

CHALLENGING FEUDALISM IN LABOUR RELATIONS IN COTTON SECTOR OF UZBEKISTAN: STRATEGY AND TACTICS

INTERVIEW WITH ANDRE MROST

Andre Mrost has a PhD in physical geography and studied environmental impact of large irrigation projects, including Uzbekistan within the UNEP - Institute of Deserts study of the Aral Sea drying. He is also an expert in the international labour relations with 18 year experience of working for the global trade unions. Later he was a researcher on corporate social responsibility, CSR, and is a certified auditor on SA 8000 social standard. Andre took part in training child and forced labour monitors of the Uzbek German Forum, was detained by the Uzbek security in Tashkent in times of the President Karimov and expelled from Uzbekistan.

Dmitry Tikhonov, interviewer, is an journalist and human rights activist from Uzbekistan where he was involved in monitoring child and forced labour in the Uzbek cotton sector. Dimtry was detained for his human rights activity by the Uzbek security forces, his house was burned down together with computers and archive, and he had to flee to France avoiding arrest and imprisonment.

Dmitry Tikhonov. Good morning, Andre. The topic of our conversation today is the ILO policy and monitoring mission in Uzbekistan, child labor and forced labor, primarily in cotton sector

Tell me a little about your experience, as far as I know, you once collaborated with the ILO on the one hand, and on the other hand you trained the activists of the Uzbek-German Forum (UGF) to monitor child and forced labor, if my memory serves me right since 2014, so you have a good understanding of the approaches of these two organizations to monitoring.

Andre Mrost. Good morning, Dmitry. Yes, exactly, I will only add: I was not only training UGF activists in labor relations regulations, including the ILO international labor standards and its procedures. The most important thing is that together with the UGF activists, and basing on the personal experience of each of them, we built the philosophy, strategy, programs and monitoring methodology precisely for civil society, "sharpened" for specific conditions of an authoritarian regime, intimidation of the people, and most importantly - for the goal of public disclosure of a state system of organization of forced labor as the main cause of child and forced labor in Uzbekistan, and its subsequent dismantling. As a participant in the events you must remember this.

D.T. Yes, I remember how over the course of several workshops, in addition to studying the ILO Conventions and the principles of its activities, the labor legislation of Uzbekistan, the Government Action Plan on the elimination of child labor and other documents, we gradually built a detailed picture of the state system of the organization of forced labor, who and how participated in it, where there may be leaking points in hiding information from the public, who and how can obtain such information, what is available in the open sources, what were the indicators of child and forced labour we could use...

A.M. Yes, and this was the most important work in accumulating experience of civil society, different professions, different geography, different working positions and further construction on this basis an effective monitoring methodology.

D. T. Before diving into the methodology, I would like to ask a question. You said that the main reason for forced and child labor in Uzbekistan is the existence of a state system of coercion. Could there be other objective reasons: economic, technical, social, cultural?

A.M. My own research in this area coincides with the opinion of almost all civil society activists from Uzbekistan, with whom I spoke: with current level of unemployment, especially in rural areas of Uzbekistan, if the authorities would organize seasonal public works for the unemployed and the poor, and people would be paid adequate money for picking cotton (and not pennies, like now) - there would not be any reason to force schoolchildren, students, doctors, teachers, and workers from the cities to go to the fields. The state, which is the owner of the cotton business, does not want to spend money. It is cheaper to force intimidated people. It is the same with the mechanization of harvesting, because in the times of the

USSR thousands of specially created cotton harvesters worked on the cotton fields of Uzbekistan, where did they suddenly disappear? Harvesters require fuel, repair, maintenance, qualified operators - all this is money. And forced labor is cheap. Therefore, the main reason for the existence of the state system of forced labor in Uzbek cotton is the greed of the owners of the cotton business. There are no economic, technical or social and cultural obstacles to the complete elimination of forced labor right tomorrow. Only greed.

D. T. Let us return to the comparison of the monitoring methodology of the ILO and UGF. As far as I know, you are now completing a comparative study of the methods of the ILO and UGF, could you share the main conclusions of this study?

A.M. Before completing and publishing the study, I would prefer to avoid the details, so I will rather answer in general terms

D.T. And what are your personal motives for conducting such a study?

A.M. There are several of them. In different periods of my life I collaborated with different groups of civil society. At the beginning, being engaged in the the study of the impact of large irrigation projects on the environment, I collaborated with environmental movement, including the international organization Friends of the Earth International, so I am familiar with approaches of the "green" activists. Then for many years I worked in global trade unions (where I collaborated with the ILO) - this is also an important institution of civil society, and I know how trade unions look at the world. Labor relations and ecology are important components of the modern corporate social responsibility movement, CSR, or as it is more often called now "corporate citizenship and sustainable development". CSR now has a serious impact on civil society and business, new concepts of "ethical production" and "ethical consumption", new rules and standards and new activities: social audit and compliance monitoring have emerged. I have also been involved in this activity, and I am a certified auditor of the social standard SA 8000 (Social Accountability). And finally, when working on the topic of child and forced labor in Uzbekistan, I encountered for the first time with "pure" human rights defenders, and it was very interesting for me to understand their vision of the world. It was also very challenging for me to use all my experience in various fields while training UGF monitors and developing a tailor made methodology, also applying substantial methodological arsenal of social and compliance auditors.

In addition, I grew up and lived most of my life in an authoritarian society and worked a lot under authoritarian regimes, and it was of particular interest for me to understand how human rights activism can be used to develop civil society in such countries, and how effective international mechanisms can be. Well, the immediate motive for my research was the unusually contrasting conclusions in the monitoring reports of the ILO and UGF - how can this be? All monitors visit the same places, and should see the same things there?

D.T. Do you know anything about Uzbekistan's agriculture, in particular, the cotton sector?

A.M. Quite a lot, actually. Cotton is an irrigated crop in Uzbekistan, and I, as a postgraduate student of the Institute of Deserts, participated in the study of the environmental disaster of the Aral Sea, also within the UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) project. And low efficient irrigated agriculture in Uzbekistan was one of the main reasons for the drying of the Aral Sea. I even wrote my research on this issue and published it.

D. T. Good. Let's take the bull by the horns - what are the main shortcomings of the ILO monitoring methodology?

A.M. Firstly, I would like to distinguish between the International Labour Organization High-Level Mission (HLM) monitoring of child labor in 2013, and later Third Party Monitoring (TPM) for the World Bank since

2015, which actually was initiated by International Labor Office (also abbreviated as ILO), although both were using (as acknowledged by the ILO itself) practically similar methodology.

In 2013, the Government of Uzbekistan (GoU) allowed the Monitoring of the ILO HLM in Uzbekistan under pressure from the international community (and not least of the international business, which heard human rights activists and threatened to boycott Uzbek cotton), as well as by the direct order of the ILO supervisory body - Expert Committee on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR). The ILO then hoped to restart the child labor eradication program (IPEC) and negotiate Decent Work Country Program (DWCP) in Uzbekistan, and the DWCP was launched. However, later the International Labor Office (ILO) decided to substitute civil society or compliance monitoring professionals, and offered its services to the WB for Third Party Monitoring, TPM, instead of concentrating its efforts on implementing its core agenda - Decent Work. This is a different story with many questions and consequences.

D. T. What are the main negative consequences of this approach?

A. M. The main strategic shortcoming of the ILO monitoring, both in HLM and TPM is abrupt change of the monitoring focus from the state system of child and forced labor to simply child and forced labor, as if it was organized by some unknown dark forces, or some private irresponsible business.

D. T. What did that change?

A. M. ILO experts declared that Government of Uzbekistan, GoU, allegedly wanted to end forced labor and needed help, so ILO monitors began to roll thousands of kilometers across Uzbekistan in search of children in the fields in order to find out from them who sent them to pick cotton. While UGF monitors began digging evidence indicating that it was GoU starting from the very top, the president and the prime minister, and down to the leadership of the mahallas, acted as a unified system of forced labour using also police, prosecutors and tax authorities, and it was that system which sent the children and adults to the fields. Do you understand the difference? That is, the ILO, by its approach to monitoring, had in fact put under question what the international community has firmly knew for many years: the authorities are forcing people to the fields. And the modality of the discussion with GoU made a step back returning to the modality "does child labor and forced labor exist in Uzbekistan or not?" instead of moving to the modality: "when will you stop it?".

In order for children (or doctors, or teachers, or students) to get to the cotton fields, a lot of things need to be done: set quotas for growing and picking cotton, organize lists of pickers, threaten disobedient, organize departure, accommodation, control cotton picking daily rates, punish those who fell behind, establish allegedly "public" organizations for ideological brainwashing of the population, launch a mass media campaign calling to the fields, report upwards on the implementation of the plan, and all of that should work in sync, like a system. So children in the fields is a consequence of the operation of the system, which is the reason. And question here is, with whom and with what should one fight: with the reason or with consequences? If with the reason, then it should have become the main object of monitoring. In the ILO monitoring, in both HLM and TPM, the reason changed places with the consequences, which attracted away attention from the main point, and, the saddest thing, emasculated the purpose and meaning of monitoring.

So, following the strategic alteration in the focus of monitoring, methodology continued rolling down the slope - think for yourself how it is easier to find out the reasons for children picking cotton: via collecting documents and evidence of the mechanism that brought them there, or by asking children and adults preliminary brainwashed and intimidated by authorities, and in the presence of these same authorities? The ILO chosen the second option, the UGF - the first. This is the difference in ideology and monitoring. And, of course, in the results.

D. T. But why didn't the ILO itself go down this path?

A. M. The ILO had no such opportunity and did not dare. After all, the ILO is a structure dominated by governments; the organizational formula, conditionally, is 2 votes for governments, one for employers and

one for workers. And the ILO could operate in Uzbekistan only with the consent of GoU. Would GoU like it, if the guest caught host (and very hospitable host) by the hand in organizing child and forced labour? That is precisely why the ILO did not find "systematic use of child labor" in the cotton fields of Uzbekistan in 2013, while in reality thousands of students under 18 worked on the fields. Did not dare to find.

D.T. But how can this be? After all, the materials of the ILO supervisory bodies (which the ILO monitors should have been guided by) are full of direct evidence not only of the forced labor of children and adults, but of the existence of the state system of forced labor?

A.M. And not only that, in the materials of the ILO supervisory bodies there are examples that "social partners", the Federation of Trade Unions of Uzbekistan (FTUU) and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Uzbekistan (CCIU) which the ILO included in its monitoring system, have denied for decades the existence of child and forced labor at the International Labor Conferences, misleading the international community. And when the ILO HLM did not find systematic use of child labor in 2013, a paradox occurred: in fact, the ILO HLM confirmed that over the years, the ILO supervisory bodies were wrong in accusing Uzbekistan of using child labor, and GoU with Uzbekistan's social partners who denied child labor were right. Following that, since 2015 the ILO was failing to report also forced labor of adults on a massive scale. Gradually mutual confidence of the ILO monitors and GoU grew from year to year. While at first the authorities of Uzbekistan had serious suspicions that the ILO monitors would honestly tell about child labor, so in the ILO 2013 Monitoring Methodology Guide each ILO representative should be surrounded by four representatives of Uzbekistan (apparently from each direction: south, north, east and west), but in reality ILO monitor was surrounded by FIVE local representatives (4 sides of the world + sky?). Later, despite the fact that systemic child labor in 2013 was not found by the ILO, GoU still had fears and formula 1: 5 was preserved in the first ILO TPM in 2015, because the risk was high - millions of World Bank dollars were at stake. But everything worked perfect, the ILO monitors did not report anything wrong again. And after 2015 and 2016, when ILO experts did not report massive forced labor on cotton again, GoU finally got convinced in absolute loyalty of the ILO team, and in 2017, ILO monitors were allowed NOT to find forced labour already on their own, without accompanying local personnel.

D.T. It turns out that the ILO with its format was initially useless?

A.M. Not at all. Monitoring is not an end in itself, but one of the means to achieve the goal: the eradication of child and forced labor. And for this, the ILO has both a mandate, experience and tools: DWCP. But ILO both structurally and functionally is in no way good for field monitoring. And the ILO's procedures and mandate, described in its constitution, do not prescribe direct monitoring in countries. And the work of the ILO supervisory bodies is based on analyzing the information of institutional participants - governments, employers and workers - as well as partner organizations, and not on sitting in the bushes with a camera or winding thousands of kilometers across Uzbekistan. I participated, for example, in several special missions of the ILO in Belarus: there the ILO employees did not engage in independent monitoring, but acted within the framework of their mandate - checked the information of the government, employees and employers. And it was one of the most successful ILO project in recent decades, when Belarus Government was punished by suspending the EU General System of Preferences for trade because of violating the rights of Belarusian free trade unions.

D.T. Now it is clear about ideology and strategy, but are there any comments on the technical side of the ILO methodology?

A.M. As you can imagine, these things are interrelated. There are a lot of complaints about the ILO monitoring technique. But before turning to the technology, I will say a little more about the ideological limitations. For example, monitoring by civil society is not bound by procedural chains, and can apply any effective method and call black - black and white - white. But the ILO must follow its procedures. And one of them is a tripartite social dialogue that the ILO cannot ignore. It is based on the important principles of the ILO - this should be a dialogue of equal and independent partners: workers that are represented by

their independent body, and the employers represented by their own organization. And the governments do not have the right even come close to establishment and operation of organizations of workers and employers (as well as they are to each other, Conventions 87 and 98). In Uzbekistan FTUU over the past decade was led by a government representative, then an employer representative; and the CCIU was established by decree of the President and ALWAYS was headed by government representatives. What sort of "social dialogue" could take place in this situation? When only government officials meet at the table - one big and two smaller? This is a social monologue.

D.T. Yes, I remember, during one of conference calls of Cotton Campaign with the ILO, when you presented these arguments, one of the ILO staff, not finding what to answer on the merits, said: "Let's see what ACTRAV will say to that" (*ACTRAV is an ILO division representing workers*)

A.M. And what can ACTRAV say to this? Look at the text of Convention 98:

"Article 2

- **1. Workers' and employers' organisations shall enjoy adequate protection against any acts of interference by each other or each other's agents or members in their establishment, functioning or administration.**
- **2. In particular, acts which are designed to promote the establishment of workers' organisations under the domination of employers or employers' organisations, or to support workers' organisations by financial or other means, with the object of placing such organisations under the control of employers or employers' organisations, shall be deemed to constitute acts of interference within the meaning of this Article."**

Here is the text of Convention 87:

"Article 3

- **1. Workers' and employers' organisations shall have the right to draw up their constitutions and rules, to elect their representatives in full freedom, to organise their administration and activities and to formulate their programmes.**
- **2. The public authorities shall refrain from any interference which would restrict this right or impede the lawful exercise thereof"**

And how can ACTRAV justify with a view to above the fact that FTUU is now headed by an employer? who was elected at the Plenum held by the Deputy Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister and the President's representative were sitting next to him? Only according to Orwell can ACTRAV justify this, saying that everyone is equal, but there are those who are more equal ... Or ACTRAV should send a clear message to the world: you can sometimes ignore ILO conventions, because the ILO units do it themselves

...

And by the way, some time ago in Kyrgyzstan, when the chairman of the Federation of Trade Unions of Kyrgyzstan was dismissed on charges of corruption, and the Kyrgyz government put its own man in his place (albeit with a certain trade union past), and vice-premier of the government of Kyrgyzstan only attended the "election" of the new chairman of the FTUK, the International Confederation of Trade Unions, the ITUC (an ILO partner organization) considered such actions unacceptable, and suspended the membership of the FPKR in the ITUC even in associated status. And in case of Uzbekistan, when the FTUU

was directly headed by an employee of the Government Office, Mrs Narbaeva, the ITUC for some reason considered it quite democratic and accepted the FTUU in associate status in 2015. In a similar situation, in neighbouring countries ITUC made contrastingly different decisions. Why? I suspect, not without the influence of the ILO, for which it was important to somehow whitewash an absolutely authoritarian FTUU that does not represent interests of workers, because the ILO could not do without FTUU and "social dialogue" in Uzbekistan.

And this example, by the way, shows that reckless compromises and deviations from principles can in no way contribute to the development of democracy. Do you think that the FTUU appreciated the advances that were actually made by the adoption of this authoritarian organization into the international family of democratic trade unions of the ITUC? Did FTUU started some internal reforms? On the contrary - inspired by the unscrupulous position and readiness to unlimited compromising of international organizations, GoU together with the labor relations department named FTUU, cynically and openly demonstrated complete disregard for the basic ILO conventions, by appointing to the FTUU leadership a director of the factory and member of the Business Council. So, unfortunately, in modern Uzbekistan there is no real social dialogue, and as the Oriental sages argued: no matter how much the word "sugar" is pronounced, it will not become sweet in the mouth ...

And this is not at all a harmless for the ILO monitoring methodology, because the tripartite "social dialogue" is fully integrated into the ILO monitoring system, both architecturally and functionally. The Government of Uzbekistan, FTUU and CCIE are included in the Coordination Council of the ILO monitoring and reporting, and their representatives actually participated in monitoring.

And now answer me a question: how could monitoring be effective if it is based on a non-working mechanism?

But in case of the ILO monitoring in Uzbekistan the situation is even worse: the ILO was forced to connect to its monitoring (declared independent and objective) those structures that for decades were hiding and denying the mere existence of child and forced labor, and have tremendous experience in this exercise. What can we expect from such monitoring? Only that it will not discover massive and systemic forced labor of children and adults. And that is what happened.

D.T. Yes, but how with such inadequate monitoring methodology did the ILO observers manage to see and record examples of child labor and forced labor in their reports?

Though they camouflaged irrefutable facts of forced labor at maximum both terminologically, renaming them in "risks of forced labor", and for forced workers they even invented a new term "reluctant worker", which is not found in the ILO Conventions or documents, and by scattering the discovered facts of forced labor in various paragraphs of their reports, without any logic, so that the reader has to put a lot of efforts into collecting a complete picture from these different patches, but nevertheless they still found these facts. So, does the ILO methodology work somehow?

A.M. The clarifications to your question, from my point of view, are no less important than the question itself, and I will return to this later. To your question: how despite the most serious shortcomings of the ILO monitoring methodology, have the observers managed to see examples of forced labor of children and adults? I my answer is: child and forced labor were so MASSIVE that it was impossible to see ANYTHING ELSE.

Here is an analogy to clarify my thoughts: in the midst of the Cold War, when the construction of domestic shelters from nuclear bombing was popular in America, and we in Moscow had civil defense lessons at a school, it was all scary: not to look at a nuclear explosion, to cover yourself with a sheet and to crawl somewhere... But at the end there was an encouraging conclusion: it is very difficult to start a nuclear war suddenly, since it would take several days to cover own population from retaliation nuclear strike, and it is impossible to hide mass mobilization of the population from the enemy intelligence. So, by analogy, those who were not in Uzbekistan during the mass harvesting of cotton, let them try to imagine compulsory mobilization to the fields of more than MILLION people! Such mobilization is visible at every step, except for it, nothing else is visible. And only the blind can not notice it, or the one who does not want to see. And now I will finish the "portrait" of the ILO reports that you have drawn. Not only did the ILO observers veiled their findings terminologically, and randomly screened them in different paragraphs of reports to confuse the reader, here I agree with you, but on top of that they managed to ignore what they saw in the

fields in the main conclusions . And instead of the promised independent monitoring, they made conclusions independent of the monitoring findings!

D. T. I agree, I also noticed that conclusions are in contrast with the detected facts. But what for? And who benefits?

A.M. I do not have an unequivocal answer to this question, but let's try to build logic together. So who is the customer of the TPM report?

D.T. The World Bank

A.M. True, and who in this case determines the format of the TPM report?

D.T. It is most logical to assume that the format is determined by the customer.

A.M. I agree. In this case, explaining the objective irrationality of the report, where conclusions do not correspond to the facts, I have the right to assume that this is the customer who set a condition: write what you want in the text of the report, but the *main conclusions* should not contain any child and forced labor, because we will only refer to the *main conclusions*. What, in fact, the World Bank has been doing successfully in recent years. In any case, for example, being a bona fide customer, I would not accept a report in which the conclusions do not correspond to the facts. And the World Bank accepts, then it suits it.

D.T. It seems logical. But this is a very shaky and vulnerable scheme in terms of public opinion and reputational risks of the participants in such a scheme. After all, there are other reports about cotton harvesting in the same year on the same fields, for example, the UGF annual reports.

A.M. Correct: it is shaky and vulnerable, and that is why it requires political support at the highest level and necessarily in the international arena. And, yes - the annual reports of the UGF (I think they are read carefully both in the ILO and in the World Bank), they stick as nails in their chairs; later I'll explain it separately.

D.T. Under political support at the highest level in the international arena, do you mean the unexpected performance of President of Uzbekistan Mirziyoyev last year at the UN General Assembly in New York? It also seemed unusual to me that he chose this particular rostrum to send students from Uzbekistan to the cotton fields ... Too far away ...

Why do you think he did that? And why, despite the earlier decisions of GoU, were the students still sent to pick cotton?

A.M. I draw your attention to couple details. First, Mirziyoyev stressed two things: sending students home from the fields, and lush compliments to the ILO. Second: his unexpected speech followed after a meeting with the WB president on the day before.

D. T. How do you connect it?

A.M. I can only assume that Mirziyoyev at a meeting with the World Bank was given a certain condition, tough enough: we will not be able to continue funding projects in Uzbekistan and / or talk about new financing as long as there are reputational risks, since independent monitors present year after year undeniable evidence of state participation in the organization of forced labor. And second, we, like you, are counting on the results of the ILO monitoring, but we cannot ignore the ILO's reputational risks, which, year after year, has to pretend that GoU does not force people to collect cotton. The ILO needs public international support.

Of course, this is only my conjecture, since I was not at that meeting, but some logical moves with high probability can be read from a distance. You should agree that the president, who wants to eradicate forced labor in his country, is unlikely to go to New York to announce his intentions, it is more logical to

speak on this topic at a meeting of his own parliament. And declaration from the UN GA stand are aimed to make an impression on the international community. And at the same time, no one is praised randomly from the UN General Assembly rostrum — it means there was a need and an order to praise the ILO precisely in New York at the GA (and not in Geneva, for example, where the ILO headquarters are located). So I agree with you that the scheme of relations between the WB and the ILO under the auspices of TPM is very vulnerable in terms of reputational risks.

I will say more, the WB has contracted the ILO to conduct TPM with a flagrant violation of its own rules. In its explanation of the TPM procedure, the Department of Social Development of the World Bank writes in very clearly:

"Third party monitoring (TPM) is defined as monitoring by parties that are external to the project or program's direct beneficiary chain or management structure to assess whether intended outputs, outcomes, and impacts have been achieved by the project. TPM is mainly used to provide an independent perspective on project or government performance." (see in "HOW-TO NOTES. Participatory and Third Party Monitoring in World Bank–Financed Projects: What Can Non-state Actors Do?")

The beneficiary of the WB projects in Uzbekistan is mainly GoU. And it is for GoU and its structures that the WB rules do not allow to participate in the TPM, that is, to make judgement on themselves. And the ILO structurally (!) includes the government, and therefore does not constitute an "external entity" in relation to GoU. The Ministry of Labor (GoU) participated in monitoring, and the Coordination Monitoring Council (that is, the monitoring censorship body of the GoU over the ILO monitoring) was headed by the Vice Prime Minister. Direct and obvious conflict of interest.

D.T. Really straightforward and clearly marked conflict of interests. But how is this possible in international organizations? And for what?

A.M. Why? - it is more or less clear. The WB are not fools, they knew very well (and know it now) that child labor and forced labor were massively used in Uzbekistan. And there was a fear that civil society monitors or professional social auditors would reveal this, and the WB would have trouble with projects that had just been launched in Uzbekistan. And the ILO most likely promised that it would not find either child or forced labor, and if it could not conceal it, it would not write about them in the main conclusions.

D.T. But this looks like a plot?

A.M. Very much. And why a clear conflict of interest is allowed in the UN structures? In business it would be more difficult (at least with impunity), because it contradicts to the written rules and principles of corporate governance, the implementation of which is controlled, including mandatory external audit (a sort of monitoring by a third party). And when one of the world's largest audit corporations, Arthur Andersen from the "Big Three", decided to cheat on the Enron audit, and was caught by the hand, then after six months it ceased to exist. And just recently the American regulator kicked out Elon Musk from the leadership of his own Tesla company for violating the principles of corporate governance ... Even global trade union federations are undergoing an external audit procedure. And the WB and ILO, the UN family structures, unfortunately, have no external audit. So they can allow a conflict of interests in order to exclude civil society from monitoring the violation of the rights of citizens, and replace it with monitoring of one international bureaucrat in favour of the other. Who will judge?

D.T. Maybe it is important to introduce the practice of external audit for the UN structures as well? Maybe it will improve their work? After all, now the work of the UN structures is increasingly criticized.

A.M. I will answer with a joke: I think that the famous businessman Donald Trump (he is also the President of the United States) will support your point of view.

D. T. We wanted to go down a little from the strategic shortcomings of the ILO monitoring methodology, which you described in detail, to the technology itself, for example, the interviewing methodology.

A. M. To begin with, choosing interviewing as the main tool for monitoring child and forced labor, and with the mandatory participation of representatives of structures fully controlled by GoU, is also a strategic mistake. Frightened people, especially children, of course, will not say anything to foreigners in the presence of the authorities. As for the interview methodology itself, the recently published research by professor Christian Laslet ([link to the report in Russian https://corruptionandhumanrights.org/app/uploads/2018/08/ILO-Review-Russian-FINAL.pdf](https://corruptionandhumanrights.org/app/uploads/2018/08/ILO-Review-Russian-FINAL.pdf)) has literally “destroyed” technique, and I do not need to repeat it here. I will only add that from the point of view of the experience of social audit accumulated by the international community over the past decades of working in an unfavorable environment, the methodology of the ILO interviews is backward, inefficient, formalized and therefore not reliable at all.

You know very well, Dmitry, that many civil society monitors, in particular UGF monitors, do not disclose their names and participation in the monitoring of child and forced labor in Uzbekistan, rightly fearing persecution by the authorities. So, some of them experienced the effectiveness of the ILO interviewing process on themselves, and then explained it in detail: how they were brainwashed by the authorities before the interview, how during an interview in the presence of the authorities and trade union officers, they had to lie and deny the forced nature of their work fearing reprisals immediately after ILO observers leave. Who needs all this? And for what? That is the question.

D. T. You called the ILO interviewing methodology ineffective and formalized. I understand you are comparing it with some examples of an effective interviewing technique? Could you make some enlargement on that?

A. M. Sure. As I said earlier, over the past decades, the conviction that business must be socially responsible grows in the public consciousness. You can hardly find now in the world any large company that could afford not to pay attention to CSR. Labor standards, by the way, usually based on ILO Conventions, and human rights at work are the most important indicators of CSR business commitments. Many international NGO and private consulting companies are focusing on the implementation of social justice principles, and tracking how business follows the principles of CSR in reality, and not just on paper, this is so-called compliance monitoring. Very often, compliance auditors have to work in uncomfortable atmosphere and situations where companies seek to hide perverted disgraces, intimidate workers, brainwash them before the arrival of monitors, and so on, in short, do everything like in Uzbekistan. International compliance monitoring has gained good experience in identifying human rights violations at workplaces, especially when working in an unfavorable environment. Including experience of the interviewing. Although I must say here, that I myself, for example, as a social auditor, will use interviews likely as a last resort, mainly to confirm violations identified earlier. And the interviews will have to occupy about 15% of the time and effort of an experienced monitor, while the focus will be on the so-called desktop study, the study of the object of monitoring basing on external and internal information. So the ILO colorful poster “Down with child labor and forced labor!” hanging on the wall of the Hokimiyat or Indorama Kokand Textiles office will not make a big impression on me. In the first case, I will ask to show the internal instructions of the hokimiyat on practical measures to counter forced labor, and reports on the implementation of these measures over the past couple of years. And in the second case, I will ask to show the documents - the corporate “Indorama Policy on Counteracting Forced Labor” and contracts with raw cotton suppliers, where suppliers have promised in writing to comply with the principles of this “Policy” ... No signs of serious desktop studies are reflected in the reports of the ILO HLM and TPM, and most likely they were never done.

And now about the the effective technology of interviewing. I will mention briefly 4 basic principles of effective interviewing.

First. Candidates for interviews are chosen by the monitor, and the interviews take place tet-a-tet, without the presence of any local staff.

Second. An experienced monitor will try, as far as possible, to expand and diversify the range of parameters and indicators of dishonest practices that he should identify. If the authorities or managers give preliminary instructions to employees on how to behave and how to answer questions, then these tricks will work only if the number of parameters is limited, otherwise people will not retain a large amount of information in memory. Diversification helps to circumvent the tricks and reveal the truth. (In its monitoring, the ILO did the opposite; it reduced the number of parameters as much as possible; in 2013, only C 182 and in TPM only C 182 and C105, although C 29, 47, 100, 103, 111,122, 138 have relation to child and forced labour.)

Third. An experienced monitor tries to minimize direct questions about violations, since these questions can alert the interviewee, especially if they are children, because it was about these direct questions that the authorities might have warned. A frightened interviewee is likely to tell a lie or keep silent. An experienced interviewer, who knows his subject in detail, operates with indirect questions that are not alarming, or even wrong statements, which the interviewee gladly refutes, thereby confirming the suspicions of the monitor.

The fourth rule is closely related to the second and third: never conduct interviews with printed questionnaires in your hands, because this immediately gives the impression of interrogation to the already frightened workers.

The ILO monitors, judging by the texts of their reports, did EVERYTHING contrary, against the rules of effective interviewing.

D.T. And what opinion do you have about the methodology for identifying points for monitoring by randomly selecting coordinates and then transmitting these coordinates to team leaders? In the ILO reports this is presented as the latest science achievement?

A.M. To be honest, I could not read it without a smile. Perhaps this is something suitable, for example, for the Paris-Dakar rally. Or it looks more as an attempt to objectively estimate population of animal species in African savannas or in the open spaces of the tundra in the era before the advent of satellite images and remote sensing. In my student years, forty years ago, I used a similar technique of random determination of monitoring coordinates when I wrote a diploma on choosing the optimal place for the tundra ecosystems reserve in the Magadan region, where I tried to get a certain objective figure of animal and bird population using the grid of randomly selected coordinates. For those purposes, in those days this technique was suitable. But for modern monitoring of child and forced labor, it looks like a joke. So let's compare the approaches of the ILO and UGF. After all, force people to pick cotton is a long-term practice. And in many cases, gathering places for cotton pickers are not changed from year to year. In any case, the time and place of gathering cannot be concealed from the people (otherwise no one will arrive there on time), and accordingly, they are always known to civil society monitors, who conduct their observations there. Not only this, the UGF monitors tried to transmit this information to the ILO. Just imagine what opportunities the ILO could have by coming directly to the assembly point, and check there, for example, the age of the students being sent to pick cotton, whether they have contracts, find out whether they themselves are going in good faith, or they are forced by authorities who command the shipment? Did cotton pickers have medical check? Were any safety instructions given to them? How representatives of educational institutions explain the fact that instead of studying, students will be engaged in hazardous work (both are regulated by the ILO Conventions and the laws of Uzbekistan); and a lot of things could have been found out if the ILO monitors would as they promised conduct honest "independent monitoring" and arrive to such places unexpectedly for the authorities. And after taking interview and checking papers, they could just go with that convoy of buses (or even one bus) to the final destination (checking at the same time how far students are taken away from home - this is also regulated by the ILO Conventions) and see what conditions people will live in? Are the bedrooms normal? how many people? Are there separate bedrooms for men and women? Is there a canteen, toilets, is there a first-aid post? Can you imagine how effective such monitoring could have been? And on many parameters? But instead of effective, concrete, targeted, and focused monitoring at dozens of gathering points, the ILO's monitors preferred to rush somewhere to a randomly defined coordinates (perhaps just to avoid a random running into the gathering point), and then present the number of kilometers wound on wheels. as an indicator of monitoring effectiveness. Ridiculous.

D.T. Rather sad. The last question on the method. The Monitoring Guide for the ILO HLM in 2013 (the same methodology was used for TPM according to the ILO reports) states that the methodology is adapted to the conditions of Uzbekistan and is based on international experience. Is it so?

A.M. From what has been said about the ILO monitoring methodology, I can only draw one conclusion: adaptation to the conditions of Uzbekistan consisted only of minimizing a possibility to detect violations and of minimizing the number and scale of violation if some were observed.

Even the national indicators of forced labor for Uzbekistan were not developed, as required by ALL instructions and ILO guidelines on monitoring child and forced labor.

As for international experience, in the ILO methodology it is not present in any way. I already said enough about compliance monitoring. We are dealing here with two things: agriculture and unfavorable environment of an authoritarian state. FAO (Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations) has experience in monitoring child and forced labour in agriculture; while the OSCE has experience of monitoring in an aggressive authoritarian environments. The ILO monitoring methodology for Uzbekistan does not take into account either experience of FAO or the OSCE.

D.T. Now in Uzbekistan, cotton is being harvested. According to some reports, this year the ILO declined the services of the monitors from FTUU replacing them (or, perhaps, adding) with independent monitors from civil society. Can we expect a fundamental increase in the effectiveness of the monitoring of the ILO 2018?

A.M. I am skeptical about this for three reasons.

First and foremost. I use the metaphor of the fishing net to explain my skepticism. The ILO methodology of monitoring is similar to the fishing net, where the size of the cells is intentionally made larger than the size of the fish that they are going to catch with this net. Therefore, it does not matter who will throw this net, even a very experienced fisherman - anyway, he or she or they will catch nothing with this net.

Second. You personally participated for many years in monitoring child and forced labor in Uzbekistan at risk for yourself (and even suffered for it), and you certainly know all the experienced monitors of child and forced labor in this country, especially since there are not so many of them. Also you know that such monitoring, apart from courage, also requires serious substantive training, including practical skills, it takes time ... Are any of the experienced human rights activists known to you, who specialized in child labor and forced labor in Uzbekistan, involved in the current ILO monitoring?

D.T. As far as I know, non. But someone could have been specially trained... Recently, in Tashkent, the ILO held a special workshop for monitors from civil society, and some UGF monitors who worked with me in the past and who together with me signed a complaint against the International Finance Corporation for financial assistance to Indorama Kokand Textiles and HamkorBank for making a profit from the use of child and forced labor took part in this workshop.

A.M. I saw the program of this workshop, just 1.5 days, including political brainwashing from Deputy Premier Narbayeva, known as a long term true defender of president Karimov regime against accusation in organizing child and forced labour. A question for you: is it possible in 1.5 days to prepare a human rights activist, but without experience in labor relations and particularly in child and forced labor topics, for high-quality field monitors of forced labor?

D.T. Definitely not. This should be a multi-day course or several workshops, in fact, as it was in UGF. And this should not be only training in regulations and standards, but also modeling situations, developing indicators, setting goals, developing roles ...

A.M. Nice to hear. I am proud that I participated in this work together with you and other colleagues. So, this is the first brick. Second: from those who participated in UGF monitoring and participated in the ILO seminar, who participates in the current ILO monitoring?

D.T. According to my information - nobody. And this is strange ...

A.M. This is strange, Dima, only if your goal is to increase the effectiveness of monitoring. And if your goal is not to find the massive use of forced labor, then this is very logical. After all, experienced monitors may suddenly find something undesirable. Can you imagine what would happen if these fearless monitors of child labor who had not been frightened during the days of President Karimov, will find some wrongdoing? They may refuse to ignore violations for the sake of a bright future? Why take these?

D.T. But why then invite them to a workshop? And why did they agree to this? Waste of money...

A.M. Human being is weak, Dima. And that's normal. After so many years of persecution and a hopeless future, the winds of hope and freedom suddenly blew. And they really want to be part of this new. Shift from the category of outcast to the squad officially recognized, to whom people listen, whose past merits are respected. Who dares to condemn? I have seen it many times. Including also in the mirror ... As for money ... Sometimes money is paid for non-participation ... Or for participation in a secondary events... I would not be surprised to learn about it.

But for now, to continue our discussion, I want to fix my conclusion:

- In order to improve the quality of monitoring, you need to attract qualified and experienced.
- And in order to be secured from unwanted findings during monitoring it is better to attract those who are not very experienced, but obedient and loyal. Just such a general conclusion. Without personalities.

D.T. On "without personalities" I agree. But after all, the ILO has done well all these years without civil society, being satisfied by cooperation with "non-governmental" organizations created by the government, such as the Farmers' Union, the Youth Union, the Women's Committee, the Nuroni Foundation, etc., why now ILO needs monitors from civil society?

A.M. Do you remember some time ago I compared the annual reports of the UGF with the nails in the ILO and WB chairs? These reports were the only alternative information to the ILO monitoring and spoiled the whole matter of the eradication child and forced labor on paper. And it would be naive to believe that the ILO would tolerate that for long. After all, if the ILO was genuinely interested in improving the quality of its monitoring, why not suggest the UGF to join forces? However, such an offer did not follow. Instead, the ILO decided to create its own civil society competitor to UGF, more precisely, a controlled competitor from human rights defenders who are not particularly experienced in monitoring forced labor, but are interested in remuneration, and include them in their monitoring contour. And in the event of a serious discrepancy in the monitoring results of 2018 between the ILO and the UGF, one can say something like: "With all due respect to the UGF, they are not the only ones who represent the civil society of Uzbekistan, there are other groups, and they have a different opinion ... ". Or at the extreme, one can even say: "Yes, the UGF is a bunch of political emigrants angry for their past offenses, who have long been separated from the realities of Uzbekistan, where people are building now a bright democratic future ...". Umida Niyazova told me that test balloons on this topic had already been launched.

D.T. Don't you think, Andre, that in your reasoning you sometimes get too carried away with something like "conspiracy theory"?

A.M. It is possible, Dima. But, conspiracy theory begins to dominate when the thread of reasoning breaks and you need to grab hold of something in order not to fall into the abyss. I still hold the thread of logic. And then, we have a public discussion with you, and therefore everyone who wants meaningfully, with arguments (I adore qualitative arguments) to object - he is welcome. I feel very comfortable in public discussions.

And besides, I will sincerely be happy if someone proves to me that all my suspicions and conclusions are in no way justified, that the ILO is right in everything and forced labor in Uzbekistan is over. So there is no risk.

But in order to shake your suspicion of bias, I will give at least one example, although I didn't initially want to go into details.

Here is a quote from the ILO Report on TPM 2017, in Section 5.5.1 on page 42 it is written:

"One case of 12 pickers aged 10-14 years old was identified by the monitoring team in Beruniy district. The incident was not a result of systemic recruitment and there was no evidence of coercion. The farmer was not aware of their presence in his field. The underage pickers were withdrawn from the field immediately. The Khokim and others in the community took the situation very seriously and rectified it without delay. Related information sessions for parents, teachers and farmers were organized the following day. The prosecutor's office, the education department and mahalla were also involved to ensure appropriate action was taken to avoid recurrence" (7) .

And in the footnote 7 on the same page is written:

" The mahalla leader of the locality, the representative of the District Education department and some of the children's parents came to the school in about one hour. No one seemed to be aware of children's picking cotton. On the second day, the monitoring team visited the school again, met with the management and staff of the school to discuss about the incident, possible causes behind and ways to prevent such cases in the future. The meeting was attended by the district prosecutor's office, education department and mahalla. As communicated by the district hokim, the incident was an isolated case and corrective measures were taken."

Just imagine the situation: the ILO monitors at the representative point of randomly chosen coordinates find 12 children picking cotton. An hour later, the Mahalla chairman, a representative of the regional education authority, and kids parents rush headlong. And it turns out that no one knew that children were picking cotton. That is, the teacher comes in the morning to the class, sees that approximately half of the class is absent, but he does not care. It turns out that the children escaped from their lessons, climbed over the farm fence, found empty bags somewhere and suddenly began to pick cotton for no reason at all. And the farmer did not know anything about it, because farmers in Uzbekistan usually sleep during the day, do not work on the field, and have no idea what is happening there in their fields and who harvests their crops without them. Tell me, Dima, a normal person with an open mind and some knowledge of the realities of Uzbekistan (and even without them) can believe in this "fairy tale about the white bull"? But the ILO has not only believed, but also tries to convince us, the readers of its Report.

And is trying very intensively. Pay attention to how the text is constructed, immediately after the first phrase, before just pure facts are described, the ILO Report author is already in a hurry with his ideological interpretation: ***"This incident was not the result of systematic hiring. There were no signs of coercion. The farmer was not aware of the presence of these collectors on the field"***.

Immediately erase any option that someone could interpret it as example of child labour. And what about the phrase ***"Signs of coercion were absent."*** What signs of coercion should have been convincing for the ILO monitors in this case? Bruises? bitten asses? the rods in a bucket of water, standing at the edge of the field?

And note, here again the same tried and tested method of perplexing information that the ILO constantly uses in its monitoring reports: a small text on the same event is divided into two parts, one part in the report's "body" and the other, small print, on the same page, but in a footnote. You, as a professional journalist, and a specialist in organizing and submitting information, explain to me why it was necessary to split a small single information block into two parts in such a way ?!

D.T. Absurd...

A.M. It seems that only to repeat the mantra: ***"... this incident was an isolated case and corrective measures were taken."*** in the second piece again, I don't see any other reasonable explanation.

But I remember another episode described in the ILO High-Level Mission Report on Child Labor Monitoring in 2013, when human rights activists reported to the ILO Mission about several deaths during cotton picking. The ILO mission, which was already in Uzbekistan and had all opportunities to check these

episodes, nevertheless was satisfied with the explanations of the authorities and rubber stamped their authenticity with its ILO verdict:

"The information provided indicated that they were not related to death cotton."

And here the episode itself:

"Case 2. On the 15th September ... a 6-year-old child died of suffocation when he was sleeping in a trailer with cotton"

So what's wrong with that? This is a recognised national Uzbek tradition: children usually sleep not in beds, but in trailers with cotton. What was there to investigate in particular from the point of view of the ILO High Level Mission? Not the slightest hint of child labor in cotton ...

The saddest thing is that this episode was investigated by the Human Rights Watch, and there was a special message on this topic that this boy, Amirbek Rakhmatov, was mobilized by the authorities to pick cotton. But it was more important for the ILO to maintain good relations with the government of Uzbekistan than to ask uncomfortable questions and care about life of 6 year old boy.. And you say, "conspiracy theory" ...

D.T. Tell me, Andre, do you scrutinize all ILO reports and materials like this?

A.M. Sure. I have a bad character in this sense, I believe that the devil is in the details.

D.T. Let's continue about the ILO. In fact, ILO staff members are actually crediting themselves elimination of child labor in the cotton sector of Uzbekistan. Indeed, pupils and junior students stopped being sent cotton when the ILO appeared in Uzbekistan. This point of view is especially actively promoted in its tweets by the ILO representative in Uzbekistan Jonas Astrup.

A.M Well, we will not analyze the tweets of Jonas here due to the lack of serious content, in style they remind me of the stream of consciousness, tinted with a desire to glorify the achievements of the government of Uzbekistan, even if they do not exist.

I will answer your main question as follows: objectively, the ILO has nothing to do with the elimination of child labor in Uzbekistan.

Let's start with the main thing. For about 10 years, the ILO supervisory bodies literally bombarded the GoU with direct inquiries on child labor, including reminders of the need for Uzbekistan to comply with the statutory obligations that each ILO member organization should periodically inform the ILO supervisory bodies about compliance with the fundamental and ratified ILO Conventions . GoU simply ignored all these requests and actually squeezed out of the country an ILO program of eradication of child labor IPEC, and even the formal ILO presence in Uzbekistan was interrupted. The Karimov government considered the ILO to be something like a paper tiger. These facts suggest that the ILO's mechanisms and tools have proved powerless to combat child and forced labor in Uzbekistan. Point.

The ILO returned to Uzbekistan under international pressure, including the Cotton Campaign, which was able to convince many international brands to boycott Uzbek cotton. The exploiters of child labor were not afraid of the "paper tiger", but of losses in their business.

(And, I will note in brackets, that the UGF monitoring reports were the basis for the activity of the CC, the credibility of which the ILO constantly undermines, not finding either child or forced labor in Uzbekistan. Instead of gratitude).

Second argument. In the UGF monitoring report for 2013 one can read that GoU under international pressure, stopped sending secondary school students to cotton as early as 2012, that is, a year before the ILO monitoring mission arrived to the country.

And finally, the third. In an ILO HLM report on monitoring child labor in 2013, it is written in the main conclusions that no systemic child labor was found. How could the ILO eradicate something which in its opinion did not exist?

D.T. We will soon have to complete our interesting discussion. I still have an important question about the methodology for monitoring ILO. The last report of 2017 has Annex 7, which describes the **"Temporary procedure for the organization of non-governmental cotton command units to mobilize unemployed people to cotton picking and motivate them in order to ensure the timely cotton harvesting in 2017"**.

Frankly, I was struck by this Temporary procedure because it is like two drops water similar, even in small details - in the participants, their positions and functions - to the state system of organization of forced labor, which we built at our workshops, and which Uzbekistan has been hiding all this time. And now GoU decided to make it public, and also share it with the ILO, and the ILO decided to include it in its report, describing this mechanism as a great progress. WHAT FOR?!

A. M. Yes, right here, I am afraid, you have found the most painful point of the entire ILO POLICY in Uzbekistan. I was also struck by these two things: why did the authorities of Uzbekistan suddenly decided to publish the actually previously concealed scheme of forced labor, and why the ILO put this scheme in its report with the heading "great progress".

Let's remind the readers of our dialogue the main points of the "Temporary Procedure " from Appendix 7 of the ILO MTS Report (pages 86 - 88):

"This temporary procedure determines the organization of non-governmental cotton command units to mobilize unemployed people to cotton picking and motivate them in order to ensure the timely cotton harvesting in 2017..."

Regional and district NGCUs will be organized under the leadership of Deputies Khokims on women's affairs of provinces and districts to mobilize unemployed people to cotton harvesting... 2. Regional NGCU include in accordance with Annex 1: - chairmen of regional branches of the Nuroniy Foundation, Mahalla NonGovernmental Charity Fund, regional branch of the Youth Union, Trade Union, - Responsible officer from the regional department of internal affairs, - chairmen of the regional employment office, regional post office, Imam Khatib of the region.

The Deputy Regional Khokim – Chair of the Regional Women Committee Branch – leads the regional NGCU and is ex-officio the Deputy Chair of the Regional Cotton NGCU".

From this paragraph it becomes clear that the NGCUs are organized by government agencies, with government agencies and headed by government officers, although they are called "non government". This is already funny.

Further, we see that the NGCU includes representatives of all "public" associations that previously participated in the forced mobilization of people to pick cotton or were created by the authorities specifically for such mobilization (Nuroniy Foundation, Mahalla Foundation, Union of Youth, trade unions, women's committees) . And in order for them to act more decisively, the regional departments of internal affairs (the police) were appointed to help them. A sufficiently detailed description of the REGIONAL mechanism of the state system of forced labor.

Next unfolding of "non governmentness" is at the district level:

"4. According to Annex 2, two groups of active members are formed in every mahalla that consist of 10-15 volunteers as part of the District NGCU to visit every house and make the list of cotton pickers. The active members of mahalla include the chairmen of the assemblies of citizens, their secretaries, religious advisers, public order defenders, head of the village's medical office, site inspectors, imam khatibs..."

Just think, GoU that issued this "Temporary proceducre " simply orders public organizations, heads of rural medical centers and even clergy to participate in the formation of lists of cotton pickers. That is, doctors, instead of treating, and imams and muezzins, instead of engaging in spiritual activities, should be involved in drawing up lists of cotton pickers. Doctors, clergy and NGO are subjected to forced labor. Amazing: the

norm of forced labor is openly spelled out in the government document of 2017, the effect of which extends also to the World Bank projects, while the ILO and the World Bank continue to assert that there is no forced labor.

What a powerful state vertical of coercion is revealed in this document!

(This is also ridiculous: forced labor in Uzbekistan is so widespread and its legitimacy is so deeply rooted in the minds of the authorities that they do not even understand what can be written publicly and what is not. But could it be the ILO officers do not see it or do not understand? Or see, but close their eyes?)

Let us see how this state machine of forced labour acts. Here is the following quote from this unique document:

"13. The District NGCU obtains information on the number of pickers that are unemployed and involved in daily cotton picking in the district, the volume of cotton picked by them and the average volume of cotton picked by person from the Group of volunteers and team leaders and provides it to the District Pakhtashtab by 8 pm on a daily basis."...

16. The Groups of volunteers visit every house in the assigned territory, converse with able-bodied citizens in each household and advocate for the importance of cotton harvest, explain that cotton picking is an opportunity to improve livelihood of the household, and that participation in cotton harvest is the duty of each citizen. 17. The Group will mobilize at least 50-60 percent of able-bodied citizens of the territory to cotton harvest, forms teams of pickers and participate in electing their experienced respected team leader, also makes arrangements for daily participation of pickers...

17. The Group will mobilize at least 50-60 percent of able-bodied citizens of the territory to cotton harvest, forms teams of pickers and participate in electing their experienced respected team leader, also makes arrangements for daily participation of pickers....

19. The members of the Group of volunteers will transfer the pickers they are in charge of (20-30 unemployed people) to the team leaders by 7 am daily, checking the name of each picker. Page 75 of 79 The members of the Group of volunteers after 7 am will go to the house of pickers that did not show, check the reasons, ensure their participation in the harvest. Also, every day from 8 am till noon and from 2 pm till 4 pm they will visit houses in the mahalla."

Just imagine, instead of using information about unemployed from state agencies, and widely declare via mass media that those unemployed or anybody willing to pick cotton for money, except children, students, elder, disabled or ill and other categories whom the LAW denies access to hard work, are welcome to voluntarily come to our state-run recruiting agencies with documents, sign a contract, and work, - GoU has created a huge multilevel system, involving police, when "activists" literally search homes looking for those who stay at home during working hours, and then convince them using different arguments, including religion, that picking cotton is their civil duty! And if somebody would not show up at the gathering points, then activists would come to your home once again, I presume with a new set of more convincing arguments, and would make such an offer that you would not be able to reject.

This is a complete picture of how GoU organises system of forced labor, based on medieval rules and principles instead of the RULE of LAW and ILO international labour standards. This system is operating today in Uzbekistan with the blessing of the ILO, including areas of the World Bank projects. System of quotas of compulsory mobilization of cotton pickers is very well in place: ***".. At least 50-60% of citizens from the working-age population attract."***

There is nothing to add.

D.T. Very impressive. But my questions have not been answered yet: why did the authorities do this and why did the ILO publish it in its TPM Report for 2017?

A.M. Well, it's pretty simple. After all, no basic reason for the existence of forced labor on cotton in Uzbekistan was eliminated: farmers are still forced to grow cotton, cotton growing quotas have not been

abandoned, and regional authorities are still responsible for the implementation (or non-fulfillment) of the plan; cotton purchasing prices still take farmers by the throat and do not allow them to organize cotton picking and hire people for good money; cotton harvesters did not appear in the fields on a sizeable scale; GoU has not organized proper public works with attractive payments even for the unemployed (that is why "activists" search homes) - so how can cotton be harvested? Only in the usual old way - the coercion system, though a little repainted and with an ILO rubber stamp (otherwise, why did the ILO put this "Temporary Order" in its TPM Report for the World Bank with a positive characteristic? This is like an official approval, in English "Endorsement".)

And again here: the reason is GREED.

D.T. No questions about why GoU needs this system, but why does the ILO look at it positively?

A.M. It looks like the ILO policy has brought it to a dead end. Look: the ILO came to Uzbekistan in 2013, and already in 2014 it joyfully and loudly reported a success in eliminating child labor hinting that it was the ILO achievement (now we know it is not). But since then - no more progress which could really and objectively be demonstrated and recognized by the international community. (Otherwise, it would have already been done). Until today the only recognized progress is in child labor. Though the ILO in its TPM year after year is not finding massive forced labour, and is reporting steady progress, number of kilometers run by monitor cars steadily grow (together with fuel bills I presume), number of interviews also steadily grow, in 2017 added by telephone interviews, DWCP silently continues for the 4th year, awareness raising workshop soon will cover all government employees, at least it looks like; but even Jonas could not boast more or less sizeable progress in elimination of forced labour of adults. Posters against forced labour reported as achievement in 2015 are still in place. As well as forced labour. International community and donors could soon run out of patience and begin asking uncomfortable questions.

We are already near the end of 2018, 5 years without significant progress. Even after two years of the Uzbekistan democratic "perestroika" declared by President Mirziyoyev. Obviously time is running against the ILO policy in Uzbekistan and something must be done.

D.T. And can the ILO really do something?

A.M. I think it will be very difficult. From the very beginning the ILO has chosen unlimited compromise as an instrument to cling to Uzbekistan at any cost. GoU has become accustomed to this position and takes it for granted; and in such a situation, any change in behavior will be perceived very painfully. And technically it is difficult to do something as well, again, because of the ILO's policies and methodology of monitoring during HLM and later in TPM; and also because of the initial design of Decent Work Country Program. For any qualified observer it is obvious that forced labor in Uzbekistan does not land from the moon with a parachute, but is organized by GoU, and will continue until this system operates. But since the ILO never (except for the documents of its supervisory bodies), recognized, either in monitoring or in the DWCP the existence of this system, it cannot dismantle it. How can you dismantle something which does not exist in your opinion?

On the other side the ILO cannot leave its projects in Uzbekistan without real progress recognized by the international community - it will be a complete fiasco: turning from a hypothetical "paper tiger" into a real one, with all the consequences for the further ILO mission in the world ...

D.T. And what should we expect in this situation?

A. M. Well, the possibilities are limited here, so it's not very difficult to calculate them. Why despite the non-recognition by the ILO of systemic and mass forced labor in its in TPM 2015-2017 reports, does the international community continue talking about the existence of forced labor on cotton in Uzbekistan? Because there is persuasive information from alternative sources that cannot be dismissed just like that (Cotton Campaign, ILRF, IUF, HRW, PFM). It is easy to establish that the system-forming

source of this alternative information is UGF. So, first of all, one should try to somehow neutralize, or at least weaken, the authority of UGF monitoring. Above, we have already talked about possible moves in this direction: to organize another "alternative" monitoring by not very experienced, but absolutely loyal civil society activists, and demonstrate it at public events ("round tables") with the participation of experienced monitors. For money. It is quite simple.

However, dismantling state system of organizing forced labor is more difficult. Here one can act according to a well-known joke: "if one cannot defeat the mafia, then one should become its ruler". That is, if the state system of organizing forced labor in Uzbekistan cannot be dismantled, then it must be repainted into a project of voluntary involvement of the unemployed in picking cotton, and legitimize it as such. It seems to me that GoU is now engaged in precisely this with the help of the ILO. And that was exactly the reason of including description of this repainted system in the ILO TPM report 2017.

D.T. And what will this scenario look like in 2018?

A.M. I suppose that at the end of cotton harvesting, GoU and the ILO will hold several public events, where the ILO monitors together with monitors from civil society who participated in the ILO monitoring (as well as those who did not participate, but might be supportive for a number of reasons) on which they will report that the new system ("Temporary Order") worked perfectly, and forced labor on cotton in Uzbekistan is over. To convince home and, what is more important, international public, there should be several events, and necessarily with the international component, including ambassadors, the WB, possibly the ITUC and the International Organization of Employers. Most likely, the Cotton Campaign and HRW will also be invited, because the risk of their presence will be small: if the UGF monitors show some wrongdoing, it will be neutralized right on the spot by the opinion of "independent" monitors from civil society. And if traditional mechanisms of state system of forced labour would be demonstrated by the UGF monitors as still operating, then they might be described as elements of the new system of engaging poor volunteers and the unemployed in public works with the ILO rubber stamp on it.

At the end of the year, the next (and possibly the last) ILO TPM report will be released, where the new system of forced labor repainted into the state program of public works will no longer be in a shy Annex # 7, like last year, but will become the center of the entire report with the final conclusion: forced labor in Uzbekistan is over! Hurray! All involved actors will be winners.

But for people of Uzbekistan.

And when the next UGF report will be released (usually it comes out later than the ILO report), then no one will care about it...

D.T. And you completely exclude any positive effect of this "repainted" system of forced labor?

A.M. Not at all, however with caution. After all, positive changes are obvious: children were no longer forced to the fields, students were removed from cotton ... However, all those achievements were reached under close attention of the international community and under still continued pressure on GoU with the help of international economic instruments. After declaration of a complete victory over forced labor these external factors will undoubtedly defuse. And then I cannot forecast how this "repainted" system which has preserved intact all the mechanisms and actors, will behave left tet-a-tet with the citizens of Uzbekistan?

Let me describe one episode from my experience of the times when perestroika began in the USSR.

I loved (and still love) to travel around Alexander Pushkin's places, including so-called. "Pushkin ring of the Upper Volga", which starts from the city of Torzhok. So one day, walking around Torzhok, I discovered there a fragment of the GULAG, an abandoned, but very well-preserved "zone" (a prison camp and prison factory surrounded by one fence). I was struck by a tall fence of vertically standing long logs with barbed wire, guard towers, searchlights. I brought my friend there, a Moscow correspondent for Swiss French-speaking television, and she, too, was amazed by this GULAG remnant. Pushing the iron door of the gate, she found that the door was not locked, we entered "the zone", the door of the security booth was also opened. Inside, I saw some buttons and pressed one: and suddenly the gates of the "zone" began to open! The second button turned on the spotlights around the perimeter of the "zone", the third button turned on

the alarm siren, to the sound of which from two nice houses in the street, not far from the gate of the "zone" people came running. It turned out that these nice houses were built specifically for VOKHR - guards and wardens of the "zone", they remained there to live after the "zone" was closed, they still live by their own community (even if the apartments in these houses were released, no one wanted live with them). One of them, the former head of the "zone" for the "regime", agreed to drink a beer with us and said that the "zone" was for female convicts, many of them on political charges, and then, when it was closed, the authorities after warm farewells, asked former wardens to keep a neighbor's eye after the "zone": "May be it will be needed some day again".

"So what, - said the former VOKHR, - we are still young, we are paid fatty pensions, why not keep an eye out, what if we are still useful? "

So, the state system of forced labor in Uzbekistan, in its current repainted form and stamped with ILO approval, where all the elements, mechanisms and even personalities are preserved, is in a much better condition than the "zone" in Torzhok ... It's a pity that the ILO participated in repainting this system ...

D. T. What do you think, and why does the ILO need it?

A. M. I do not know, Dima, for me it is a mystery: why was it all needed for the ILO and the World Bank? In fact, the World Bank among its most important goals declares the eradication of poverty and the fight against corruption; the ILO declares eradication of child and forced labor. So in 2013, when the WB projects were launched in Uzbekistan, the situation was very favorable: it was the peak of pressure on GoU by the international human rights community and by business brands. It was also clear that GoU really needed money from the World Bank and was willing to cooperate with it to improve somehow its international image. And if at that moment the World Bank and the ILO had joined forces, and the condition for GoU would be set: World Bank can consider financing only if the use of child and forced labor was stopped, and replaced with a bona fide transparent system of public works involving the unemployed and the poor. Firstly, it would be at least some kind of material assistance to people, and a small step toward eradicating poverty and stopping corruption (when people were forced to pay bribes for exemption from hard labor in the fields); and secondly, the ILO would take a step towards its goals - the eradication of child and forced labor, and most importantly - the citizens of Uzbekistan would cease to suffer from forced labor. This is called in English a "win win solution" - a solution that would suit everyone. Why, instead of this possible and honest path, was the path of hypocrisy chosen, when the ILO came up with methodology designed for turning a blind eye on obvious violations, and write in the conclusions of its reports something that did not correspond to the revealed facts, and the WB pretended to believe to these conclusions? Corruption continued to flourish, while the people of Uzbekistan continued to suffer ... Forced labor is also a suffering from humiliation, it also causes a morally corrupting effect on both forced people and those who force, intimidate and punish, this is a moral degradation of civil of society. Why did the World Bank and the ILO needed to lengthen this evil? For me, this is a mystery ...

Indeed, the world has accumulated a great experience of honest and transparent organization of public works, which could be shared with Uzbekistan. And Uzbekistan itself has a certain experience in this matter: the Great Fergana, North Fergana and South Fergana canals were built in the beginning of the XX century using the "folk construction" method, a prototype of public works.

D.T. At the beginning of our conversation you said that one of the goals of your research was to understand whether the ILO policy and methodology in Uzbekistan can be used when working in other countries with authoritarian regimes? What do you say to that?

A.M. Firstly. Institutionally and functionally ILO is not suitable for field monitoring. This is not the activity for which it was established, which is spelled out in its constitution, and in which it has experience.

Second. Policies based on endless compromises and trade offs in basic principles are not suitable for work in authoritarian regimes. Practice shows that authoritarianism is afraid of publicity and economic losses. The ILO cannot provide either.

Third. Complete substitution of monitoring of civil society by monitoring of international officials in favor of each other is also unacceptable, because such monitoring is ineffective, it isolates civil society and can put civil society monitors in jeopardy as it happens in Uzbekistan.

On the whole, the ILO's experiment with field monitoring and the policy of "appeasing" the authoritarian government in Uzbekistan should be considered untenable, because while President Karimov was alive, he did not pay any attention to the ILO and continued to force millions to the fields, understanding that ILO would not dare to catch him by hand. And one cannot expect that every time the ILO is engaged in monitoring in a particular country, then the dictator in this country will die, and a democrat will replace him.

D.T. Today Uzbekistan is passing through really serious changes, also for the human rights activists. A lot of enthusiasm, and many connect positive changes with the ILO presence.

A.M. This is a myth. A longstanding authoritarian ruler died in Uzbekistan, and a man with different views came to replace him, but using so far created earlier authoritarian mechanism to carry out his policy. And what does the ILO have to do with this? Nothing.

I would rather think of human rights defenders in a relation with the new policy, who, with courage and devotion in many years of work, were raising the level of civil society pressure in this authoritarian boiler, gradually shifting authoritarian regime to the edge of popular anger.

To influence means to take some kind of action to change the situation in the direction of your goals. And the ILO, from the beginning to the present day, is ONLY ADJUSTING its policy to the situation: if GoU has banned something, well, we agree silently, but if GoU cancels its own ban - hurrah! we won! - in no way this can be qualified as influence. Karimov died on physiological reasons ...

Let us follow the dynamics of the ILO tradeoffs. In 2013, the ILO was allowed to conduct a first monitoring. Initially, negotiations were held that the institutional partners of the ILO, the International Confederation of Trade Unions and the International Organization of Employers were to take part in the monitoring, since their affiliates have much more experience in monitoring child labor than the ILO staff. That is why the government of Uzbekistan rejected this option, and the ILO did not argue, refusing the help of more experienced partners. Further, the Government required the ILO to monitor child labor on just one Convention instead of two, the ILO agreed. Government: do not touch forced labor - the ILO has swallowed this too. Despite the initial statement on independent monitoring in 2013, the ILO monitors were able to conduct independent interviews only in the 4th year of monitoring (and in the second year from the beginning of the Uzbek "perestroika"), and the ILO was allowed to engage civil society in monitoring only this year. For any objective observer it is clear that the ILO did not initially try to change the situation for its goals, but made any compromises just to maintain its presence - that is, it simply drifted and used the opportunities that arose after the change in the political situation in the country after Karimov's death. Well, what kind of influence could there be?

D.T. How do you assess the prospects for democratization of the Uzbek society?

A.M. For now, with reservations. I understand many colleagues, Uzbek human rights activists, whom today's freedoms, unthinkable yesterday, fill with hopes and enthusiasm. However, I have observed this several times in several countries, including Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and monitored the situation during the Arab Spring, and now look at what is happening in Poland, Hungary and Turkey. Any Perestroika meets with serious resistance from the authorities and a large part of society. The president and his new team can be any kind of democrats, and pronounce beautiful words, but for some small (and maybe large) khokim, it's easier to force people to the fields than to organize normal public works, because this way he knows for years, and because "business as usual" is less painful and risky. And the other participant of the old system was accustomed to receiving bribes for exemption from picking cotton, and this became a considerable article of his family income. And the third likes to command people, confuse and intimidate them. What to do with all of them: melt to buttons? put in jail? Therefore, the

monitors this year will surely find examples of forced and child labor on cotton - you cannot change everything everywhere at once: even the reorganization of the state apparatus is difficult, not to mention changing of consciousness and long-term habits. Social mechanisms have enormous inertia ... And to overcome it is possible only due to the long work of democratic institutions. In the meantime, I do not observe construction of serious democratic institutions in Uzbekistan. And unfortunately, the current ILO policy objectively slows down this process in its field of activity. Here is one example. In Europe, independent and militant trade unions are one of the most important democratic institutions. The trade unions of the FTUU system, naturally, do not belong to such: they were created by the state, and not by workers, and are actually managed by government employees and employers. Majority in FTUU Presidium are MPs of local "parliaments" and members of territorial commissions for elections of different levels, there are mayors offices employees and even businessmen... Why GoU needs the heads of territorial trade union bodies to be, for example, in election commissions? For using the extensive infrastructure of trade unions for campaigning and choosing the right people to power. So instead of effective collective bargaining in favour of the workers - the main function of the trade unions - the Uzbek trade unions serve as a channel for communicating decisions of the authorities to the people: a tool for implementing GoU policy. And this government run FTUU, in 2013 was immediately recognized by the ILO as democratic side of the tripartite social dialogue, just for the sake of the ILO team short term goals and purposes; and the ITUC, following this line, invited the FTUU into the family of democratic unions of the world. Recently, ACTRAV, together with the Pan-European Regional Council (PERC) of the ITUC, helped FTUU to gather in Tashkent a nice "domiciling" party - introduction to the family of European democratic unions. Everybody were so happy. Fun! And do you think all these dances will be an incentive for FTUU to change? to reform? Quite the opposite - the long-awaited goal has been achieved: FTUU was recognized as real and democratic, hurray! In fact, this short-term and selfish policy of the ILO has preserved this institution of authoritarian power and saved it from dismantling for many years ahead. And note: the approach is the same as in repainting the old state system of forced labor into an allegedly voluntary mechanism of public works. That is, not to bring the task to the end - to the complete and unconditional elimination of forced labor, but to imitate the eradication: quickly repaint, declare victory and receive prizes and awards. Until I do not see true signs of dismantling of repainted institutions of authoritarian power, and efforts in building democratic institutions of civil society I will have my reservations about the bright future of democracy in Uzbekistan.

D.T. And why the ITUC decided to affiliate the FTUU?

A.M. I do not know for sure. Perhaps, the ITUC leadership needs 6 million union members of the FTUU today to demonstrate growth of the organization and increase in the number of countries in affiliation at the approaching ITUC Congress at the end of this year. In addition to statistical indicators, the affiliation of the FTUU does not carry other meanings. This is not an independent and militant trade union and its affiliation will not strengthen the ITUC. Today it is a ballast.

D.T. Thank you for the interesting conversation.

A.M. The pleasure is mine. Thank you for your interesting questions.