



June 27, 2015

Ambassador Patricia A. Butenis
Acting Director
Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Ambassador Butenis:

We write express our sincere disappointment that the U.S. Department of State once again did not downgrade Turkmenistan to Tier 3 in the 2015 Trafficking in Persons Report, while the government of Turkmenistan continues to organize, orchestrate and benefit from forced labor. We urge the U.S. government to use the TIP Report to press the Turkmen government to take meaningful steps to end the use of forced labor this year.

In 2014, the State Department exercised its authority to waive an automatic downgrade of Turkmenistan to Tier 3, citing a written and funded plan of action that would bring the government into compliance with the minimum standards of the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA). Since then, the Turkmen government continued widespread use of forced labor. In 2014, the Turkmen government forced tens of thousands of citizens to pick cotton and farmers to deliver cotton quotas, all under coercive threat of punishment.¹ The authorities repressed citizen attempts to document human rights concerns. Some officials used forced labor for street cleaning, landscaping, and domestic work in their homes.

Next year the State Department will no longer have the authority to waive downgrading Turkmenistan to Tier 3. We believe that the U.S. should immediately communicate to the Government of Turkmenistan that, to avoid Tier 3 in next year's TIP Report, it must take concrete steps to end forced labor, including: instruct officials at all levels of government to refrain from using coercion to mobilize citizens to work in the cotton fields and prosecute any officials that do, and permit citizens to report human rights concerns without intimidation, coercion, or retaliation. In the wake of the regrettable failure to downgrade Turkmenistan to Tier 3 in the 2015 TIP Report, a strong and unequivocal message by the administration in this regard is all the more important.

For our part, the unions, industry associations, investors, trade unions and NGOs that form the Cotton Campaign will continue efforts to raise corporate, public, governmental and international awareness of the problem and press the Turkmen authorities to implement their human rights commitments.

¹ Alternative Turkmenistan News, "Spotlight on Turkmenistan: Widespread State-Orchestrated Forced Labor in Turkmenistan's 2014 Cotton Harvest," available at http://www.cottoncampaign.org/uploads/3/9/4/7/39474145/stateforcedlaborinturkmenistan2014_report_atn.pdf

Sincerely,

The Cotton Campaign

Advocates for Public Interest Law

AFL-CIO

American Federation of Teachers

Anti-Slavery International

Association for Human Rights in Central Asia

Australian Council of Trade Unions

Bennett Freeman, former U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State
for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor

Boston Common Asset Management

Calvert Investments

CEE Bankwatch Network

Child Labor Coalition



AFL-CIO



BOSTON COMMON
ASSET MANAGEMENT, LLC



Daughters of Charity, Province of St Louise



Dignity Health



The Eurasian Transition Group, e.V.



Gonggam Human Rights Law Foundation



International Labor Rights Forum



International Partnership for Human Rights



Korean Teachers and Education Workers Union



JEON GYOJO

Mercy Health



MERCYHEALTH

Mercy Investment Services



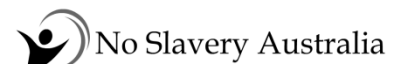
National Consumers League



Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment



No Slavery Australia



Open Society Foundations



Portfolio Advisory Board, Adrian Dominican Sisters



Responsible Sourcing Network



Retail Industry Leaders Association



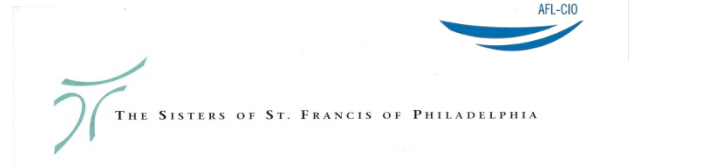
St. Joseph Health



Solidarity Center



Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia



Stop the Traffik



The Sunshine Coalition



Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, Uniting Church in Australia



Textile Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia



U.S. Fashion Industry Association



Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights



Walden Asset Management



Walk Free



cc: Allan P. Mustard, United States Ambassador to Turkmenistan
Thomas E. Perez, Secretary of Labor
Nisha Desai Biswal, Assistant Secretary of State, South and Central Asian Affairs Bureau
Tom Malinowski, Assistant Secretary of State, Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Bureau