for just a few days. For third-year students classes stopped entirely. For first- and second-years classes didn’t stop completely. The harvest ended on October 24. Students returned to class and teachers to their work.”⁸⁹

One teacher noted that at his college, officials checked students’ ages in their passports and did not mobilize third-year students who had not reached 18, indicating that compliance is possible and underscoring the need for the government to make clear that there is accountability under the law.⁹⁰



The government did take steps to avoid mobilizing first- and second-year students of colleges and lyceums, who are usually 16 and 17 years old. Nevertheless, in a few areas our observers recorded cases in which first- and second-year students were mobilized. In the Karakul district of the Bukhara region, first- and second- year students from eight colleges were sent to pick cotton beginning on October 12. Beginning on October 15 all colleges in five districts of Kashkadarya region sent second-year students to the harvest, and several colleges also sent first-year students.⁹¹ Several colleges in the Zarbdor district of Jizzakh region also sent students in the first- through third-years to harvest cotton. For example, students of the Zarbdor Industrial Professional Technical College picked cotton for one month instead of attending class.⁹²

Effects on Teachers and Schools

Schools and educational institutions at every level in Uzbekistan face enormous challenges. Teachers across the country told the Uzbek German Forum that their schools have few or no computers, that students have limited or no access to the Internet, and lack updated supplies. The countrywide energy crisis that continues to worsen every year hits schools especially hard. Centralized heating systems function poorly in every city and village across the country with the exception of Tashkent. In most rural regions electricity is only available sporadically and for a few hours per day.⁹³ Most schools also have little or no heat, and limited access to water, and only sporadic electricity.

In this difficult context, the cotton production system places further strain on the education system, resulting in violations of the right of teachers and some pupils and students to be free from forced labor and producing widespread violations of the right to education.

With the move away from using children to harvest cotton, more teachers than ever were forced to work the harvest. In schools across the country, our monitors observed significant numbers of teachers were absent from classrooms at any given time, leaving schools severely understaffed and unable to conduct normal classes, a finding confirmed by numerous interviews with teachers. In just one example, 70 teachers normally work at School No. 31 in the Uchtepa district of the Jizzakh region, but during the harvest 60 teachers were forced to pick cotton,

leaving only 10 teachers for 800 pupils.⁹⁴ As a result, while most children nominally remained in school, the state's harvest policies left many schools effectively shuttered or functioning at significantly reduced levels. Teachers who remained behind were teaching double loads with no additional compensation to cover for their colleagues who were in the fields. Schools that were able to function more or less normally during the harvest only did so because teachers paid their way out of the harvest—often at the cost of an entire month's salary—so that they could stay behind and teach. Teachers were also forced to make other contributions, by picking cotton in their own districts on weekends or after school, and making payments to cover transportation and other expenses for teachers sent far away to harvest or to help the school meet its quota. This abusive system amounts to public sector workers and especially teachers, who are generally among the lowest paid professionals, directly subsidizing the cost of picking cotton, a crop which produces enormous revenues for the government and government-controlled monopolies. One teacher described the paradox of taking teachers out of school even as steps were taken to keep children from the fields



My place is in school. I studied to become a teacher. While I was stuck in the fields my lessons weren't being taught meaningfully. It's bad for me. I'm in the field, and the children aren't learning. Teachers should have been left in peace a long time ago. If they've stopped sending children to pick cotton then they should be taught during the school year. If all the teachers who were on the list for cotton shifts had gone to the fields then school would have stopped altogether. The children only study more or less because the majority of teachers [in our school] paid their way out and are working. Only for that reason. But it's apparently done this way on purpose.⁹⁵

Every teacher we interviewed at every educational level reported that the forced labor of the cotton harvest disrupted education by taking teachers and university students as well as third-year college students and some school children out of school and reducing instructional time and quality during the harvest. A classroom teacher who picked cotton for 20 days, then paid to be released from her shifts and returned to school, where she taught in place of those who remained at the harvest, told us, "No one can say anything, because in one shift I covered seven or eight lessons, my tongue almost fell out. I taught math, and chemistry, and Uzbek language, and geography. Oy, I became a professional. I learned what it is I don't know!"⁹⁶

A college instructor described the effect of the cotton harvest on the quality of education: "The academic program isn't reduced, when we return [from the harvest] we speed through all the lessons. But in reality, it's just for show; we document that we conducted all the lessons according to the plan but the students can't absorb all the material in such a short amount of time."⁹⁷ A medical student also bemoaned cotton's effect on the quality of instruction in Uzbekistan



I know [about laws prohibiting forced labor] but it's no use. What can I do? I don't even know. I am not supposed to harvest cotton, it's not part of my job description....Do you know why we have no high-level specialists? Because instead of education, we think about cotton. We have returned from the fields, but the teachers who are supposed to teach us are still there. It's very difficult to study here. How can you learn two topics in one hour of lessons? I have no words. You can't do it. And that's how we are producing half-literate specialists. The Andijan Medical Institute doesn't have its former authority and qualifications, because the conditions are nil. Good specialists leave the country. That's the situation, sister.⁹⁸

Forced Labor of Healthcare Workers and Impact on Service Provision

In addition to teachers, the government forced healthcare workers to participate in the cotton harvest in greater numbers than in previous years. For example, in early September, local authorities ordered 42% of all healthcare workers from the Angren district of Tashkent region to pick cotton in three shifts (the first two lasting 25 days and the third lasting until the end of the harvest), as compared to 30-35% last year.⁹⁹ Monitors documented similar findings in all regions where we conducted research. A nurse in Tashkent reported that more than 35% of all hospital staff went to pick cotton in two shifts of 25 days each with additional staff paying their way out of the harvest or forcibly mobilized for a third shift.¹⁰⁰

Several healthcare workers we interviewed told us that medical workers were especially vulnerable to forced mobilization and extortion because, despite relatively low salaries in healthcare, it is very difficult for qualified doctors and nurses to get jobs. Uzbekistan has a large number of people with medical degrees seeking work, and respondents told us that it is only possible to get a job by paying a bribe. Medical workers do not dare refuse cotton work or payments for fear of losing their jobs.¹⁰¹ An Uzbek-German Forum monitor who observed the mobilization of medical workers in the Tashkent region in mid-September reported that the obstetrics hospital was supposed to send 50% of its staff, of which 60-70% paid for replacement workers. Replacement workers were required to give copies of their passports and contact information to the medical workers who hired them, so they could ensure replacement workers completed their harvest work. Medical workers who failed to complete their picking assignment or whose replacement workers left the job were considered to have unexcused absences from work, grounds for dismissal.¹⁰²

Some healthcare workers told us that many doctors chose to buy their way out of the harvest but, due to their lower salaries, most nurses, orderlies, and technicians could not afford to pay for replacements and were sent for long shifts to pick cotton. The doctors who paid not to be sent to the fields were often still mobilized to pick cotton on weekends.¹⁰³

A nurse in the Tashkent region who picked cotton for a 25-day shift said that more than 40% of all medical staff in her laboratory was assigned cotton shifts at any one time, and nearly all staff either worked or paid during the harvest. She said that some doctors had paid their way out but wondered

*what would happen if all the [medical workers] who are supposed to pick cotton at one time actually did [instead of buying their way out]? The epidemiological center would not be able to do its work for two months. I don't know what they are thinking when they send everyone out at this time of year to pick cotton. Who will do laboratory analyses? Inspections? We do a lot of preventative work. In addition, we have an outbreak of hepatitis every autumn. Every autumn. And that's just hepatitis.*¹⁰⁴

Numerous doctors and other health care workers interviewed by the Uzbek-German Forum reported that their local health clinics or hospitals had to operate at significantly reduced levels during the harvest. A nurse in Karakalpakstan who worked a 25-day shift picking cotton said that at her clinic "There weren't enough doctors and nurses. [Those left] had to work double, and patients often had no one to attend to them."¹⁰⁵ Another nurse said "we couldn't give enough attention to every patient. There weren't enough doctors on call. Some doctors had to work several shifts per week for the same pay."¹⁰⁶

One medical clinic in the Khorezm region normally staffed with two doctors and 13 nurses had to operate with only one doctor and one nurse for the duration of the harvest as the rest of the employees were forced to pick cotton.¹⁰⁷ Village medical clinics in some regions were forced to close temporarily during the harvest. In another example from the Khorezm region, a grandfather reported finding no doctors at the district hospital to treat his grandson and instead, only a sign reading: "All at the cotton harvest."¹⁰⁸ One rural doctor commented,

*The harvest negatively affects [our clinic]... One or two doctors are left. Are the abilities of just two people enough to do everything? For example, we are always going out on house calls to different patients, elderly people. A couple of times a week we visit them, check their conditions, measure their blood pressure, give injections. When we're at the harvest, no one does this. Our patients are left without care. If something happens, they're brought to the hospital, but there are also few people there. Half of them are at the harvest. If they call an ambulance, it doesn't come—they are told you need to get here yourselves, we have no gasoline. [The cotton harvest] very negatively affects our work.*¹⁰⁹

The Situation in Karakalpakstan

The Republic of Karakalpakstan, an autonomous republic within Uzbekistan, is located in the northwest of Uzbekistan. Its 62,000 square miles account for nearly a third of Uzbekistan's total territory. Although mainly desert, Karakalpakstan also grows cotton, particularly in the Amu Darya river basin. In 2014 the World Bank approved \$460.69 million in loan agreements to Uzbekistan, which included \$260 million to develop irrigation systems and other agricultural modernization projects in Karakalpakstan, which will primarily benefit the cotton sector.¹¹⁰

The 2014 cotton harvest in Karakalpakstan in many ways mirrored the situation in the rest of the country. The widespread and large-scale forced mobilization of labor in the region, where crop yields were particularly low, highlights the coercion embedded in the production system. The Uzbek-German Forum found that, as in other regions, college instructors, third-year college and lyceum students, university students and instructors, and schoolteachers were widely forcibly mobilized to harvest cotton, in most cases spending between 28-40 days in the fields.¹¹¹ Pickers reported that they received 200 soum (approximately \$0.07 USD) per kilogram, and that farmers withheld 2,000 soum (approximately \$0.70 USD) per day for food, in both cases slightly less than in other regions. In a difference from other regions, all pickers we interviewed in Karakalpakstan told us that officials required them to bring enough food supplies to feed themselves for the first five days of their harvest shift. Additionally, officials collected 15,000 soum (approximately \$5.40 USD) from each student to purchase food for workers.

In another departure from the common practice in other regions, people we interviewed in Karakalpakstan reported that officials and supervisors did not demand that pickers fulfill the quota and did not impose sanctions or punishments for failure to pick the prescribed amount.¹¹² Several respondents told the Uzbek-German Forum that officials set the quota at 70 kilograms/day, but that almost no one was able to pick this amount because there was so little cotton. One university student told our monitors that in reality no one picked more than 20 kilograms per day. He said that it was accepted even among supervisors that the quota was unrealistic. Although all the students at his university were forced to spend more than a month in the cotton fields, the student expressed doubt about the true utility of their labor: "we're simply required to go to the fields, but we can't help the farmer with anything."¹¹³ Another noted "at first the quota was 70 kilograms. But they didn't especially demand this because there was so little cotton. Sometimes they scolded a little, that we are bad pickers, but later when there was no cotton left no one talked about the quota anymore."¹¹⁴ Another worker from Karakalpakstan told us

In principle we sat in the fields most of the time because the cotton was bad, that is, the harvest. There was barely any and it was difficult to harvest so we didn't work much. And who will pick for 200 soum for 1 kilogram, it's an absurd amount. The harvest was bad and we picked alright, whatever we could come by. Because there was nothing to pick, I cleaned up trash and sometimes cooked for the workers, although I was brought there only to pick cotton.¹¹⁵

The case of Karakalpakstan underscores a trend seen across other regions in 2014—officials required people to go to the fields whether or not their labor made economic sense, was an efficient use of resources, or appeared to have value. One student commented "Our presence doesn't help [the harvest]. We aren't day laborers, we are paid miserly wages, we are simply present in the fields."¹¹⁶ Students and teachers were out of the classrooms and in the fields in large numbers until the end of October even where there was little or no cotton remaining to be picked, suggesting that in addition to being centrally-planned, the harvest has become a mechanism for rent seeking by officials at every level. It also suggests that local officials feared informing the central government about the reality on the ground, preferring to force people to stay in the fields. One woman told us

I wasn't paid anything even though I went to the fields, because the harvest was bad so I couldn't pick anything. I just helped a little, and I paid 2,000 for food (approximately \$0.70 USD). 50,000 soum (approximately \$18 USD) were deducted from my salary, that's all. I didn't work, and I wasn't paid. And there I understood that the district heads needed to make it look like there was work in the fields.¹¹⁷

At least two people in Karakalpakstan told our monitors that the government deployed soldiers to the fields.¹¹⁸ A parent whose son was forced to pick cotton with his university said

*They were kept in the fields from 8:00 in the morning until 7:00 in the evening! In the last 6 or 7 years a new method has appeared. Soldiers from the local base are brought in, and they are supposed to threaten with guns and bullets to force people to work. Plus they maintain discipline.*¹¹⁹

Working and Living Conditions for Cotton Pickers

Living and working conditions differed little from previous years, with pickers reporting crowded, unsanitary and generally poor conditions and long hours. In no cases did monitors find that people forced to pick cotton were provided with protective gear such as gloves, even where chemicals were in use.

Working Hours

Nearly all third-year college students, university students and some other workers picked cotton for the entire two-month period of the harvest and did not attend classes or work at their normal jobs during this time. First- and second-year college students deployed to the harvest picked cotton instead of attending class for 10-15 days at a time and generally did not stay overnight at the fields. Adults employed at publicly funded organizations including schools, hospitals, clinics, and local administrations usually worked 25-day shifts, longer than the 10-day shifts prevalent in 2013. Workers did not have weekends, holidays, or days off to rest during the harvest season. Teachers were forced to “celebrate” Teacher’s Day in the cotton fields as it falls on October 1, the height of the harvest season.¹²⁰

People forced to pick cotton, including children, generally worked long days, usually arriving to the cotton fields before 8 a.m. and working until 6 p.m., and in many cases later, and then waiting an hour or more to deliver their cotton and have it weighed. Many people were forced to work even longer hours. Most workers reported having an hour break for lunch around 1 p.m. People deployed away from home had to rise early in the morning, usually between 5-6 a.m. to wait in line to use toilets and washing facilities and receive breakfast before going to the fields. Some students in the Bukhara region picked cotton from 5 a.m. until 7 p.m., and were then forced to gather firewood for cooking fires from 9-11 p.m., a manual labor requirement of 16 hours per day for 44 days.¹²¹ According to a student from Jizzakh, “We’re in the fields for 12-13 hours. They wake us up before 5 a.m. By 6 we have breakfast and walk to the fields. We start harvesting before 7. We leave the field at 7 in the evening. Sometimes we stayed until after 8 if there were a lot of people around the scales [waiting to weigh their cotton]. There was no rest at all.”¹²²



Accidents, Violence, and Deaths

At least 17 people died and numerous people were injured as a result of the cotton harvest and poor or unsafe working and living conditions, a disturbing increase from previous years. Numerous vehicle crashes occurred while transporting workers to the cotton fields or transporting cotton, injuring many. In one case, a cargo truck transporting students crashed, injuring 29, some of them seriously; the youngest was 16 years old.



At least five people apparently died from heart attacks or other health complications while picking cotton or immediately upon their return from the fields. One of them was Abbosek Taptiev, a 19-year old employee at UzDongVonCo, a contractor of GM in Uzbekistan, which sent 60 employees to pick cotton every 10 days during the harvest. Taptiev apparently suffered a heart attack after a day picking cotton and died on the way to the hospital.¹²³ At least four people committed suicide during forced deployments to pick cotton, including a 7th-grade girl in the Samarkand region. A farmer in the Khorezm region killed himself after local authorities humiliated and threatened him for failing to meet his production quota and another farmer, mentioned above, hanged himself in late December after local authorities informed him that he would lose his land and pay significant debts for failing to meet the quota.

Two children in Karakalpakstan died from smoke inhalation when they were trapped in a burning home while their mother was forced to pick cotton. Although she usually took her children to the fields with her, she had been told that the authorities would monitor the fields that day and she could not bring her children. A neighbor reported that the local police had gone house to house informing residents that they would lose child benefits unless they picked cotton.¹²⁴



Poor housing conditions and overcrowding also led to accidents and serious injuries. In the Jizzakh region, a brigade of 40 medical workers was assigned to a barracks for 20 people, and several bunk beds collapsed injuring 12 people, several of them seriously, and leaving one in critical condition with a broken back.¹²⁵

Several fights and other violent incidents broke out in 2014 among students forcibly deployed to harvest cotton. Long working hours, crowded and poor living conditions, and an entrenched culture of punitive measures, including physical violence and humiliation against farmers and workers, may have contributed to the outbreak of fights among students. Alcohol also plays a role, as some students, and teachers responsible for maintaining discipline and safety, drink alcohol in worker housing. At least four students were killed in such incidents and six others injured. One student committed suicide after such a fight, though his exact motivation remains unknown.¹²⁶ On October 2, a fight broke out between students from the Gulistan State University in the Syrdarya region, who had been in the fields since September 10. A 20-year old student was killed in the fight. His parents have sought justice, but at the time of writing, police had refused to open an investigation.¹²⁷

Food and Water

Workers who picked cotton daily near their own homes generally provided their own food. Workers sent farther away who stayed in temporary housing near the fields generally received food from the farmer. Most people reported that the food they were provided was monotonous and of poor quality. Many used their own money to buy additional food. One student returning from a 40-day stint picking cotton said: “Goodbye cotton and goodbye macaroni!” referring to the bland, cheap diet provided by the farmer.¹²⁸ Pickers received little breakfast, usually tea with sugar and bread, sometimes with butter or margarine. A picker in the Shahrizabz region said “There’s [almost] no food in the morning. They give tea, bread, a little butter, a couple of times they gave us an egg. We’re tormented by hunger until lunch. Then even if they cook a stone you’ll eat it.”¹²⁹ Lunches were usually soup with rice, macaroni, cabbage, or potatoes. Dinners were also cabbage with potatoes, macaroni, or rice, and occasionally a bit of meat.

Access to safe, potable water for drinking and washing was a problem for many workers. Often worker housing had no running water at all. Many workers told us that the farmer provided barrels of water, but it was not boiled and therefore not safe to drink. Some workers had to drink from the same streams they used for washing. A student from Jizzakh said “we used water from cisterns— we drank it and used it for washing. They never brought boiled water. There were students who got sick from drinking water from the cisterns. The clinic doctors gave injections, and they stayed in their barracks until they got better.”¹³⁰

Housing and Hygiene

Housing was usually poor, crowded, and unsanitary, with many workers being housed in garages, unused farm buildings, or local schools. Nearly all housing was unheated, even during cold weather at the end of the season. Many people noted that rats and mice were prevalent in worker housing, and some also saw snakes and scorpions. In numerous cases students were housed in tents that provided insufficient protection from rain.¹³¹ For example, The Uzbek-German Forum’s monitors in the Kashkadarya region received official information that officials planned to mobilize 417,000 cotton pickers in the region for overnight shifts, and designated 1,048 places for overnights. Of these, 10 were tent cities, and 491 were in open-air field camps. The remainder was schools and kindergartens.¹³²



Workers had to provide their own bedding and in many cases had no access to hot water or any facilities for hygiene. Most worker housing had no running water and barrels of water were brought in for washing hands and faces. In many cases workers bathed in nearby streams or paid to use the bathrooms at locals’ homes. There were also no facilities for laundry, so workers washed clothing and bedding in streams or paid local residents to do their washing. One worker noted that he and fellow workers used a local stream to wash until it became too cold to do so, and they stopped being able to wash up at all.¹³³ Another said “they made places for washing. But the shower didn’t work. It was done for show. We dug two holes outside and lined them with canvas and these were called toilets.”¹³⁴ Many chose to spend their own money to rent rooms with local people, but this did not guarantee better conditions. A teacher described the difficulties his students faced: “we rented an apartment from locals. There was no way to get warm. 15-20 students slept in each room. We drank water from cisterns. We went to the people’s house to use the toilet. We slept on the floor. There was not enough food. There was nowhere to wash.”¹³⁵

Corruption and the Cotton Production System

The cotton production system in Uzbekistan has created myriad opportunities for corruption at all levels of government. Annually income from cotton sales, estimated to exceed \$1 billion USD, disappears into the Selkofond, an extra-budgetary fund in the Finance Ministry to which only the highest-level officials have access. Unregulated money changes hands at every other level of the system as well—local administration officials, university, college, and school directors, cotton officials and many others extort and skim money from workers, institutions, and businesses. Forced payments from businesses, payments for replacement workers, and payments to compensate for unmet quotas are demanded under the threat of penalty. The payments amount to a massive, unregulated, and unaccounted for direct subsidy to the government's cotton production system and mask the true cost of cotton production in Uzbekistan. These payments also contribute to the corruption of local officials in charge of the harvest.

Corruption in the financing of the cotton harvest appears to be both widespread and systematic in nature, with the participation of officials at every level. The enrichment of officials creates a powerful disincentive to enact real reforms of the cotton sector, and unlawful practices undermine the rule of law, nurturing an environment in which the government denies its use of forced labor and impunity prevails. Numerous people told researchers that they did not understand why they were forced to leave their jobs and families to pick cotton against their will when their towns and villages had unemployed people or day laborers seeking work. In addition, many respondents noted that they would be willing to pick cotton in decent working conditions and for a fair wage. The parent of a student forced to pick cotton said

It's possible to pick cotton. But only adults should be going. You see, in our village there are a lot of people out of work. If they go to the fields they can [each] replace 10-20 children. But how can you send them to the fields if you don't pay them? They need to be paid, and paid good money. Then we'll go ourselves to pick cotton. If we are paid good money it will be good for all of us. We'll stand on our feet materially. We'll be able to buy flour, bread, rice. What's so bad about picking cotton? We grew up doing it. If we are paid good wages it is better to go to the fields than sit at home.¹³⁶

A teacher said that she had no interest at all in picking cotton under any circumstances, but thought that the government forced students and teachers because

Children and everyone else forced to pick cotton are paid practically nothing. And we have nowhere to turn. We could lose our jobs. So we go. And for that amount of money the locals don't go to pick until they are also forced. The locals picked for us [as replacement workers] when we paid them 300-350 soum (approximately \$0.13 USD) per kilo. If they raised the price for picking I think that locals would do the picking and be pleased [to be paid.]¹³⁷

Payments and Costs to Workers

People forced to pick cotton receive nominal payment, usually between 200-250 soum (approximately \$.07-.08 USD) per kilogram of cotton harvested, however this amount was reduced by fines for failure to meet the quota, for cotton evaluated to be of lower quality, and to pay for food, housing, transportation, or other costs.

Cost for Food, Transportation, and Supplies

Workers provided with food by the farmer always had to pay for it with mandatory deductions from their earnings, usually the equivalent of 20-35 kilograms of cotton per day. Workers could not opt out of the deductions, even when they bought and prepared their own food or bought supplemental food. Many people told us that they often had little or no money left after food deductions, and sometimes even owed money. Many people spent all their earnings to buy their own food and told us that the food provided could not have cost the amount they were charged. A teacher said "They withheld money for food from the cotton we picked. I didn't count how much. They said they would withhold 25 kilos. But they withheld it all. Really, what they cooked for us in the general pot couldn't have cost even 3,000 soum (approximately \$1.08 USD) per person."¹³⁸



In numerous cases the amount received was barely sufficient to cover workers' costs, especially for supplemental food and bathing and laundry facilities. According to one worker, "for the harvest I received overall 100,000 soum (approximately \$36 USD). But I don't know where I spent it. All the money went for baths, breakfast, [instant soup]. No money is left. I'm just happy that I didn't end up in debt."¹³⁹ A college student forced to pick cotton said "The harvest was expensive. I had to spend 280,000 soum (approximately \$100 USD) at the bazaar. I had to buy sneakers, a change of shirts, two pairs of pants, and other small things. I spent 50,000 (approximately \$18 USD) on food."¹⁴⁰ A student from Jizzakh reported that "in the beginning we bought food from local shops with the money we got for the cotton we picked. By the middle of the season they didn't give us money for the cotton at all, the dean put it all in his own pocket. If we asked 'why aren't you giving it to us,' he would get back at us during exams and so we were afraid to demand our cotton money."¹⁴¹ In addition, some workers had to cover their own transportation costs to the harvest or, more frequently, to get home.

Deductions and Non-Payment of Wages

Payments were generally made every five to eight days, so some workers forced to pick cotton only for a few days at a time or who were not present on a payday received no payment at all.¹⁴² In addition to mandatory deductions for food, many workers reported other withholdings from their earnings or receiving no money at all. Pickers reported that deductions were taken if the cotton was wet or was not "clean," meaning it had bits of dirt or plant matter in it, or if they failed to pick the quota. Workers also reported that officials responsible for weighing and accounting for cotton skimmed from workers' earnings. One picker recounted

A kilogram of cotton was worth around 200 soum (approximately \$0.07 USD), I don't remember exactly. What difference does it make how much it cost when in any case they don't give you what you earned? You count up your kilograms and think that you'll receive so much. And at the weigh-in they take a cut, and the accountant takes a cut, something else happens, and when you get paid it's a completely different amount. I don't think about it. However much they give, they give.¹⁴³

A teacher from Tashkent recounted that school and other officials attempted to cover up failure to pay teachers for cotton picking.

We picked last year too and still never received any money. The farm workers got paid for the harvest. Our bosses and the district bosses make a deal amongst themselves, and they take our money themselves. A couple of times I received 23,000 soum (approximately \$8.20 USD), and once I received 26,000 soum (approximately \$9.30 USD), after all its money we earned... but when we got back to Tashkent we were made to sign a receipt as if we had been paid all our [cotton] money.¹⁴⁴

Several teachers told our monitors that students generally only received payment for the first pay period to get them interested in picking, but then they stopped paying them altogether or withheld so much that students lost their motivation and only picked enough to cover their food costs.¹⁴⁵

Numerous workers reported incurring debts during the harvest, for failure to meet quotas, or to cover the cost of food if workers picked less than the amount required to pay for food. Many workers reported that these harvest debts followed them after the cotton season and they were required to pay them, usually to their employers, such as at schools and colleges, or the amount of the debt was later deducted from their salaries. A cotton picker from the Tashkent region said that when he was forcibly mobilized to pick cotton in late October very little cotton remai-

ned, but he was still required to meet a quota and 45 kilograms were deducted daily for food. As a result “I earned a debt. They said they would take it out of my salary.”¹⁴⁶ A December letter from a teacher who had hired a replacement worker described the school’s efforts to collect her debts,

The head of the school’s finance department called me in and said that I had a debt from the harvest and I must pay it today. During the harvest I had hired a worker to replace me in the field for 10 days. I paid her 150,000 soum (approximately \$54 USD). During that period I also made daily payments for food for workers. The daily cotton quota per picker was 60 kilograms and [payment for] 25 kilograms was withheld each day for food. The head of the finance department told me that my replacement worker did not even pick 25 kilograms a day and was in debt for food. Now I must pay it, because she was in the field in my name and place. Two months after the harvest, the head of the cotton headquarters [where all cotton is delivered each day] sent our school a list of debtors from harvest, which included me. This is strange to me because when I hired the girl to replace me I always phoned her and asked her to pick the quota because the school director required us, the teachers, to pick 60 kilograms a day. I am surprised! How I can have debts from harvest?”¹⁴⁷

Fearing debts or other punitive measures for failure to meet picking quotas, many cotton pickers resorted to buying additional cotton from other workers or from local people, usually at inflated rates. A student from Tashkent said “we were paid between 220-230 soum (approximately \$0.07-\$0.08 USD) per kilo, but to make up the extra we bought cotton for 500 soum (approximately \$0.18 USD) a kilo and in any case came out behind. They also took 25 kilos for food. And for the remaining 25 kilos [that we picked] we received no money anyway. We also paid our own money to rent a room because it wasn’t possible to live where they put us.”¹⁴⁸

Buying out of Cotton Picking

Many people across the country who did not want to or were unable to harvest cotton, including for health reasons or obligations such as caring for young children, told us that they paid to get out of being forced to pick cotton or to reduce the amount of time they were sent to the fields. In some cases they paid to hire workers to replace them, and in other cases they paid their supervisors. Replacement workers usually cost 20,000-25,000 soum per day (approximately \$6-7 USD per day or more than \$200 USD per month). Many teachers bought their way out of the harvest so they could continue to hold classes. Teachers in Uzbekistan generally earn between 200,000 and 800,000 soum per month (approximately \$71-286 USD) and reported to us that it cost between 300,000-600,000 soum (approximately \$107-214 USD) to buy out of their cotton shifts.¹⁴⁹ Some private business owners were forced to send employees to the harvest and some chose to pay for replacement workers instead (see below).

Some parents of college and university students chose to buy their children out of cotton picking by making payments to teachers or school officials. One mother, whose son picked cotton for more than a month with his university said “God willing, next year we’ll buy our son out of the cotton!”¹⁵⁰

Students were particularly vulnerable to corruption on the part of college and university officials.¹⁵¹ In 2014, as in previous years, some students paid bribes to deans or other officials to avoid forced mobilization to the harvest. In 2014, numerous students reported that the price to avoid the harvest was between 300,000-600,000 soum, (approximately \$107-\$214 USD), usually paid to the dean but sometimes to a teacher or other official. The students we interviewed were generally those who could not afford or did not want to pay this price and were forced to pick cotton. For example, one teacher said that at his school pupils and students could pay their way out of the harvest if they gave 500,000 soum (approximately \$180) to their teacher.¹⁵² A student told us, “the dean asked for 500,000 soum, but I was forced to go to the harvest because I don’t have that kind of money.”¹⁵³

Payments made to teachers, deans, or other school officials to buy out of the harvest were made privately and not accounted for or officially recorded. Many students, teachers, and parents reported that they assumed officials used some of the money to buy cotton to meet the institution’s quota and pocketed some of the money. A college teacher in the Syrdarya region said

I heard from the students that there are a lot of people who want to make money during this time. Before the money gets to the director, it is handled by the group advisor. If the group advisor agrees with the parents to receive 400,000 soum (approximately \$143 USD) [to buy a student out of the harvest] then he only gives 350,000 (approximately \$125 USD) to the director and puts 50,000 soum (approximately \$18 USD) in his own pocket. The parents learn about the price from talking the advisor and pay that amount to leave their children [out of cotton picking]. I know that the director has a lot of places where he needs to pay. He even needs [to pay] to close someone's mouth. In general, they have a lot of people to give to and from whom to take.¹⁵⁴

Journalism students at the National University of Tashkent published an appeal on a local website to the university's rector and government officials including the prime minister, prosecutor general, and minister of education expressing their anger at corruption and other abuses related to cotton production:

Do the laws of Uzbekistan really indicate that students have the responsibility to harvest cotton? Of course not! Despite this, an order of the rector of the National University of Tashkent, G. I. Mukhamedov, the dean of the journalism department, Makhila Mirsoatova, and the vice dean Otabek Tillaev, announced that male third-year students are required to go to the cotton harvest. Those who do not wish to go to the fields must pay 300,000 soum (approximately \$107 USD). This amounts to two months' of a student's stipend.

Those who have money paid; those who do not were required to harvest cotton. But where is justice? Where did our money go? There are also students who must have this money withheld from their stipends. In addition, money was collected from second-year students and higher-level journalism students. Students without money went to the harvest.

Students pay money, go to the fields, but no one gives information about where the money went and how these resources were spent. What should we do if our bursar [name withheld] withholds money from our stipends by order of the dean?¹⁵⁵

Payments by Individuals and Institutions to Compensate for Failure to Meet Quotas

Individuals or institutions such as schools or hospitals that failed to meet their harvest quotas were obligated to use their own money to purchase cotton to rectify the deficit. They purchased this cotton from local residents or other pickers who sold it at inflated prices—350-500 soum (approximately \$0.13-\$0.18 USD) per kilogram instead of the 200-250 (approximately \$0.07-\$0.09 USD) soum the government paid workers for cotton picked. A nurse from the Tashkent region told us, “in the beginning we could pick 30-35 kilograms, mid-season maximum 45, and at the end about the best result was 43 kilograms. If we didn't meet the quota they reprimanded us and forced us to buy the remaining kilograms from people who had exceeded the quota (although there were very few of these) or from locals.”¹⁵⁶

At the end of the season some public sector employees in the Tashkent region were forced to stay in the cotton fields to attempt to meet harvesting quotas of 30 kilograms per day. Workers reported that with so little cotton remaining in the fields it was impossible to pick more than 20 kilograms in a 10-hour workday. With no cotton available to buy at the end of the season to make up the difference, local officials instead demanded the cash equivalent but provided no evidence how these payments were recorded or accounted for.¹⁵⁷

Some teachers said that their school, college, or university directors made the teachers pay for the institution's unmet quota, either by collecting from everyone or making those who didn't meet the quota take on the debt. In other cases, directors made up the difference themselves. One teacher said “the director pays from his own pocket to meet the quota.”¹⁵⁸

A significant amount of money remained unaccounted for entirely, including over payments for food, underpayments and withholdings to pickers, and payments made to avoid picking.

*The quota was 70 kilograms a day and we strictly ordered the replacement workers to pick the quota. The replacement workers who were paid well were good pickers and picked the crop, although we paid the government for 50% of the quota out of our own pockets because there was no cotton. It was a bad harvest! We paid the replacement workers 500 soum (approximately \$0.18 USD) per kilo, and if there wasn't enough cotton then our bosses paid a certain amount to compensate, how much they didn't tell us.*¹⁵⁹

Extortion from Private Business

The government extorted payments and forced labor from businesses in the form of mandatory “contributions” to the cotton harvest. In some region the government also forced businesses and bazaars to close or to reduce hours of operation. In no cases that we documented did officials provide evidence that the payments or forced labor of private employees was lawful or that money extorted was actually being used for the cotton harvest. One businessman agreed to pay on the condition that the tax authorities bring him an official, signed document proving that he was required to do so. He did not receive the document and was worried that he would face reprisals.¹⁶⁰ The amount of money or labor authorities extorted from business owners did not appear to follow set regulations or be subject to oversight although generally the larger the business, the larger the payment. For example, small-scale market traders, such as individual sellers of sunflower seeds in Karakalpakstan, were forced to pay 2,000 soum (about \$0.70 USD) per day during the harvest, whereas small enterprises generally paid around 500,000 soum (approximately \$179 USD) for the harvest.¹⁶¹ Many larger businesses paid much more. Several shopkeepers noted that they negotiated the amount they had to contribute and others noted that the amounts seemed arbitrary. One said “if your paperwork is in order you can negotiate to pay less” because there was less to fear in the case of an intrusive inspection.¹⁶² A shopkeeper at a large market in Tashkent said that he was required to pay 900,000 soum (approximately \$321 USD) and send an employee to pick cotton but that a neighboring business twice as big only paid 400,000 soum (approximately \$143 USD). The shopkeeper noted that the cotton harvest cost his family dearly

*It's an especially painful issue. The money, almost a million soum, was taken from my firm's account. It's a direct loss. Moreover, we would have used the money to generate more profit because we would have used it for inventory. And one employee was absent [picking cotton] for half a month. That's another 400,000. In addition, in my family my wife paid so as not to have to pick cotton. My daughter-in-law, a university graduate student, had to pay 400,000 not to pick even though she is pregnant. My son is a driver at a transport company. He was taken, with his bus, to the fields [forced to transport workers]. The total loss for our family was more than 3 million soum [approximately \$2,800 USD] as well as our nerves and our health.*¹⁶³

The government in some regions reduced the trading hours of bazaars, department stores, restaurants and cafes, allowing them to operate only after 4 p.m., apparently so as not to lure workers away from the cotton fields.¹⁶⁴ These requirements resulted in lost profits and reduced productivity for businesses across the country during the harvest. An employee of a private firm in Tashkent commented, “Cotton has a negative influence on everything, even on business. For example, if [authorities] collect money from the traders, they will immediately raise all their prices. If they take money from businessmen, it's the same story. It's a loss for everyone, for people, and schools, and the economy.”¹⁶⁵

Tax inspectors, officials from the local hokimiat, and police officers visited bazaars, shops, and other businesses to demand workers and money for the cotton harvest and in some cases held meetings with groups of business owners to inform them that they had to contribute to the harvest. Many businesses told us that failure to make payments would result in harassment through tax inspections, fines, or bureaucratic hurdles and could threaten their business. In the Angren bazaar in the Tashkent region, authorities required every shopkeeper to transfer 500,000 soum (approximately \$179 USD) to the city's assistance fund without providing any documentation that the money was for the cotton harvest.¹⁶⁶ In some regions, such as Syrdarya, the tax authorities required even very small shops to send two employees to pick cotton. A shopkeeper in the Saikhonobod district of Syrdarya told us that the tax inspectorate ordered him to send an employee to pick cotton for 25 days, but that the shift actually lasted 40 days. After 40 days the shopkeeper began to pay 10,000 soum (approximately \$3.57 USD) per day and prepare food for a brigade of 100 cotton pickers in lieu of sending his employee. After a few days, the authorities



informed him that the price had increased to 17,000 soum per day (approximately \$6.07 USD) but offered no explanation why.¹⁶⁷ One employee reported that his boss told him when he was hired that willingness to work in the fields was a condition of employment and that he risked losing his job if he refused to pick cotton.¹⁶⁸

Some businesses sent their employees or hired, and in some cases also supervised, replacement workers to pick cotton at the demand of the local tax authorities or hokimiat because they could not afford to operate with reduced staff. The tax inspectorate called in numerous shopkeepers to inform them of the demand.¹⁶⁹ The co-owner of a manufacturing business in Tashkent that employs approximately 450 people received an order to send 100 employees to the harvest, which he said would have been damaging to his business. After a negotiation with the authorities, he hired 50 replacement workers at a cost of 30 million soum (approximately \$10,700 USD).¹⁷⁰

Requirement on Foreign Business to Contribute to the Harvest

Multinational companies operating in Uzbekistan reported that they were required to contribute to the cotton harvest as a prerequisite to doing business in the country. The Swedish telecommunications company Telia Sonera reported that it was required to make an in-kind contribution equivalent to \$50,000 to the harvest in 2014 and that such contributions are required for companies to do business in Uzbekistan.¹⁷¹ The Norwegian telecommunications company Telenor also publicly stated it contributed to the harvest.¹⁷² When companies agree to “assist” the cotton harvest, serious concerns about corruption and accountability arise. No established cotton assistance fund or special bank accounts exist, leaving open the question of to whom the companies made their payments and how this money is used. Companies that agree to pay for food for workers do so despite the fact that money for food is already withheld from pickers at the rate of 20-35 kilograms of cotton per day.

Employees of GM Uzbekistan, a joint venture with the government of Uzbekistan in the Andijan region, reported to the Uzbek-German for Human Rights that their company sent workers to the harvest in 2014, as it had in previous years. According to the workers, GM Uzbekistan continued to pay its workers' regular salaries during their forced cotton deployments and paid for food and housing for its employees sent to the harvest. New employees in particular were sent to the harvest; they could not refuse or they would lose their jobs.¹⁷³ One employee said that he had been sent to harvest cotton in 2013, soon after starting work for the company “I went. I had just started work and was sent to the cotton fields right away, to [name of village withheld]...My boss came and said you're going to harvest cotton for a week. I said yes....I was there for 11 days and then returned to my job.”¹⁷⁴ The GM contractor UzDongVonCo also stated that its employees were sent to pick cotton.¹⁷⁵

Recommendations

Although the forced labor system of cotton production in Uzbekistan remains intact, the acceptance of an ILO monitoring mission in 2013, continued engagement with the ILO, and steps to reduce the systematic use of forced child labor indicate that the government feels compelled to respond to the pressure it has come under as the result of sustained, multi-lateral advocacy on these issues.

Ending government-orchestrated forced labor will require systematic reform of the cotton sector; however, it is a mistake to assume that this will necessitate years of preparatory work. Considering that the system of forced labor is fully organized and controlled by government structures, including the prosecutor, police, tax inspection, and

other administrative and enforcement agencies, the government can eliminate forced labor as soon as it musters the political will to do so. It is therefore necessary for Uzbekistan's international partners, including multi-lateral institutions and individual governments, to use their influence to urge Uzbekistan to eliminate all forms of forced labor and to make the elimination of forced labor a key condition of engagement with Uzbekistan.



To the Government of Uzbekistan

- Allow independent human rights organizations, activists and journalists unfettered access to investigate and report on conditions in the cotton production sector.
- Reform the cotton sector including by:
 - o enforcing national laws that prohibit the use of forced and child labor and vigorously prosecute non-compliance
 - o ensuring financial transparency of expenditures and revenues,
 - o ending mandatory cotton production and harvest quotas while ceasing in the meantime to penalize farmers who do not fulfill cotton quotas,
 - o raising and eventually freeing procurement prices, and de-monopolizing agricultural inputs and the cotton sales markets.
- Grant access to the country to the Special Procedures of the UN Human Rights Council and issue an invitation to the UN special rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery.
- Permit the ILO unfettered access to conduct a survey of the application of ILO Convention No. 105 on the Abolition of Forced Labor and for ILO monitors to monitor Convention No. 105 throughout the 2015 cotton season with the participation of the International Organization of Employers (IOE), International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), and local independent civil society activists and groups.
- Ratify and implement ILO Convention No. 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize so farmers and farmworkers can form independent organizations to represent their interests, speak out against and seek redress for violations such as forced labor, and negotiate for better working conditions.

To the International Labor Organization

- Conduct a survey of the application of ILO Convention No. 105 on the Abolition of Forced Labor and monitor the use of forced labor of children and adults during the 2015 cotton harvest in cooperation with independent Uzbek civil-society organizations and not the government-controlled official unions and employers association.
- Establish, monitor and report on clear benchmarks for the government of Uzbekistan to fulfill its commitments to implement the fundamental labor conventions of the ILO. This includes the elimination of state-orchestrated forced labor of children and adults in the cotton sector, starting with the 2015 cotton production cycle.
- Ensure the participation of the IOE, ITUC, and International Union of Food Workers (IUF) as well as regular consultation with independent Uzbek civil society groups in the development and implementation of all monitoring and technical assistance activities in Uzbekistan.
- Publicly report findings, activities, and recommendations concerning fundamental labor standards in Uzbekistan.

To the United States and European Union

- Urge the government of Uzbekistan to end its use of forced labor by implementing the recommendations above.
- In the U.S., maintain Uzbekistan in Tier 3 in the 2014 Global Trafficking in Persons Report until the forced-labor system for cotton production is ended.
- Exclude cotton from Uzbekistan from benefitting from trade preferences under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) until the government of Uzbekistan ends its forced-labor system of cotton production.
- Exercise 'voice and vote' at the World Bank and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to prevent any investment that would benefit the Uzbek Government's forced-labor system for cotton production.
- Investigate and prosecute companies that are benefitting from or contributing to the forced labor system of cotton production that are in violation of international and national laws.
- Publicly communicate to other companies operating in Uzbekistan the importance of fulfilling their human rights due diligence responsibilities, as established in the United Nations Principles for Business and Human Rights and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises.
- Prior to providing any development assistance to Uzbekistan, consult independent civil society organizations (in the country and in exile), require that the government of Uzbekistan demonstrate financial transparency and accountability around cotton production as a condition for releasing project loans, and publicly report on progress.

To the World Bank and Asian Development Bank

- Require that the Uzbek government demonstrate financial transparency and accountability around cotton production as a condition for releasing project loans and publicly report on progress.
- Ensure robust and fully independent third-party monitoring of compliance with core labor conventions in the project areas.
- Take all necessary measures to prevent reprisals against community members, journalists, and independent organizations for monitoring or reporting on human rights violations in these areas, for engaging with the Bank's project monitors, or for filing complaints, including by seeking an enforceable commitment from the government that it will not interfere with independent reporting and engagement.
- Support independent access to markets for farmers so they can sell their products outside of the government's forced labor system.
- Immediately cease financing these projects if forced labor occurs in the project areas.
- Establish a confidential and accessible grievance mechanism and provide effective remedies, including legal and financial, to any person who is subjected to forced labor in the project areas.

To International Companies Operating in Uzbekistan

- Refuse demands to contribute personnel, cash, or in-kind to the cotton harvest and report requests for such contributions publicly and to home-country governments.

- Establish an independent monitoring and public reporting program of the company's operations and supply chain in Uzbekistan.
- Divest from Uzbekistan if forced labor continues even after using all available leverage with the Uzbek government to convey that continued investment requires an end of state-sponsored forced labor.

To Companies That Use Cotton

- Sign the Cotton Pledge "to not knowingly source Uzbek cotton for the manufacturing of any of our products until the Government of Uzbekistan ends the practice of forced child and adult labor in its cotton sector;"
- Implement the Pledge by:
 - o Establishing a policy that prohibits the use of Uzbekistan's cotton and prohibits business with companies that are either invested in the cotton sector in Uzbekistan or using Uzbekistan's cotton, including explicitly all companies of Daewoo International, Indorama Corporation, Youngone and other companies operating in Uzbekistan;
 - o Incorporating language into vendor agreements and purchase orders that effectively prohibits suppliers from doing business with all companies that are either invested in the cotton sector in Uzbekistan or using its cotton;
 - o Requiring suppliers, suppliers' subsidiaries and suppliers' affiliates to implement these steps as well;
 - o Removing from the company's supplier database all companies invested in the cotton sector in Uzbekistan or using Uzbekistan's cotton, and companies that have not signed the revised vendor agreement and implemented steps b and c;
 - o Verifying compliance with the company policy by incorporating into supplier social compliance audits a check on implementation of the ban on business with companies that are either invested in the cotton sector in Uzbekistan or using its cotton; and
 - o Publicly releasing documentation of these steps.



Appendix

List of Terms

College

The equivalent of high school or upper secondary school. First-year students are usually 16 years old; second-year students are usually 17; third-year students are usually 18.

Hokim

Local ruler who is the head of district or regional administration.

Hokimiat

District or regional administration.

Khashar

Traditional Uzbek term describing communal work.

Lyceum

The equivalent of a vocational school or technical institute. Students are usually 16-18 years old.

Mahalla

Traditional Uzbek neighborhood, overseen by a mahalla committee that controls distribution of social benefits payments.

Mardikor

Day or seasonal laborer.

Radio Ozodlik

The Uzbek-language service of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

Legal Standards

International Legal Standards

Forced Labor

International law absolutely prohibits a government or other entity from forcing a person to work against his or her will under threat of punishment or penalty. International law also enshrines special protections for children. Uzbekistan is a member of the International Labor Organization (ILO) and has ratified seven of the ILO's eight fundamental treaties¹⁷⁶ Uzbekistan is also a party to key international human rights treaties that prohibit the forced labor of children and adults. These include the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (Article 8)¹⁷⁷, and the Abolition of Forced Labor Convention (ILO Convention No. 105)¹⁷⁸, and the Forced Labor Convention (ILO Convention No. 29).¹⁷⁹ These fundamental conventions prohibit forced or compulsory labor as political coercion, as punishment for expressing particular political views, as a means of mobilizing, and for purposes of economic development.

Convention No. 29 defines forced labor as “all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself [or herself] voluntarily.”¹⁸⁰ According to the ILO's Committee of Experts,¹⁸¹ “under menace of penalty” “should be understood in a very broad sense: it covers penal sanctions, as well as various forms of coercion, such as physical violence, psychological coercion, retention of identity documents, etc. The penalty here in question might also take the form of a loss of rights or privileges.”¹⁸²

In its 2015 observation on the application of ILO Convention No. 105 in Uzbekistan, the Committee of Experts clarified that even where a government may claim that work is part of a civic obligation and therefore exempted from the forced labor conventions, “these exceptions are limited to minor works or services performed in the direct interest of the population, and do not include work intended to benefit a wider group or work for purposes of economic development, which is explicitly prohibited by the present Convention.”¹⁸³

Additionally, the existence of a contract does not negate the possibility of forced labor.¹⁸⁴ According to the Committee, even in cases where employment is originally the result of a freely concluded agreement, the right of workers to free choice of employment remains inalienable.¹⁸⁵

Forced Child Labor

International law recognizes that many children must work to contribute to their families' income and that some work may have benefits for or be appropriate for children. However international law establishes standards to protect children from exploitation, hazardous work, and work that interferes with children's schooling, development, and future livelihoods.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child,¹⁸⁶ the ILO Minimum Age Convention,¹⁸⁷ and ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor,¹⁸⁸ all ratified by Uzbekistan, generally prohibit the employment of children under the age of 18 in harmful or hazardous work. The Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention defines the worst forms of child labor as “slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children and forced or compulsory labor.” It establishes four categories of the worst forms of child labor, one of which is “hazardous labor.” Hazardous labor is “work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.... Convention No. 182 has universal coverage, which means it applies to all sectors of the economy and status in employment (for example including unpaid family labor on family farms) with no exception possible.”¹⁸⁹ Additionally, the recommendation accompanying Convention 182 notes that the worst forms of child labor also include work with dangerous machinery or tools; work under particularly difficult conditions, such as long hours or during the night, or work that does not allow for the possibility of returning home each day; and work that may expose children to hazardous substances or to temperatures damaging to their health. Put another way, “in essence, child labor is work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity and is considered a violation of fundamental human rights.”¹⁹⁰

While the ILO does not have a specific list of prohibited occupations for children or occupations that constitute the worst forms of child labor, agriculture is considered one of the most dangerous sectors in which children work. Each country establishes its own national list of hazardous work prohibited for children. Picking cotton is included in Uzbekistan's national hazardous work list and is thus prohibited for all children, defined as all persons under age 18, in accordance with Convention 182.¹⁹¹ Further, the ILO has identified specific "major health hazards in cotton cultivation that children under 18 should not be exposed to."¹⁹²

Uzbek Law

Uzbek law, including the Constitution, provisions of the Labor Code and laws on child protection, generally prohibit forced and child labor in accordance with Uzbekistan's international legal obligations.¹⁹³ Article 37 of the Constitution guarantees the right to work and to fair labor conditions and prohibits forced labor.¹⁹⁴

Uzbek law recognizes persons under age 18 as children¹⁹⁵ entitled to specific protections, including protection from exploitation.¹⁹⁶ Section 241 of the Labor Code prohibits the employment of persons under 18 years of age in hazardous work, including cotton picking.¹⁹⁷ Other laws provide that child labor is only permissible if it does not harm development or interfere with education,¹⁹⁸ prohibit the use of school children and college students in public works,¹⁹⁹ and make labor permissible from age 15 only with a parent or guardian's written consent.²⁰⁰

Presidential Decree

Presidential Resolution No. PP2830, "On Organizational Measures to Ensure the Timely and Quality Harvest of the 2014 Cotton Crop," September 4, 2014.

Resolution of the Mayor of Tashkent

Resolution No. 719 of the Hokim of Tashkent R. Usmanov, "On Measures for the Mass Mobilization of Cotton Pickers to Jizzakh and Syrdarya Regions in Connection with the Beginning of the 2014 Cotton Harvest," August 28, 2014.





№ 719

28.14.2014 г. 28 август

Хизмат доирасида
фойдаланиш учун
нусха 2

2014 йил пахта ҳосили йиғими мавсуми бошланиши муносабати билан
Республиканинг Жizzах ва Сырдарё вилоятларига ҳашарчиларни кенг
жалб этиш чора-тадбирлари тўғрисида

Ўзбекистон Республикаси Вазирлар Маҳкамасининг 2014 йил
30 июлдаги 04-04/1-98-сонли ҳамда 12 августдаги 07/55-5-сонли йиғинига
бодиларида белгиланган топшириқлар ижросини таъминлаш ҳамда 2014 йил
пахта ҳосилини йиғиб-териб олиш мавсумига пухта тайёрлаш бўлими ва бу
борда белгиланган тадбирларни тўлиқ амалга ошириш мақсадида

ҚАРОР ҚИЛАМАН:

1. Тошкент шаҳар ҳокимининг Ахборот-таҳлил гуруҳи (Б.Шансламов);
2014 йил пахта ҳосилини уюшқонлик билан, ўз вақтида ва сифати йиғиб
териб олиш мақсадида Тошкент шаҳридан Жizzах ва Сырдарё вилоятларига
борувчи ҳашарчиларни шаҳар ва туман ҳокимликлари билан қорғон
ва таъкилот кесимларида жалб қилиш, Мирзачўл тумани қишлоқ
ва маҳаллалардаги аҳолини пахта йиғими-теримига жалб этиш учун тарғибот
ишларини ташкил қилиш мақсадида Тошкент шаҳридан маъсулларни
бирктириш рўйхатлари ишлаб чиқилиши ва тасдиқ учун киратилади.

2. Тошкент шаҳридан Жizzах ва Сырдарё вилояти туманларига
бирктирилган маъсуллар, туман ҳокимликлари ва пахта йиғими-теримига
жалб қилинган қорғон, таъкилот ва бошқарилар раҳбарлари зиммаларига
қуйидаги вазифаларни ўрнатилган тартибда амалга ошириш юқлатилиши:

пахта йиғими-теримини тизимли ташкил этиш бўйича агабарин аниқ
вазифасини белгилан;

жорий йил пахта йиғими-теримига жалб этиладиган ҳашарчиларни
сонидан келиб чиқиб, улар учун зарур бўладиган турар жойларни аниқлаш
ва керакли шартларни яратиш;

ҳашарчилар учун озиқ-овқатлар таъминлаш, яратили, янда-товосқлар,
зарурей ашё ва анжомлар билан таъминлаш;

пахта йиғими-теримини уюшқонлик билан тартибли ташкил этиш
бўйича амалга ошириладиган ишларни мувофиқлаштириш, маъсул
муаммоларни тежор ҳал этиш;

пахта йиғими-теримига жалб қилинган ҳашарчиларни бирктирилган
вилоят туманига етказиб бериш ва қилишга учун етарли шартларда
яқотраспорт воситаларини жалб қилиш;

пахта йиғими-теримига жалб қилинган ишчи-қодимларни тизимли
равоқоти белгиланган манзилга олиб бориш учун бир жойда қўлини қили
дисциплинасини ишлаб чиқиб, Тошкент шаҳар ҳокимлигига тасдиқ этиш.

3. Тошкент шаҳар Ички ишлар бошқармаси (М.Адилов) Жizzах
ва Сырдарё вилояти Ички ишлар бошқармалари билан бирга қорғонда пахта
йиғими-теримига жалб қилинган ҳашарчиларни белгиланган манзилларига
халфот этиб бориш-қилиш ва жойларда уларнинг халфотлигини таъминлаш
чора-тадбирларини белгилан.

4. Тошкент шаҳар Соғломлик саклаш бошқармаси (Б.Мамажонов)
Жizzах ва Сырдарё вилояти туманларига пахта йиғими-теримига жалб
қилинган ҳашарчилар соғломлик саклаш ва тиббий халфот хўрсатиш учун,
ўрнатилган тартибда тиббий халфотлари ва тез ёрдам атомацияларини билан
таъминлаш чоралари қўрилади.

5. Ободмонлиқлари бошқармаси (А.Қоримов) Жizzах ва Сырдарё
вилояти туманларига пахта йиғими-теримига жалб қилинган теримчиларга
ёрдим хўрсатиш учун зарур техникаларини етказиб бериш чоралари қўрилади.

6. Пахта йиғими-теримига жалб қилинган қорғон, таъкилот
ва бошқарилар раҳбарларига:

пахта йиғими-терим ҳашарига жалб этилган ишчи-хизматчи халфотлар
ҳашарда фаолият билан қатнашган халфотлари ўрнатилган тартибда
рағбатлантириш чораларига қўриш таъмин этилиши.

7. Тошкент шаҳар ҳокимининг ўринбосарлари, туман ҳокимлари:

Пахта йиғими-теримини уюшқонлик билан тартибли ташкил этиш
бўйича амалга ошириладиган ишларни бирктирилган бошқарма, қорғон
ва таъкилотлар раҳбарлари билан мунтазам мувофиқлаштириш, тақвия
қилиш ҳамда маъсул муаммоларини тежор ҳал этиш вазифаси таъмин этилиши.

8. Маъсул қирорнинг ижросини назорат қилиш Тошкент шаҳар
ҳокимининг биринчи ўринбосари Б.Раҳмонов ва Тошкент шаҳар ҳокимини
Истифодот ва истеъмий равоқлантириш масалалари маъсул
зиммаларига юқлатилиши.



Р.Усманов

The Republic of Uzbekistan
The Resolution of the Mayor of Tashkent city № 719
August 28, 2014

For internal use

A copy

On the mass mobilization of cotton pickers in the Jizzakh and Syrdarya regions due to the start of the 2014 cotton harvest season

For the purpose of implementing the activities planned during the meetings of the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan, the reference number 04-04/1-98, dated July 20, 2014 and the reference number 07/55-5 dated August 12, as well as the full implementation of all activities planned as part of a thorough preparation for the cotton harvest.

Resolution:

1. To ensure a timely and quality cotton campaign in 2014, the Information and Analysis Group of the Tashkent city municipality (B.Shaislamov) is to mobilize cotton pickers to the Jizzakh and Syrdarya regions from the organizations of the Tashkent city and regional municipalities. For the purpose of propaganda and mobilization of the population from kishlaks (villages) and makhallyas (neighbourhood communities) of the Mirzachul region the group is to develop a list of responsible people in Tashkent and to submit it for approval.
2. The heads of organizations, management and regional municipalities mobilized for the cotton campaign as well as the responsible people attached from Tashkent to the Jizzakh and Syrdarya regions are to fulfil the following tasks:
 - To define the exact tasks for the staffs organizing a systematic cotton harvest;
 - Depending on the number of people mobilized for the cotton campaign this year, to determine the places for their accommodation and to create the necessary conditions for them;
 - To provide cotton pickers with foodstuffs, utensils and the necessary household items;
 - To agree the cotton harvest activities and swift problem solving;
 - To transport cotton pickers to the defined areas of the region and to ensure the necessary amount of vehicles for their return;
 - To develop one location from which the mobilized cotton pickers and workers will be transported to the cotton harvest in an organized manner and to submit it for consideration to the Tashkent city municipality.
3. The Main Department of Internal Affairs of Tashkent city (M.Adylov) and the Internal Affairs departments of the Jizzakh and Syrdarya regions are to outline measures for the secure transportation of people engaged in the cotton harvest to the required places and providing on-site safety.
4. The Main Public Health Department of Tashkent city (B. Mamazhanov) is to ensure that health workers provide necessary medical assistance to cotton pickers in the Jizzakh and Syrdarya regions in accordance with the established order and to provide them with ambulance cars.
5. The Main Amenity Department (A.Karimov) is to undertake measures for the delivery of the necessary technology to assist cotton pickers in the Jizzakh and Syrdarya regions.
6. The heads of departments, organizations and businesses engaged in the cotton harvest are to consider measures to incentivize the most active workers in the cotton harvest.
7. The Deputy Mayors of Tashkent city and regional governors together with the heads of organizations, businesses and administrations are to coordinate practical work for the cotton harvest in an organized manner, to analyse and swiftly solve the existing problems.
8. To entrust the execution and monitoring of this resolution to the first Deputy Mayor of Tashkent city B. Rakhmonov and the Economic and Social Development Department of the Tashkent city municipality.

Mayor of Tashkent city

R. Usmanov

Endnotes

- ¹ The Chronicle of Forced Labor is a periodic update of media monitoring and analysis produced regularly throughout the harvest season, available at: <http://uzbekgermanforum.org/category/cotton-chronicle/chronicle-of-forced-labour-2014/>.
- ² Alisher Ilkhamov, Uzbekistan Program Manager for the Open Society Foundation and Matthew Fischer-Daly, coordinator of the Cotton Campaign (www.cottoncampaign.org), composed the questionnaires.
- ³ See for example the International Human Rights Rank Indicator (<http://www.ihri.com/>) and the Freedom in the World Index (<http://www.freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world>).
- ⁴ The United Nations special rapporteur on torture made the finding that the use of torture in Uzbekistan is “systematic,” following his 2002 visit to the country. See: United Nations Economic and Social Council, Civil and Political Rights, Including the Questions of Torture and Detention, Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. UN Commission on Human Rights, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the question of torture, Theo van Boven, Visit to Uzbekistan, E/CN.4/2003/68/Add.2. February 3, 2003, <http://www.unhcr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/0/29d0f1eaf87cf3eac1256ce9005a0170?Opendocument>. In the Concluding Observations of its 2013 periodic review of Uzbekistan, the Committee Against Torture reiterated its concerns about the persistent use of torture in Uzbekistan, CAT/C/UZB/CO/4, available at http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CAT%2fC%2fUZB%2fCO%2f4&Lang=en.
- ⁵ In its latest report on Uzbekistan, the United Nations Human Rights Committee expressed concern and issued recommendations about the government’s repression of civil society. In particular, the Committee said it remained “concerned about the number of representatives of independent non governmental organizations (NGO), journalists, and human rights defenders imprisoned, assaulted, harassed or intimidated, because of the exercise of their profession.” United Nations Human Rights Committee, “Concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee: Uzbekistan,” New York, 8-26 March 2010, CCPR/C/UZB/CO/3, <http://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/enacaregion/pages/uzindex.aspx>, at paragraph 24.
- ⁶ See “Denial of exit visas has been used to prevent activists and human rights defenders from traveling,” Remarks on Freedom of Movement, J. Brian Atwood, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Human Dimension Meeting, Warsaw, October 1, 2014, available at: http://osce.usmission.gov/oct_1_14_session15.html.
- ⁷ They are the United Nations special rapporteurs on torture and other cruel, degrading, or inhuman treatment, on the situation of human rights defenders, on freedom of religion or belief, on violence against women, on the independence of judges and lawyers, on extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions, on contemporary forms of slavery, on freedom of association and assembly, and on cultural rights, as well as the working groups on arbitrary detention, and on enforced or involuntary disappearances.
- ⁸ See the Decent Work Country Program- Uzbekistan at <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/program/dwcp/download/uzbekistan.pdf>.
- ⁹ International Labor Organization (ILO), Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, ReportIII(1A)-2015-[NORME-141218-1]-En.docx, at page 175 (reviewing the Government of Uzbekistan’s implementation of the Forced Labor Convention 105), stating “The Committee notes the Government’s statement...that the recruitment of workers on a voluntary basis for work in the cotton harvest cannot be considered as forced labor, since workers are free to terminate their employment at any time, may a situation of coercion arise... that individuals engaged in cotton picking are usually motivated by the possibility of supplementing their income.”
- ¹⁰ “К сбору хлопка в Узбекистане вновь привлечены несовершеннолетние,” [“Minors are Again Brought to Harvest Cotton”], News Asia, October 10, 2014, available at: <http://www.news-asia.ru/view/uz/7385/>.
- ¹¹ Email correspondence from Uktam Paradaev to Umida Niyazova, January 2015, on file with the Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights.
- ¹² For detailed information on the cotton production system and its financial system, see: “Uzbekistan’s Cotton Sector: Financial Flows and Distribution of Resources,” Alisher Ilkhamov and Bakhodiy Muradov, Open Society Institute, October 2014, available at: <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/reports/uzbekistan-s-cotton-sector-financial-flows-and-distribution-resources>.
- ¹³ See Appendix. Presidential Resolution No. PP2830, “On Organizational Measures to Ensure the Timely and Quality Harvest of the 2014 Cotton Crop,” September 4, 2014. The resolution orders regional and district hokims, among other officials, to bear “personal responsibility” for the cotton harvest.
- ¹⁴ Ibid and Hornidge, Anna-Katharina and Shtaltovna, Anastasiya, “A Comparative Study on Cotton Production in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan,” Center for Development Research (ZEF), University of Bonn, 2014, http://www.zef.de/uploads/tx_zefportal/Publications/ZEF-Cotton_Kasachstan-web.pdf, page 13-14.
- ¹⁵ The government uses forced labor in other sectors of the economy in Uzbekistan as well. Many respondents told the Uzbek-German Forum that they are regularly required to do forced, unpaid labor such as cleaning the streets, planting flowers, or guarding construction sites. Systematic forced labor is used in silk and wheat production. The Uzbek-German Forum has conducted more than 50 interviews with people forced to work in silk production and a report on this topic is forthcoming in 2015. For more information about forced labor in silk production, please see: Uzbeks Toil to Keep Silk Industry’s Traditions Alive, Farangis Najibullah and Sadridin Ashurov, March 12, 2013, available at: <http://www.rferl.org/content/uzbekistan-silk-industry/24926469.html>.
- ¹⁶ Ilkhamov and Muradov, page 22.
- ¹⁷ Ibid, page 18.
- ¹⁸ Ibid, Executive Summary.
- ¹⁹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with institute student (name withheld), Andijan region, November 11, 2014.

²⁰ ILO Convention No. 29 concerning Forced or Compulsory Labor (Forced Labor Convention), adopted June 28, 1930, 39 U.N.T.S. 55, entered into force May 1, 1932. For a, overview of Uzbek and international standards regulating forced child labor and forced labor, see Legal Standards, Appendix.

²¹ International Labor Organization (ILO), Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, ReportIII(1A)-2014-[NORME-140107-1]-En.docx, at page 172 (reviewing the Government of Uzbekistan's implementation of the Forced Labor Convention 105), , at page 171, stating: "The Committee notes that the Government...states that workers called upon to participate in agricultural work are paid," "that all the cotton produced in the country is grown by private farmers," and "pickers are engaged through individual employment contracts, generally motivated by a desire to earn additional income."

²² International Labor Organization (ILO), Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, ReportIII(1A)-2015-[NORME-141218-1]-En.docx, at page 175 (reviewing the Government of Uzbekistan's implementation of the Forced Labor Convention 105), stating "The Committee notes the Government's statement...that the recruitment of workers on a voluntary basis for work in the cotton harvest cannot be considered as forced labor, since workers are free to terminate their employment at any time, may a situation of coercion arise... that individuals engaged in cotton picking are usually motivated by the possibility of supplementing their income."

²³ The Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) is an independent body composed of legal experts charged with examining the application of ILO Conventions and Recommendations by ILO member States. The annual report of the Committee of Experts covers numerous matters related to the application of ILO standards. The report of the Committee of Experts is also available at: www.ilo.org/global/standards/lang--en/index.htm.

²⁴ International Labor Organization, "Giving Globalization a Human Face," 2012, ILC.101/III/1B, Para 308 http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_norm/@relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_174846.pdf, at paragraph 270.

²⁵ International Labor Organization (ILO), Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, Report III(1A)-2015-[NORME-141218-1]-En.docx, at page 175 (reviewing the Government of Uzbekistan's implementation of the Forced Labour Convention 105).

²⁶ International Labor Organization (ILO), Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, Report III(1A)-2015-[NORME-141218-1]-En.docx, at page 175 (reviewing the Government of Uzbekistan's implementation of the Forced Labor Convention 105), stating: "In this context, 'voluntary offer' refers to the freely given and informed consent of workers to enter into an employment relationship, as well as to their freedom to leave their employment at any time, without fear of retaliation or loss of any privilege. In this regard, the Committee recalls, referring also to paragraph 271 of its 2012 General Survey on the fundamental Conventions, that, even in cases where employment is originally the result of a freely concluded agreement, the right of workers to free choice of employment, without being subject to the menace of any penalty, remains inalienable. Accordingly, while temporary transfers of employment might be inherent to certain professions and activities, the Committee considers that the application in practice of provisions, orders or regulations allowing for the systematic transfer of workers for the performance of activities which are unrelated to their ordinary occupations (e.g. the transfer of a health-care professional to perform agricultural work) should be carefully examined in order to ensure that such practice would not result in a contractual relationship based on the will of the parties turning into work by compulsion of law."

²⁷ Ibid and ILO, "Giving Globalization a Human Face," Id. at ¶ 271.

²⁸ Resolution No. 719 of the Hokim of Tashkent R. Usmanov, "On Measures for the Mass Mobilization of Cotton Pickers to Jizzakh and Syrdarya Regions in Connection with the Beginning of the 2014 Cotton Harvest," August 28, 2014. See Appendix.

²⁹ Resolution of the Mayor of Tashkent city No 719, August 28, 2014. A copy of the original resolution and translation are attached to this report.

³⁰ Uzbek-German Forum interview with nurse (name withheld), Tashkent, November 13, 2014.

³¹ See Cotton Campaign and Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights, "A Systemic Problem," July 2013, http://www.cottoncampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/SystemicProblem-ForcedLabour_Uzbekistan_Cotton_Continues.pdf; Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights, "Cotton- it's not a plant, it's politics," 2012, <http://www.cottoncampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/cotton-its-not-a-plant-its-politics-UGF.pdf>; Centre for Contemporary Central Asia and the Caucasus, The School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, "Invisible to the World," 2009, http://www.cottoncampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/invisible2world_CIRC4.pdf; Environmental Justice Foundation, "White Gold," 2005, http://www.cottoncampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/2005_EJF_WhiteGold.pdf.

Cotton Campaign and Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights, "A Systemic Problem," July 2013, http://www.cottoncampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/SystemicProblem-ForcedLabour_Uzbekistan_Cotton_Continues.pdf; Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights, "Cotton- it's not a plant, it's politics," 2012, <http://www.cottoncampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/cotton-its-not-a-plant-its-politics-UGF.pdf>; Centre for Contemporary Central Asia and the Caucasus, The School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, "Invisible to the World," 2009, http://www.cottoncampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/invisible2world_CIRC4.pdf; Environmental Justice Foundation, "White Gold," 2005, http://www.cottoncampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/2005_EJF_WhiteGold.pdf.

³² In 2005 the ILO supervisory bodies began to consistently express concern for the use of forced labor of children and adults in cotton production in Uzbekistan. In 2008 the U.S. Department of Labor investigated forced child labor in cotton production in Uzbekistan and added cotton from Uzbekistan to the list of goods made by forced child labor in 2009. The Uzbek government ratified international conventions on child labor in 2008 and 2009. In December 2011, the European Parliament voted 603 to 8 not to extend the EU-Uzbekistan Partnership and Cooperation Agreement to trade in cotton and textiles, and in January 2012 the United States Trade Representative reviewed the Generalized System of Trade Preferences for Uzbekistan. The Uzbek government met with the ILO in Tashkent in March 2012. In October 2012, the French National Contact Point of the OECD issued guidance to multinational enterprises not to trade Uzbek cotton, and in June 2013 the U.S. government placed Uzbekistan in Tier 3 of the 2013 Trafficking in Persons Report. In July 2013 the Uzbek government agreed to allow ILO monitors to observe the cotton harvest, albeit under restricted terms. From September to November 2013, the South Korean Human Rights Commission investigated companies operating in Uzbekistan; the U.S. government applied the Tariff Act by holding shipments of cotton from Uzbekistan; and the World Bank Inspection Panel reported that the World Bank's project in the agriculture sector in Uzbekistan was plausibly linked to forced labor. Between 2008 and 2015, more than 160 apparel retailers pledged to not use cotton from Uzbekistan until the government ends its use of forced labor and child labor. In April 2014 the Uzbek Government signed a Decent Work Country Program, yet continues to deny its use of forced labor.

³³ "A Systemic Problem: State-Sponsored Forced Labor in Uzbekistan's Cotton Sector Continues in 2012," Uzbek-German Forum and Cotton Campaign, May 2013, available at: <http://uzbekgermanforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/SystemicProblem-ForcedLabour-Uzbekistan-Cotton-Continues.pdf>.

³⁴ Although most collective farms have been converted to leases since the end of the Soviet Union, cotton production is still controlled by an administrative-command system, a planned, highly centralized system where decisions around cotton production, harvesting, and sales are made by the central government and enforced by coercive means. The government owns the land and exerts comprehensive state control of crop allocation, financial flows, land, inputs, purchasing, processing, access to markets, and sales.

³⁵ Uzbek-German Forum interview with farmer (name withheld), Tashkent region, November 18, 2014.

³⁶ "Хоразмда ҳокимлик йиғилишида ҳақоратланган фермер ўзини осди," ["In Khorezm, a farmer hanged himself after humiliation"] Radio Ozodlik, October 21, 2014, available at: <http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/26648503.html>.

³⁷ "Пахта режасини бажара олмаган самарқандлик фермер ўзини осди," ["In Samarkand, a farmer who didn't meet the cotton production plan hanged himself"] Radio Ozodlik, January 6, 2015, available at: <http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/26779607.html>.

³⁸ Uzbek-German Forum interview with farmer (name withheld), Kashkadarya region, December 1, 2014.

³⁹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with farmer (name withheld), Syrdarya region, November 16, 2014.

⁴⁰ Uzbek-German Forum interview with farmer (name withheld), Andijan region, November 7, 2014.

⁴¹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with farmer (name withheld), Andijan region, November 7, 2014.

⁴² Uzbek-German Forum interview with seventh-grade pupil (name withheld), age 13, Kashkadarya region, November 16, 2014.

⁴³ Uzbek-German Forum interview with parent (name withheld), Andijan region, November 14, 2014.

⁴⁴ Uzbek-German Forum Andijan monitor's report, November 2, 2014.

⁴⁵ Uzbek-German Forum Tashkent region, Andijan region, and Kashkadarya region monitors' reports, September- November 2014.

⁴⁶ "Вышедший собирать хлопок вместо внука-школьника, дед скончался на поле" ["A grandfather picking cotton in the place of his pupil-grandson died in the fields"], ProfiForex, September 29, 2014, available at: <http://www.profi-forex.org/novosti-mira/novosti-sng/uzbekistan/entry1008228663.html>.

⁴⁷ Uzbek-German Forum interview with public agency employee (name withheld), Kashkadarya region, November 20, 2014.

⁴⁸ Uzbek-German Forum interview with farmer (name withheld), Andijan region, November 7, 2014.

⁴⁹ Жиззахда эмизикли оналар ҳам далага ҳайдалаяпти [Newborns' mothers are forced to pick cotton in Djizzak], Radio Ozodlik, October 19, 2014, available at: <http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/26644871.html>.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan notice, Andijan region, sent by email to the Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights, November 4, 2014.

⁵² Uzbek-German Forum interview with mahalla resident (name withheld), Shahrisabz region, November 22, 2014.

⁵³ Uzbek-German Forum Andijan monitor's report, November 2, 2014.

⁵⁴ Uzbek-German Forum interview with college teacher (name withheld), Syrdarya region, November 1, 2014.

⁵⁵ Uzbek-German Forum interview with institute student (name withheld), Tashkent, November 14, 2014.

⁵⁶ Uzbek-German Forum interview with college teacher (name withheld), Syrdarya region, October 31, 2014.

⁵⁷ Uzbek-German Forum interview with university student (name withheld), Syrdarya region, October 28, 2014.

⁵⁸ Uzbek-German Forum interview with institute student (name withheld), Jizzakh region, November 19, 2014.

⁵⁹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with lyceum teacher (name withheld), Jizzakh region, November 15, 2014.

⁶⁰ Uzbek-German Forum interview with teacher (name withheld), Tashkent, November 22, 2014.

⁶¹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with teacher (name withheld), Andijan region, November 2, 2014.

⁶² "Forced labor in Uzbekistan: Report on the 2013 Cotton Harvest," Uzbek-German-Forum for Human Rights, May 2014, available at: <http://uzbekgermanforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Forced-Labor-in-Uzbekistan-Report-2013.pdf>.

⁶³ Uzbek-German Forum regional monitors' reports, September- November 2014.

⁶⁴ Uzbek-German Forum interview with employer (name withheld), Andijan region, 6 October, 2014.

⁶⁵ See the Global Partnership for Education: Uzbekistan, <http://www.globalpartnership.org/country/uzbekistan>.

⁶⁶ Uzbek-German Forum interview with college teacher (name withheld), Syrdarya region, October 31, 2014.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

- ⁶⁸ In international law and Uzbek law, a child is a person under age 18. In Uzbekistan colleges, vocational institutes, and lyceums are secondary education institutions. First-year students are often 16 years old, second-year students are often 17 years old, and third-year students are often 18, although some third year students are only 17.
- ⁶⁹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with university student (name withheld), Syrdarya region, October 28, 2014.
- ⁷⁰ Uzbek-German Forum interview with lyceum teacher (name withheld), Jizzakh region, November 15, 2014.
- ⁷¹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with college student (name withheld), Karakalpakstan, November 22, 2014.
- ⁷² Uzbek-German Forum interview with college teacher (name withheld), Tashkent region, November 22, 2014.
- ⁷³ Ibid.
- ⁷⁴ Letter from student (name withheld) in Tashkent to the Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights, September 11, 2014. A copy of the letter is on file with the Uzbek-German Forum.
- ⁷⁵ Uzbek-German Forum interview with university student (name withheld), Kashkadarya region, November 17, 2014.
- ⁷⁶ Uzbek-German Forum interview with college teacher (name withheld), Syrdarya region, October 31, 2014.
- ⁷⁷ Uzbek-German Forum interview with college teacher (name withheld), Syrdarya region, October 31, 2014.
- ⁷⁸ Uzbek-German Forum interview with mahalla resident (name withheld), Kashkadarya region, November 22, 2014.
- ⁷⁹ Kashkadarya monitor's report.
- ⁸⁰ Uzbek-German Forum interview with teacher (name withheld), Kashkadarya region, November 22, 2014.
- ⁸¹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with parent (name withheld), Kashkadarya region, November 20, 2014. Her daughter in third grade did not pick cotton but her seventh-grade son did.
- ⁸² Uzbek-German Forum interview with parent (name withheld), Kashkadarya region, November 15, 2014.
- ⁸³ Uzbek-German Forum interview with seventh-grade pupil (name withheld), Kashkadarya region, November 16, 2014.
- ⁸⁴ Uzbek-German Forum interview with parent (name withheld), Kashkadarya region, November 15, 2014.
- ⁸⁵ Uzbek-German Forum Syrdarya monitor's report.
- ⁸⁶ "В Джизакской области Узбекистана школьники собирают хлопок уже 15 дней," ["In Jizzakh Region in Uzbekistan Children Have Already Harvested Cotton for 15 Days"] Radio Ozodlik, November 4, 2014, available at: <http://www.profi-forex.org/novosti-mira/novosti-sng/uzbekistan/entry1008233418.html>.
- ⁸⁷ "В Узбекистане школьники продолжают собирать хлопок," ["In Uzbekistan Children Continue to Harvest Cotton"] Radio Ozodlik, November 1, 2014, available at: <http://www.profi-forex.org/novosti-mira/novosti-sng/uzbekistan/entry1008233089.html>.
- ⁸⁸ Uzbek-German Forum interview with parent (name withheld), Tashkent region, November 18, 2014.
- ⁸⁹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with college teacher (name withheld), Syrdarya region, October 31, 2014.
- ⁹⁰ Uzbek-German Forum interview with college teacher, Tashkent region, November 22, 2014.
- ⁹¹ Uzbek-German Forum Kashkadarya monitor's report, October 2014. Districts in the Kashkadarya that sent second-year college students to the harvest include: Qasbi, Nishon, Mirishkor, Karshi, Koson. The Kashkadarya region is one of the highest producers of cotton in Uzbekistan, producing more than 400,000 tons per year.
- ⁹² Uzbek-German Forum Jizzakh region monitor's report, October 24, 2014.
- ⁹³ «Такая революция мне не нужна!» Как устранить дефицит газа и электроэнергии в Узбекистане ["I Don't Need This Kind of Revolution!: How to Eliminate Gas and Electricity Shortages in Uzbekistan], Toshpulat Rakhmatullaev, Fergana News, December 22, 2014, available at: <http://www.fergananews.com/articles/8348>.
- ⁹⁴ Uzbek-German Forum Jizzakh monitor's report, October 2014.
- ⁹⁵ Uzbek-German Forum interview with teacher (name withheld), Tashkent region, November 23, 2014.
- ⁹⁶ Uzbek-German Forum interview with teacher (name withheld), Andijan region, November 2, 2014.
- ⁹⁷ Uzbek-German Forum interview with college instructor (name withheld), Karakalpakstan, January 24, 2015.
- ⁹⁸ Uzbek-German Forum interview with medical college student (name withheld), Andijan, November 1, 2014.
- ⁹⁹ Uzbek-German Forum Tashkent region monitor's report, September 13, 2014.
- ¹⁰⁰ Uzbek-German Forum interview with nurse (name withheld), Tashkent, November 13, 2014.
- ¹⁰¹ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with nurse (name withheld) Tashkent region, November 17, 2014.
- ¹⁰² Uzbek-German Forum Tashkent region monitor's report, September 9, 2014.
- ¹⁰³ Uzbek-German Forum interview with dentist (name withheld), Tashkent region, November 14, 2014.
- ¹⁰⁴ Uzbek-German Forum interview with nurse (name withheld), Tashkent region, November 17, 2014.
- ¹⁰⁵ Uzbek-German Forum interview with dentist (name withheld), Karakalpakstan, November 6, 2014.
- ¹⁰⁶ Uzbek-German Forum interview with nurse (name withheld), Tashkent, November 13, 2014.
- ¹⁰⁷ "Хоразмда тиббиётчилар оммавий равишда пахтага ҳайдалди," [In Khorezm all medical staff sent en masse to the cotton harvest] Radio Ozodlik, September 7, 2014, available at: <http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/26571023.html>.
- ¹⁰⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with doctor (name withheld), Shahrisabz region, November 2014.
- ¹¹⁰ See World Bank Group-Uzbekistan Partnership: Country Program Snapshot, October 2014, available at: <http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Uzbekistan-Snapshot.pdf>, and "Human Rights Due Diligence and World Bank Funding in Uzbekistan's Agricultural Sector," Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights, June 2014, available at: <http://uzbekgermanforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/UGF-World-Bank-Loans-to-Uzbekistan.pdf>.
- ¹¹¹ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with college and university students (names withheld), Karakalpakstan, November 2014.
- ¹¹² For example, Uzbek-German Forum interviews with college teacher (name withheld), Karakalpakstan, November 9, 2014; college student (name withheld), Karakalpakstan, November 5, 2014, and farmer (name withheld), Karakalpakstan, November 6, 2014.
- ¹¹³ Uzbek-German Forum interview with university student (name withheld), Karakalpakstan, November 3, 2014.
- ¹¹⁴ Uzbek-German Forum interview with university student (name withheld), Karakalpakstan, January 20, 2014.

- ¹¹⁵ Uzbek-German Forum interview with mahalla resident (name withheld), Karakalpakstan, November 5, 2014.
- ¹¹⁶ Uzbek-German Forum interview with university student (name withheld), Karakalpakstan, November 3, 2014.
- ¹¹⁷ Uzbek-German Forum interview with nurse (name withheld), Karakalpakstan, November 6, 2014.
- ¹¹⁸ Uzbek-German Forum interview with parent (name withheld), Karakalpakstan, November 6, 2014.
- ¹¹⁹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with parent (name withheld), Karakalpakstan, November 5, 2014.
- ¹²⁰ Uzbek-German Forum Jizzakh monitor's report October 24, 2014.
- ¹²¹ Uzbek-German Forum Bukhara monitor's report November 2, 2014.
- ¹²² Uzbek-German Forum interview with institute student (name withheld), Jizzakh region, November 19, 2014.
- ¹²³ "GM-Ўзбекистон"га пудратчи корхонанинг 19 яшар ишчиси пахтада вафот этди," ["19-year old employee of GM-Uzbekistan joint venture company died in the cotton field"] Radio Ozodlik, October 8, 2014, available at: <http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/26627321.html>.
- ¹²⁴ "Пахта мавсуми қурбонлари сони тўққиз нафарга етди," ["The Number of Victims of the Cotton Season Increased to Nine"], Ozodlik Radio, October 4, 2014, available at: <http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/26620554.html>.
- ¹²⁵ Uzbek-German Forum Tashkent region monitor's report, October 2014. The workers were from the Tashkent region and sent to pick in the Jizzakh region.
- ¹²⁶ Majid Uteganov, an 18-year old third-year student at the Takhiatash Polytechnical College who had been forcibly mobilized to pick cotton in the Khuzhaili district of Karakalpakstan, hanged himself on September 28, 2014. See "Еще две жертвы сезона хлопкоуборочной кампании 2014 года в Узбекистане," [Two More Victims of the 2014 Cotton Harvest in Uzbekistan], Radio Ozodlik, October 29, 2014, available at: <http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/26664676.html>.
- ¹²⁷ "Милиция в Узбекистане не принимает заявление семьи погибшего на хлопке студента" ["Police in Uzbekistan Refuse to Register the Complaint of the Family of Student Killed at the Cotton Harvest"], ProfiForex, October 9, 2014, available at: <http://www.profi-forex.org/novosti-mira/novosti-sng/uzbekistan/entry1008229989.html>.
- ¹²⁸ Uzbek-German Forum Andijan monitor's report, November 2, 2014.
- ¹²⁹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with an employee of a public agency (name withheld), Shahrisabz region, November 20, 2014.
- ¹³⁰ Uzbek-German Forum interview with institute student (name withheld), Jizzakh region, November 19, 2014.
- ¹³¹ Uzbek-German Forum Bukhara monitor's report November 2, 2014.
- ¹³² Uzbek-German Forum Kashkadarya monitor's report October 29, 2014.
- ¹³³ Uzbek-German Forum interview with doctor (name withheld), Shahrisabz region, November 2014.
- ¹³⁴ Uzbek-German Forum interview with college teacher (name withheld), Kashkadarya region, November 28, 2014.
- ¹³⁵ Uzbek-German Forum interview with lyceum teacher (name withheld), Jizzakh region, November 15, 2014.
- ¹³⁶ Uzbek-German Forum interview with parent (name withheld), Kashkadarya region, November 15, 2014.
- ¹³⁷ Uzbek-German Forum interview with teacher (name withheld), Tashkent region, November 23, 2014.
- ¹³⁸ Uzbek-German Forum interview with teacher (name withheld), Tashkent, November 22, 2014.
- ¹³⁹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with college student (name withheld), Syrdarya region, October 27, 2014.
- ¹⁴⁰ Uzbek-German Forum interview with college student (name withheld), Syrdarya region, October 28, 2014.
- ¹⁴¹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with institute student (name withheld), Jizzakh region, November 19, 2014.
- ¹⁴² Uzbek-German Forum interviews with nurses and teachers, October 2014.
- ¹⁴³ Uzbek-German Forum interview with firefighter (name withheld), Tashkent region, November 17, 2014.
- ¹⁴⁴ Uzbek-German Forum interview with teacher (name withheld), Tashkent, November 22, 2014.
- ¹⁴⁵ Uzbek-German Forum interview with college teacher (name withheld), Tashkent region, November 22, 2014.
- ¹⁴⁶ Uzbek-German Forum interview with plumber (name withheld), Tashkent region, November 19, 2014.
- ¹⁴⁷ Letter from Uzbek-German Forum monitor (name withheld) in the Tashkent region, December 29, 2014.
- ¹⁴⁸ Uzbek-German Forum interview with institute student (name withheld), Tashkent, November 14, 2014.
- ¹⁴⁹ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with teachers, September-November, 2014.
- ¹⁵⁰ Uzbek-German Forum interview with parent (name withheld), Karakalpakstan, November 5, 2014.
- ¹⁵¹ In years of surveys conducted by our monitors, hundreds of students of students have reported that bribery is a major problem in their institutions and in the education system in Uzbekistan generally. Many students reported having to pay bribes to get accepted at a college or university and then having to pay bribes to teachers and officials to pass exams or get good grades.
- ¹⁵² Uzbek-German Forum interview with lyceum teacher (name withheld), Jizzakh region, November 15, 2014.
- ¹⁵³ Uzbek-German Forum interview with institute student (name withheld), Jizzakh region, November 19, 2014.
- ¹⁵⁴ Uzbek-German Forum interview with college teacher (name withheld), Syrdarya region, November 4, 2014.
- ¹⁵⁵ Open letter on cotton policy by students of the Department of Journalism of the National University of Tashkent, November 6, 2014, available at: <http://dunyouzbeklari.com/archives/86719>.
- ¹⁵⁶ Uzbek-German Forum interview with nurse (name withheld), Tashkent region, November 13, 2014.
- ¹⁵⁷ Tashkent region monitor's report.
- ¹⁵⁸ Uzbek-German Forum interview with lyceum teacher (name withheld), Jizzakh region, November 15, 2014.
- ¹⁵⁹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with factory worker (name withheld), Karakalpakstan, November 3, 2014.
- ¹⁶⁰ Uzbek-German Forum Tashkent region monitor's report, September 2014.
- ¹⁶¹ Uzbek-German Forum Karakalpakstan monitor's report, November 2014.
- ¹⁶² Uzbek-German Forum interview with shopkeeper at the market, November 2014.
- ¹⁶³ Uzbek-German Forum interview with shopkeeper, Tashkent, November 5, 2014.
- ¹⁶⁴ Uzbek-German Forum reports from monitors in Syrdarya and Kashkadarya, September and October 2014.
- ¹⁶⁵ Uzbek-German Forum interview with employee, Tashkent, November 14, 2014.

- ¹⁶⁶ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with shop owners, Syrdarya region, September and October 2015.
- ¹⁶⁷ Uzbek-German Forum Syrdarya monitor's report, September 2014.
- ¹⁶⁸ Uzbek-German Forum interview with sales assistant, Syrdarya region, November 10, 2014.
- ¹⁶⁹ Uzbek-German Forum regional monitors' reports September-November 2014.
- ¹⁷⁰ Uzbek-German Forum Tashkent region monitor's report, November 2, 2014.
- ¹⁷¹ "Ўзбекистан: «Телисонера» «откупила» от сбора хлопка за 50 тысяч долларов," Fergana Information Agency, September 15, 2014, available at: <http://www.fergananews.com/news/22623>.
- ¹⁷² "Sponser tvangsarbeid for barn," Emilie Ekeberg and Simen Tallaksen, Klassekampen, December 12, 2014, available at: <http://www.klassekampen.no/article/20141212/ARTICLE/141219985>.
- ¹⁷³ Uzbek-German Forum interview with Daewoo-General Motors engineer (name withheld), Andijan region, November 4, 2014.
- ¹⁷⁴ Uzbek-German Forum interview with Daewoo-General Motors worker (name withheld), Andijan region, November 4, 2014.
- ¹⁷⁵ "„GM-Ўзбекистон“га пудратчи корхонанинг 19 яшар ишчиси пахтада вафот этди," [19-year old employee of GM-Uzbekistan joint venture company died in the cotton field] Radio Ozodlik, October 8, 2014, available at: <http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/26627321.html>.
- ¹⁷⁶ The International Labor Organization's Fundamental Conventions are: C87 Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention (1948), C98 Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention (1949), C29 Forced Labor Convention (1930), C105 Abolition of Forced Labor Convention (1957), C138 Minimum Age Convention (1973), C182 Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention (1999), C100 Equal Remuneration Convention (1951), C111 Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (1958), which apply to member states regardless of ratification. See ILO, "The International Labor Organization's Fundamental Conventions," 2003, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_095895.pdf. Uzbekistan has not ratified ILO Convention No. 87.
- ¹⁷⁷ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), adopted December 16, 1966, G.A. Res. 2200A (XXI), 21 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 16) at 52, U.N. Doc. A/6316 (1966), 999 U.N.T.S. 171, entered into force March 23, 1976. (ICCPR), ratified by Uzbekistan on September 28, 1995.
- ¹⁷⁸ ILO Convention No. 105 concerning Abolition of Forced Labor, adopted June 25, 1957, entered into force, January 17, 1959.
- ¹⁷⁹ ILO Convention No. 29 concerning Forced or Compulsory Labor, adopted June 28, 1930, entered into force, May 1, 1932.
- ¹⁸⁰ ILO Convention No. 29 concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour (Forced Labour Convention), adopted June 28, 1930, 39 U.N.T.S. 55, entered into force May 1, 1932.
- ¹⁸¹ The Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) is an independent body composed of legal experts charged with examining the application of ILO Conventions and Recommendations by ILO member States. The annual report of the Committee of Experts covers numerous matters related to the application of ILO standards. The report of the Committee of Experts is also available at: www.ilo.org/global/standards/lang--en/index.htm.
- ¹⁸² International Labour Organization, "Giving Globalization a Human Face," 2012, ILC.101/III/1B, Para 308 http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_norm/@relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_174846.pdf, at paragraph 270.
- ¹⁸³ International Labor Organization (ILO), Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, Report III(1A)-2015-[NORME-141218-1]-En.docx, at page 175 (reviewing the Government of Uzbekistan's implementation of the Forced Labour Convention 105).
- ¹⁸⁴ International Labor Organization (ILO), Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, Report III(1A)-2015-[NORME-141218-1]-En.docx, at page 175 (reviewing the Government of Uzbekistan's implementation of the Forced Labor Convention 105), stating: "In this context, 'voluntary offer' refers to the freely given and informed consent of workers to enter into an employment relationship, as well as to their freedom to leave their employment at any time, without fear of retaliation or loss of any privilege. In this regard, the Committee recalls, referring also to paragraph 271 of its 2012 General Survey on the fundamental Conventions, that, even in cases where employment is originally the result of a freely concluded agreement, the right of workers to free choice of employment, without being subject to the menace of any penalty, remains inalienable. Accordingly, while temporary transfers of employment might be inherent to certain professions and activities, the Committee considers that the application in practice of provisions, orders or regulations allowing for the systematic transfer of workers for the performance of activities which are unrelated to their ordinary occupations (e.g. the transfer of a health-care professional to perform agricultural work) should be carefully examined in order to ensure that such practice would not result in a contractual relationship based on the will of the parties turning into work by compulsion of law."
- ¹⁸⁵ Ibid and ILO, "Giving Globalization a Human Face," Id. at ¶ 271.
- ¹⁸⁶ Convention on the Rights of the Child, G.A. res. 44/25, annex, 44 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 49) at 167, U.N. Doc. A/44/49 (1989), entered into force Sept. 2, 1990, acceded to by Uzbekistan December 23, 2008.
- ¹⁸⁷ ILO Convention No. 138 concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, adopted June 26, 1973, entered into force, June 19, 1976.
- ¹⁸⁸ ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor, adopted June 17, 1999, entered into force November 19, 2000.
- ¹⁸⁹ International Labor Standards and Child Labor in Agriculture, ILO. Available at: http://www.ilo.org/ipecc/areas/Agriculture/WCMS_172348/lang--en/index.htm, accessed April 25, 2014.
- ¹⁹⁰ "Child Labor in the Cotton and Textile Sectors," Alejandro Plastina, International Cotton Advisory Committee, 2009. Available at: https://www.icac.org/cotton_info/speeches/plastina/2009/child_labor_lodz.pdf, accessed April 25, 2014.
- ¹⁹¹ ILO High Level Mission Report on the Monitoring of Child Labor 2013, paragraph 24, p. 7 of 78.

¹⁹² These are: 1. Musculoskeletal injuries from repetitive and forceful movements, and lifting and carrying heavy or awkward loads. 2. Poisoning and long term health problems such as respiratory problems, negative effects of pesticides on central nervous system, heart, liver, kidneys, reproductive function. Endocrine system and fast metabolism disorders, manifested abnormalities due to body-size ratio, skin burns, eye irritation, and mouth irritation from overuse of fertilizers. 3. Acute skin irritation from handling tough fibers and leaves. 4. Injuries from contact with, or entanglement in, unguarded machinery or being hit by motorized vehicles. 5. Symptoms of skin cancer and heat exhaustion due to sun exposure. ILO High Level Mission Report on the Monitoring of Child Labor 2013, Annex A, p. 21.

¹⁹³ For a detailed overview of protection of the rights of the child and protections against child labor in Uzbek law, see: National Laws of Uzbekistan, Child Rights International Network, available at: <http://www.crin.org/en/library/publications/uzbekistan-national-laws>; Какие различия существуют между детским трудом и принудительным трудом? [“ What Are the Differences Between Child Labor and Forced Labor?”], October 29, 2013, available at: <http://www.tashabbus.uz/razlichiya-mejdu-detskim-trudom/>, accessed May 10; 2014; and ILO Report Annex A, p. 27.

¹⁹⁴ Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Art. 37, available at: <http://www.gov.uz/en/constitution/>.

¹⁹⁵ The terms “child” and “children” are used in this report to refer to persons under age 18, in accordance with Uzbek law and international standards.

¹⁹⁶ The Law on the Protection of the Rights of the Child of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Art. 10.

¹⁹⁷ Labor Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Art. 241.

¹⁹⁸ The Law on the Protection of the Rights of the Child, Art. 20.

¹⁹⁹ Law on the State Youth Policy Framework of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Art. 8.

²⁰⁰ The law on the protection of the rights of the child, Art. 20.