The 2015 cotton harvest in Uzbekistan is concluding. On October 14, Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyoyev officially announced the completion of the national production plan and yield of 3.35 million tons of cotton. A week later high schools and universities began sending students home from the fields, where they had picked cotton for approximately 40 days.

The Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights (UGF) monitored the 2015 cotton production cycle from beginning to end. The Uzbek government implemented a forced-labour system as it has in previous years. Perhaps the stand-out characteristic of 2015 was the government’s extraordinary effort to mask its use of forced labour and claim that the mass mobilization of labour is voluntary: Officials instructed public-sector workers to inform international observers that they work in the fields voluntarily. Universities and high schools required students to write statements that they voluntarily participate in the cotton harvest. Police repeatedly arrested and physically assaulted human rights defenders to try to stop them from monitoring. Yet the evidence, including official documents, confirms the use of forced labour by the government, in violation of international law and national law as well as the government’s commitments.
UGF presents this 7th and final issue of the Chronicle of Forced Labour in Uzbekistan 2015, which details violations of commitments made by the Uzbek government, that are explained in the previous Issue 6 of the Chronicle. We will publish a comprehensive report on the 2015 cotton production cycle after gathering additional data from Uzbek citizens returning from the cotton fields.

UGF calls on the Uzbek government, International Labour Organization and World Bank to address the following reports of violations of its commitments, detailed below.

**Violations reported in the Chronicle of Forced Labour in Uzbekistan 2015, Issue 7:**

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**Latest Reports of Violations of the Uzbek Government’s Commitments**

**Report 1:** The head (hokim) of the Khazarasp district, Khorezm region threatened to fire and physically assault administrators of public- and private-sector organizations in the district in order to pressure them to fulfill the cotton harvesting quotas assigned to each of the organizations.

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The following is the transcript of a recording of a cotton headquarters meeting convened by the head (hokim) of the Khazarasp district, Khorezm region Uktam Kurbanov on September 29. Starting at approximately 9:00 PM, Mr. Kurbanov began to reprimand and threaten the administrators of organizations that were behind schedule on the completion of the cotton harvest quotas assigned to them.

Original recording in Uzbek is available here:  http://www.eltuz.com/ru/?p=277

Uktam Kurbonov [ed. Hokim]: So Yangibazar [ed. a company], what do you have? Stand up. Yangibazar Administrator: Boss, I’m hear.

Hokim: Department of Culture. How many of your people went? Culture Department Administrator: 30 of us.

Hokim: Printing house [ed. of the district government office, “hokimiyat”], well, report to me. Printer Administrator: From our four departments all workers went to collect cotton.

Hokim: Who?

Printer Administrator: the financial, the accounting department...

Hokim: From the department of finance, how many people did not go pick cotton?

Printer Administrator: Boss, I had 3-4 people who were needed as workers.

Hokim: What kind of hard work did they perform?

Printer Administrator: Boss, I wanted to tell you. We have 6-7 auditors [ed. of the national government Central Review Commission]. They are supervising the new school buildings. Their deputies...

Hokim: Let the school personnel sit in the school. There is no need for the others. For one month, nobody should sit in the hokimiat.

Printer Administrator: It will be done, boss.

Hokim: Cotton! You have to go and pick cotton and fulfill the norm. Is it clear!? It is not necessary, even if they come from the republic [ed. national government]. They must go and pick cotton. You’ve chosen the wrong time! This police applies to everyone! If even one person does not go out, it will be bad for you! I’ll shut down your organizations! Everyone, without exception, whether from the hokimiat, tax authorities, the bank or other organizations, all will be shut down. Come on, Bank, answer.

Bank Administrator: Boss, all of our workers went to the harvest.

Hokim: Then everything is fine, everybody went to the harvest, everything is fine.

Bank Administrator: Boss, all of our employees delivered 50 kilograms per day. Since the beginning of the season, 50 to 60 kg of cotton, it’s true; you can check. A bus with 65 to 70 people leaves to the cotton fields every day.

Hokim: The plan has not been fulfilled! Now I read...sit down. Everyone should go to the cotton! No one should stay home! SES...What’s this? You delivered only 1,286 kilograms? Why is that? I’ll tear your head off! 1,200 kilograms, who implements the plan?!...Tax?

Tax Administrator: We’re all here.

Hokim: What did you do? Where is Muzaffar? Call him quickly. You delivered only 224 kilograms! How can you do this?

Sanoat Administrator: I, myself.
COTTON CHRONICLE: Issue 7, 2015

Hokim: You, yourself go! You have to bring all of your people! Work will be after 7 at night until the morning!
Sanoat Administrator: Alright Chief.

Hokim: Vatanparvar! [ed. a farmer]
Farmer Vatanparvar: I...
Hokim: It's all a shame...
Farmer Vatanparvar: one...two tons...
Hokim: You're a disgrace for us all, saying that you used a different fertilizer...[ed. At this moment the hokim’s phone rang, and his sudden change in tone suggests that the phone call was to inform him that a stranger was in the room.]

Hokim: There you have it. Is everything clear? The employees of all public institutions should go to the cotton harvest. Ensure for the collectors a hot meal, payment and oil. A hot meal, ok? Keep things organized, samovars should be everywhere. [ed. At this moment, the Hokim dismissed everyone]


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**Report 2:** The police arrested two human rights defenders and two local residents and subjected the activists to body-cavity searches during a 12-hour interrogation, in Khazarasp district, Khorezm region, where the activists were documenting conditions in the cotton harvest.

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On 29 September, Urlaeva and Malokhat Eshankulova of the Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan were arrested and detained alongside two local residents in the Khorezm district. The women claim they were taken to a police station where they were strip-searched before police ordered a gynecologist to conduct a cavity search with medical instruments, which was done in the presence of male police officers. The activists say their request to be examined in the privacy and safety of a hospital was declined.

“The police were rough with the two local activists we were with,” said Urlaeva, speaking by phone from Uzbekistan. “We had 12 hours of questioning, it was humiliating. They stripped us naked and searched us, they searched our genitals without making hygiene precautions.”

**Report 3:** The police arrested, detained and beat a human rights defender in September, when he was documenting government buses taking teachers and industrial workers to pick cotton in Buka district, Tashkent region, in September.

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**Report 4:** Police arrested, interrogated and threatened a human rights defender with reprisal if she continued to communicate with officials of the United States government, on September 29 in Karshi district, Kashkadarya region.

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Human rights defenders Gulshan Karaeva and Nodir Akhatov met with representatives of the U.S. Embassy in Uzbekistan on September 29 in Karshi district, Kashkadarya region. Police arrested Ms. Karaeva during her return home, detained and interrogated her, and accused her of espionage and treason. The police claimed that the U.S. government was an enemy and urged companies to not buy Uzbek cotton, and threatened Ms. Karaeva with reprisals if she continued to communicate with U.S. government representatives.

Source: Karaeva, Gulshan, report to Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights, 12 October 2015.

**Report 5:** The governor of Fergana region Shukhrat Ganiev forced hundreds of citizens to work in the cotton fields on September 30, by pasting cotton back onto plants in advance of an expected visit by the Uzbek Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyoyev.
Violations reported:

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A reporter with *Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty “Ozodlik”* reported from Kushtepa district, Fergana region:

“On a cotton field, I saw more than 400 men and women. I went closer to them and saw that everyone had PVA glue in hand. Some put glue on the cotton bolls, while others stuck already picked cotton to the plants that already had the cotton picked. Others brought cotton from other bushes and tied them. When I asked them why they did this, they replied, ‘It turns out that the Prime Minister will arrive, so we were told to make it look beautiful.’”

A farmer of the Kushtepa district reported:

“That day more than 500 people were forced to leave their jobs for a day and do this. I do not know what the Prime Minister would say if he saw it all. Would he praise it or condemn it? They say that all these actions were carried out on the orders of the regional governor.”

Residents of Kushtepa district reported that local officials forcibly mobilized approximately 400 men and women from the Shaharatteppa village to glue the cotton back onto the plants and to sweep the road over which the Prime Minister was expected to arrive. The Prime Minister did not visit the district.


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**Report 6:** The regional governor (hokim) of Syrdarya region closed the Central Market of Gulistan district until 4:00 PM each day until the region fulfills its cotton quota.
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The owner of a business in the Gulistan Central Market reported:

“On October 1, about 30 soldiers and 70 policemen started to chase people away from the market area, like a flock of sheep. It has been a week now since the close of the market, and it is impossible to come near the place until 4 PM. In the afternoon, when the market opens, there is a big rush of people. This cotton has tortured people.”

The Gulistan district administration office (hokimiyat) confirmed that the Syrdarya region governor ordered the markets closed. The hokimiyat representative said,

“Yes, this is true. The mass mobilization of people to the cotton harvest has been announced. All local markets open again after 4 PM. When the cotton quota is fulfilled, everyone will return to their stands.”


Report 7: The administrators of a high school in Ellikala district of Karakalpakstan threatened students with expulsion in order to mobilize them to work in the cotton
harvest, and a student with a known vision impairment committed suicide in a cotton field on October 2.

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Mansour Matyakubov was 18 years old and a third-year student in the academic lyceum, a high-school to prepare students for university, in Ellikala district of Karakalpakstan. The lyceum administrators required all students to work in the cotton harvest and to sign statements that they would do so voluntarily. Due to known vision impairment, the school administrators assigned Mr. Matyakubov to cook lunch for the students instead of picking cotton. A witness of the suicide reported,

"On the day of the incident, Mansour cooked lunch for his fellow students directly in the field. After lunch, Mansour went away without telling anyone and hanged himself from a tree on the left side of the field."

Source: "В Узбекистане учащийся лицея повесился на поле во время сбора хлопка," Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty "Ozodlik," 20 October 2015, [http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/27315626.html](http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/27315626.html)
**Report 8:** The administration of Samarkand State Medical Institute threatened students with expulsion in order to mobilize them to pick cotton, and one of the students died when the car transporting him to the cotton field crashed into a tractor on October 11.

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Firuz Rofiev was 27-years old and a 4th-year student at Samarkand State Medical Institute. The Institute administration forcibly mobilized students to pick cotton in the Kattakurgan district of Samarkand region. On October 11, Mr. Rofiev was traveling to the cotton fields in a Zhiguli car when the car crashed into a MTZ-80 tractor. Mr. Rofiev died at the scene of the accident, and the driver was hospitalized. A lecturer at the Institute said, “They instructed the cotton staff not to tell anyone about it.”


**Report 9:** Prime Minister of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev ordered the penalization of farmers that have not fulfilled their state-assigned cotton production quotas and have outstanding debts, including by confiscating cars, cattle and other assets.

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The Prime Minister of Uzbekistan oversees cotton production through a series of meetings throughout the annual production cycle. During a conference call on October 12, Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyoyev ordered increased enforcement of the cotton production quotas assigned by the government to each farmer, by penalizing farmers who do not fulfill their quotas or have outstanding debts, including by confiscating farmers’ cars, cattle or other assets. Prime Minister Mirziyoyev called the order “Chopper” (“Oybolta”).

A farmer from Namangan region who participated in the conference call reported:
“He ordered the chief of police to create a group by the next day, telling him, ‘Go to the farmers’ fields. Urge them to fulfill the plan. Go to the home of a farmer who is in debt and cannot pay back his loans; take away his car, his cattle. If he has none of this, take the shingles from the roof of his house!’”

A farmer from Jizzak region reported:

“The Prime Minister has instructed officials to confiscate the property of farmers in debt. In the absence of property, he ordered to put them in prison for six years. Now the local mayors (hokims) implement Mirziyoyev’s order and actively punish the farmers. However, no one asks about the reasons why farmers could not fulfill the quotas. For example, this year we have not been provided water for irrigation and, as a result, we only have a small crop. When you start to talk about it, nobody listens to you.”

While farmers in Uzbekistan are characterized by the Uzbek government as independent, in reality they are forced to follow local authorities’ orders without question. Cotton and grain cultivation, including the determination of purchase prices and purchasing of the crops is managed by the government. Farmers are also required to purchase fuel and fertilizers from the state at state-established prices.


**Report 10: Officials ordered citizens to lie to International Labour Organization (ILO) monitors and claim that they picked cotton voluntarily, in the districts of Karshi and Nishon in Kashkadarya region.**

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Residents of the Karshi and Nishon districts of Kashkadarya region reported on October 13 that the local government officials, including police and national security service, instructed them to tell ILO monitors that they pick cotton voluntarily even though they are forced to do the work, under threat of penalties such as expulsion from university and the loss of pension or child-care benefits. A resident from the area said,

“I do not believe that there is still anyone who dares to tell the foreigners that he or she was forced to pick cotton in front of the Ministry officials coming from Tashkent and local security and police officers. Everyone unanimously says that they came to harvest cotton voluntarily.”
Report 11: The Prosecutor's Office of Angren, Tashkent region charged human rights defender Dmitry Tihonov with “disorderly conduct,” a misdemeanor that carries a penalty of 3-5 minimum wages or 15-day detention, on October 19.

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On October 19, the Angren district police Major Bekzod Martavaliev notified Dmitry Tihonov of the charge of disorderly conduct, a misdemeanor under Articles 299 and 305 of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The allegation of disorderly conduct was signed with the names of three women, two of whom are chairpersons of neighborhood committees (mahallas). Under the Administrative Code Article 299, a defendant is entitled to have a lawyer review the case file and to copy documents therein. Major Martavaliev denied Mr. Tihonov’s lawyer’s request to make copies of his file. When Mr. Tihonov and his lawyer requested a meeting with the chief of police, they were informed that he was unavailable, at the cotton fields.

The Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights presents the latest reports from the 2015 cotton harvest in Uzbekistan in this sixth issue of the *Chronicle of Forced Labour in Uzbekistan 2015*, detailing instances of forced labour by the government of Uzbekistan, in violation of international law and national law and its commitments to implement these laws.

Six people died during the cotton harvest in the first weeks of October. A 2-year old boy died while his mother picked cotton under threat of losing her job as a kindergarten teacher. A 17-year old boy and reported 3 others died when the cargo truck transporting them to the cotton fields rolled. Dr. Yusuf Esirgapov died after the hokim of Gallaaral district (Jizzak region) ordered his arrest and two-day detention as punishment for not fulfilling the cotton harvest quota assigned to the hospital he directed.

UGF calls on the Uzbek government, International Labour Organization and World Bank to address the following reports of violations of its commitments, detailed further below.

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The Uzbek Government’s Commitments

The Uzbek government has committed to not use forced labour, including for the purpose of economic development, has established laws prohibiting forced labour. It has also committed to develop a voluntary labour market for the cotton sector, to prevent cotton picking by education and medical staff, and to ensure there is no forced or child labour in World Bank project areas.

The Uzbek government is a member of the International Labour Organization and has ratified ILO conventions concerning forced labour, Nos. 29 and 105, and, concerning forced child labour, No. 182. Article 37 of the Uzbek constitution prohibits forced labour and guarantees the right to work in fair labour conditions, and Article 241 of the Labour Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan prohibits the employment of persons under 18 years of age in hazardous work, including cotton picking. In 2014, the Uzbek government issued a decree committing to the “Creation of institutional base for ensuring of free employment of the cotton pickers by farmers through labour market institutes.” In August 2015, the Uzbek government committed “to prevent the mobilization of education and medical personnel for the cotton harvest,” at a round table with International Trade Union Confederation, International Organization of Employers, UN, UNICEF, EU and Embassies of the US, Germany, Switzerland, France, Korea and Russia in Uzbekistan. In 2014 and 2015, the Uzbek government signed loan agreements with the World Bank agreeing to the suspension of finance if there is child or forced labour in the project areas. Furthermore, the Uzbek government has committed to respect the inalienable civil rights of its citizens.

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<th>Report No.</th>
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citizens, including freedom of expression and the exchange of information of all kinds through any media, by ratifying the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.\(^8\)

Despite its commitments, the Uzbek government continues systematic forced labour on a mass scale. From the president to the local neighborhood committees (“mahalla”),\(^9\) all levels of government are orchestrating the forced labour system, and the government is harassing, detaining and citizens’ attempts to document the cotton harvest and to distribute information about national laws and human rights.

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**Latest Reports of Violations of the Uzbek Government’s Commitments**

**Report 1:** The administration of the Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Reclamation threatened to suspend students of the Faculty of Automation and Mechanization in order to mobilize them to pick cotton in the Sayhunabad district of Surkhandarya region.

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Local men beat up Ilkhom Rezhavaliev, sending him to the hospital where he was treated for a broken jaw and potential brain damage, when he was returning to the accommodations assigned to the students after bathing in a local bath house, at 10:30 PM on September 23. Mr. Rezhavaliev is a second-year student in the Automation and Mechanization Faculty of the Institute of Irrigation and Reclamation. The Institute administration has sent students to pick cotton since the start of the harvest, instead of classes. The accommodations provided for the students to sleep near the cotton fields lack sanitary facilities, so the students pay local residents or bath houses to bathe. Mr. Rezhavaliev’s family had to pay for the medical treatment at the hospital, the Medical Academy in Tashkent, and has subsequently paid an additional $150 for medications prescribed to Mr. Rezhavaliev.

Report 2: The director of a middle school threatened to fire a pregnant teacher in order to mobilize her to contribute to the cotton harvest, either by picking cotton or hiring someone to pick cotton instead of her.

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In an interview with a UGF monitor in Jizzak region, the teacher reported her experience to UGF on the condition of anonymity. The teacher specified that she would be willing to provide her name if there were some protection against retaliation. She said,

“I’m six months pregnant. On the 15th day of the cotton harvest, the director sent me to pick cotton. My belly is already quite large, and it is very hard to bend over all day long and pick cotton. Moreover, two to three times a day I have to carry 15-20 kilograms of cotton to have it weighed. I tried to explain my situation to the school director, but she said,

“If you want to continue to work [at the school], you have to endure it. That is the policy. If you are pregnant, then hire a labourer to replace you. Be grateful that you receive your wage.”

“The first few days, I went and picked cotton, although it was hard. To hire someone, I would have to pay 20,000 soums (~$7) per day. I don’t have that kind of money. But the other day some official saw me picking cotton and apparently said something to my school director. She called me and started screaming, saying that she had been taken to task because of me. She threatened me,

“I told you, hire a labourer. Either you hire someone, or I cut the number of your lessons.” [ed. Uzbek teachers are paid per lesson.]

Source: Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights, Personal interview, Gulistan city, Syrdarya region, 29 September 2015.

Report 3: The administrators of Uzbekkino, the partially state-owned film companies, threatened to put actors onto a blacklist for castings and industry awards in order to mobilize them to pick cotton in Tashkent region.

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Uzbekfilm studio is the personnel department of Uzbekkino, the joint-stock company that manages the film industry in Uzbekistan. Starting September 26, Uzbekfilm administrators forced staff to pick cotton in the Tashkent region, by threatening to put anyone who refused on a blacklist, compromising their eligibility for future work and awards. An Uzbekkino staff person said,

“On Saturday morning they put us all on the bus and took us to the cotton fields. In the past, film actors visited cotton fields to organize cultural activities for the cotton pickers. This time we were all forced to pick cotton ourselves.”


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Report 4: Police in Uzbekistan arrested two human rights defenders and two local residents after they documented the cotton harvest on September 29 in Khorezm region, and police subjected the two female human rights defenders to body-cavity searches during a 14-hour detention.

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The morning of September 29 Elena Urlaeva, head of the Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan and fellow Alliance member Malokhat Eshankulova visited the accommodations provided to the high-school students forced to pick cotton in the Khazarasp district, Khorezm region. After taking photos and interviewing several students, police arrived in two patrol cars and arrested the two activists and two local residents who drove them, at approximately 8 AM. During the arrest, a police officer hit one of the local residents in the head, causing bleeding, and confiscated the activists’ phones, which they used to take photos.

At the station, the officers interrogated Ms. Urlaeva and Ms. Eshankulova. “They accused us, ‘You sell the Motherland!’” reported Ms. Eshankulova. After three hours, the police ordered a gynecologist, Dr. Mekhrinisso Shokirova, to conduct a body-cavity search of the two women. Ms. Eshankulova’s request to go to the hospital so that the search could be conducted in sanitary conditions and without the presence of policemen was refused. "I was also stripped naked and then searched with the help of gynecological instruments for a USB flash drive, and then with a gloved hand.” reported Ms. Urlaeva. The police held the three activists in the Khazarasp police station for 14 hours and presented no charges.

**Report 5**: A surveillance squad followed a human rights defender 100 kilometers from his home to his lawyer’s office, in order to intimidate him into silence.

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Six men in two cars followed human rights defender Dmitry Tihonov from nearby his home in Angren all the way to Tashkent city, at least 100 kilometers (~60 miles). Walking on the street in Angren, Mr. Tihonov noticed the driver of a white car on surveillance. When he sat to eat in a teahouse, the driver and another man sat nearby, watching him. He took a bus to Tashkent and called a lawyer. Upon arrival at the lawyer’s office, Mr. Tihonov noticed that a second car had joined the first, and six people were outside, watching him. The lawyer approached the surveillance squad, and the men fled.

The surveillance of Mr. Tihonov bears striking resemblance to the government’s strategy to silence another human rights defender, Sergey Naumov. The police in Khorezm region detained Mr. Naumov for 15 days during the 2013 cotton harvest, when the International Labour Organization was monitoring in his region. This latest episode of surveillance of Mr. Tihonov occurred one week after the police arrested him and during the ILO’s effort this year to monitor forced labor during the cotton harvest.

*Source: Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights, monitors in Tashkent region, 1 October, 2015.*

**Report 6**: Hospital administrators threatened staff with dismissal or reduced hours in order to mobilize them to pick cotton and to follow instructions to lie and tell authorities visiting the cotton fields that they picked cotton voluntarily, at the encouragement of their mahallas.

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On September 30, a hospital staff person wrote:

“There is one nurse and one assistant left in the hospital when the rest of the staff is gone to the shift. They told us not to tell local authorities coming to the field that we are from a medical institution. They said that we had to tell them we came voluntarily, from the mahallas. If we do not do as they told us, they threatened to fire us or to reduce our shifts.”
Report 7: School administrators have ordered teachers to pick cotton throughout the country, and school administrators in Tashkent, Kashkadarya and Khorezm regions threatened to dismiss teachers if they reported that they were forced to participate in the cotton harvest.

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Administrators of schools throughout the country have sent teachers and other school staff to pick cotton in shifts during this year’s cotton harvest, for example, in groups of 20 at a time for a school with a staff of 60. Administrators in Tashkent, Kashkadarya and Khorezm regions sent all staff to pick cotton on October 1, national teachers’ day in Uzbekistan. Most teachers refused to comment on why they picked cotton, and one teacher explained that they feared losing their jobs if they were found to have reported that they were forced to participate.


Report 8: High-school students, education and medical workers picked cotton in the Khazorasp district of Khorezm region, and administrators removed the education and medical workers from the fields during a visit by the International Labour Organization.

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High-school students picking cotton in the Khazorasp district of Khorezm region reported that teachers and medical workers had been picking cotton alongside them, were sent away during a visit by the ILO, and returned after the ILO representatives left.

Report 9: Administrators of secondary schools in the Bayavut district of Syrdarya region have threatened staff with their jobs or fines in order to mobilize them to pick cotton, and starting October 1 the administrators increased the number of staff sent to pick cotton from 30% to over 50%.

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There are approximately 55 secondary schools in Bayavut district. Administrators accelerated the forced mobilization of staff to the cotton fields starting October 1. School No.19 in Yuldoshabad sent 40 of the 60 teachers it employs to pick cotton. School No.11 in Muqimiy sent 37 of its 62 teachers. School No.10 in B. Umurzakov sent 40 of 65 teachers. School No.13 in Istiklol sent 30 of its 45 teachers.

Source: Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights, Syrdarya region monitor, 2 October 2015.

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Report 10: Administrators of Gulistan State University threatened students of the Economics and Physical Mathematics faculty with expulsion in order to mobilize them to the cotton harvest.

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Source: Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights, Syrdarya region monitor, 2 October 2015.

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Report 11: Police forced shop owners to close their businesses and pick cotton by shutting off their electricity and threatening to subject them to extraordinary tax investigations.

Violations reported:

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Police shut down the shops in the central market in Gulistan city starting October 1, and ordered the shop owners to pick cotton. Instead of the commonly seen sign “everyone went to the cotton harvest,” police hung signs that read “Under audit.” One of the shop owners said,

“Okay, I’ll find and hire as many workers to pick cotton as they need. If only they did not stop the trade, did not close the market. I’m losing money every day the store is closed. They also cut the electricity, so many of my products went bad. Because of this cotton campaign they destroy my business. Who will care for my family? The state? Will the government ever say you suffered from such losses due to the cotton campaign? They would never do so!”

*Source: Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights, Syrdarya region monitor, 2 October 2015.*

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**Report 12: Police threatened criminal charges of prostitution in order to mobilize women to pick cotton in the Alat district of Bukhara region.**

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A police officer of Alat district of Bukhara region, reported:

“The order to mobilize people to the cotton harvest is tough. It is not easy to recruit people from the mahallas [ed. neighborhood committees]. There are some women who do not work and could go and pick cotton. These women, it can be said, sell their bodies for money. We mobilized such women for the cotton harvest. We told those who resisted that we would reopen their previous cases and penalize them. Now they are picking cotton very assiduously.”

Assad Salomov, a resident and witness of the mobilization, reported:

“There is an area in the district where mostly single women live in multi-story homes. The local police and mahalla representatives took more than 40 women. I was watching from the balcony. They ordered the women to line up, called out their names, and put them on a bus to go to pick cotton.”

Report 13: An open-top cargo truck carrying people to the cotton fields overturned, resulting in a reported 4 people dead, including a 17-year old boy, and 19 injured.

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The truck, model GAZ-53 was taking passengers to farm No.8 in the Mirzaobod district of Syrdarya region when it swerved to avoid a passenger car, “Zhiguli” model, and rolled several times, according to the human rights organization Ezgulik member Isroil Rizaev. An Internal Affairs officer of Mirzaobod district confirmed the accident and the deaths and injuries. Officials often use the GAZ-53 trucks to transport people to the cotton fields, despite the obvious dangers of driving them on highways with dozens of people standing in the open-air cargo area.


Report 14: Administrators of a medical institution threatened staff with dismissal in order to mobilize them to pick cotton, and threatened to reduce hours or fire staff if they did not follow instructions to lie to anyone who asks by saying that they picked cotton voluntarily at the encouragement of their mahalla (neighborhood committee), in Fergana region.

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On October 4, staff of the medical institution wrote,

“They taught us not to tell the authorities visiting the fields that we are from a medical institution. They said that we have to tell them that we came voluntarily through our mahallas. They threatened to fire us or to reduce our shifts if we did not do as they say.”

“We go to the field at 6 or 7 in the morning and return at 7 or 8 in the evening. There are married women among us. When we say that they should go home earlier because they have small children, they accuse us of being against their policy and threaten to fire us. Everyone gets used to it and does not dare oppose. We keep our troubles to ourselves.”

**Report 15:** The dean of the English faculty of the university threatened to record low academic scores in order to mobilize students to pick cotton in the Baghdad district of Fergana region.

Violations reported:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ILO Conventions Nos. 29, 105</th>
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On October 4, a student from the English faculty wrote:

“We are from the English faculty, and were in the cotton field. One student has a dust allergy. She felt bad and lost consciousness. There was a car, so we immediately took her to the Baghdad district hospital. The doctor said she should not work in the fields under any circumstances, said that it could even be life-threatening for her. We took her to the headquarters, and after a while our dean told her that she had to go back to the cotton field. Every meeting, the dean tells us that not collecting cotton would have a negative impact on our exams and threatens us with bad marks.”


**Report 16:** Officials ordered mahallas to penalize people who refuse to participate in the cotton harvest with fines of 10,000 – 15,000 soums (~$4-$5) per weekend, in the Andijan, Fergana, Kashkadarya, and Samarkand regions.

Violations reported:

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The secretary of a mahalla in Kokand, Fergana region, reported that officials ordered mahallas in the Fergana, Andijan, Kashkadarya and Samarkand regions to increase their mobilization of cotton pickers by two-to-three times, from 3-5 people to 10-15 people on Saturdays and Sundays. The mahalla representative said,

“Originally each mahalla had to send three people for a 10-day trip to the cotton fields, and 3-5 people to take part in a one-day cotton harvesting. And now they told us to send 10-15 people from each mahalla this Saturday and Sunday. We have sent people. Those who could not participate paid 10,000 – 15,000 soums (~$4 - $5). With this money we have hired cotton pickers.”

Report 17: Administrators of public institutions in Kashkadarya region mobilized one-third of the employees, including education and medical staff, to pick cotton for ten-day, fifteen-day, and month-long shifts.

Violations reported:

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Report 18: High schools mobilized more than 18,000 students, including teenagers under age 18, to pick cotton in the Khorezm region each weekend during the harvest in September.

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One of the respondents to a survey of the high-school students in Khorezm region by Radio Ozodlik, a student in the College of Technology and Entrepreneurship in Khorezm, reported that after a visit by United Nations representatives, teachers told students that they would not pick cotton anymore. The student said,

“On Thursday people from the UN visited our college. They did not talk to us. We just saw that they had come. Thereafter, the teachers told us that we will not go to pick cotton, only on the weekend now. This time we did not go pick cotton. Third-year students did not go either. We heard that other students of other colleges also had not gone to the cotton fields.”

Report 19: Administrators of the Yangiyul school district, Buka city health and statistics departments, the hydroelectric station, the newspapers in Chui-Kirchik and Yangiyul districts, and small businesses threatened employees with the loss of their jobs or fines in order to mobilize them to pick cotton in the Tashkent region.

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Education officials in Yangiyul charged employees 600,000 soums (~$150) for exemptions from picking cotton, and a barbershop in Tashkent charged each employee 35,000 soums (~$9) to then make a contribution to the harvest. The administrators of the TashGRES hydroelectric station in Tashkent also forced their employers to pick cotton.

There are billboards with a statement that child and forced labor is prohibited and the telephone number of a hotline to call with complaints along the roads in the Urta-Chirchik, Buka, Akkurgan, Yukkori-Chirchik and Kui-Chirchik areas of Tashkent region. Residents in these districts reported that they prefer to follow the orders to pick cotton, because they are afraid and do not trust that the hotline will function.

Source: Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights, Monitor in Tashkent region, 5 October 2015.

Report 20: Following orders from the Jizzak regional governor (hokim), high-school principals forced students, including children, to pick cotton under threat of suspension from school, and administrators of public-sector institutions forced employees, including medical workers, to pick cotton under threat of losing their jobs or paying fines.

Violations reported:

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During the October 5 cotton headquarters meeting, the Jizzak regional hokim issued an order to administrators of schools and public institutions in the region to mobilize students and employees to the cotton harvest, in order to complete the region’s cotton harvest target prior to expected rains. The administrators of the Buston medical clinic in Zarbdar district ordered all 46 employees to the harvest. 10 of the clinic’s doctors and 1 nurse paid the fine for not picking cotton, hiring a worker to pick in their place for 10,000 soums (~$2.50) per day, and kept the clinic open without the 9 other nurses and all 26 technical staff. The high schools in Pakhtakor, Dustlik, Mirzachul, Arnasay, Zafarobod, Zarbdar and Zaamin districts forcibly mobilized 2nd and 3rd-year students to pick cotton, and some high schools in rural areas closed and sent all the
students to pick cotton. Uzbek students begin the three-year high school typically at age 16, some at age 15. Cotton headquarters officials visit the fields each day to check attendance and progress.

*Source: Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights, Jizzak region monitor, 6 October 2015.*

**Report 21:** A school official threatened to dismiss kindergarten teachers in order to mobilize them to pick cotton in the Chust district of Namangan region. The 2-year old son of one of the teachers forced to pick cotton fell into a well and died while she was in the cotton fields.

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A resident who knows the mother reported that the Chust district schools have sent all the teachers to pick cotton for multiple days. The mother told her fellow resident that she asked the head of her kindergarten for an exemption from the cotton harvest because she has a small child and her husband works in Russia. The mother said that the head of the kindergarten told her “I do not know anything. You have to go in any case.” The head of the kindergarten reported that she did not force the employees to pick cotton, and that the teacher concerned went to the harvest on her own.

*Source: “В Узбекистане двухлетний ребенок сборщика хлопка утонул в колодце,” Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty “Ozodlik,” 8 October 2015, [http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/27294291.html](http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/27294291.html).*

**Report 22:** The Angren city health department threatened to dismiss or fine employees in order to mobilize them to pick cotton at the “Independence” farm in Buka district, Tashkent region on October 9.

Violations reported:

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Health department officials fined employees 35,000 soums ($9) per day for exemptions from cotton picking. Many of the employees instead hired day labourers to pick their assigned quota of cotton, 35 kilograms per day. During their shift at the harvest, the employees pick cotton from 7 in the morning until 5 in the evening, with a break for lunch.
Administrators arranged for the Angren health department workers to sleep in the building of a former hospital during shifts at the cotton harvest. The health department employees reported that posters with a statement that child and forced labor is prohibited and the telephone number of a hotline to call with complaints hung in the building lobby. The employees said that no one would call; everyone would prefer to pick cotton than take the risk of complaining. The health department employees paid locals 2,000 soums ($0.50) to bathe, because the building lacks functioning bathing facilities.

A few of the health department employees asked a man driving a tractor why he was not harvesting the cotton, and the driver said that the tractor was probably 80 years old and the harvesting machinery left in the garage because it is more costly to harvest the cotton with it than manually. A journalist at the Angren newspaper also investigated the use of tractors and reported that tractors remain idle due to both the lack of adequate machinery and fuel as well as the system for mobilizing labor to manually harvest cotton.

Source: Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights, Monitor in Tashkent region, 9 October 2015.

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**Report 23:** The hokim of Gallaorol district in Jizzak region Azim Tulaboev scolded and ordered the arrest and two-day detention of Yusuf Esirgetov, chief doctor of the central hospital of Gallaorol, for not fulfilling the cotton harvest quota assigned to the hospital. Dr. Esirgapov died of a heart attack few days after his release from detention.

Violations reported:

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Witnesses of the cotton headquarters meeting reported that Gallaorol district hokim Azim Tulaboev scolded Dr. Yusuf Esirgetov, chief doctor of the Gallaorol central hospital, for not ensuring that every hospital employee collect 70 kilograms of cotton each day. The hokim alleged that the hospital staff were only picking 17-20 kg per day. Dr. Esirgapov protested, saying that the quota is impossible with the little amount of cotton in the fields. In response, the hokim ordered the chief of the district police to arrest the doctor. The police detained Dr. Esirgapov for two days. Upon his release, Dr. Esirgapov was taken to the Jizzak city central hospital, and he died of a heart attack on October 9.

Source: Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights, Jizzak region monitor, 10 October 2015.

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1 ILO Convention No. 29 concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour (Forced Labour Convention), adopted June 28, 1930, 39 U.N.T.S. 55, entered into force May 1, 1932, Article 2, stating “forced or compulsory labour shall mean all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily.” The ILO has further explained that “menace of penalty” includes various forms of coercion, such as physical violence, psychological coercion, and the loss of rights or privileges. [ILO, “Giving Globalization a Human Face,” 2012, ILC.101/III/B, Para 308 http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_norm/@relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_174846.pdf, at paragraph 270.]
COTTON CHRONICLE: Issue 6, 2015

2  ILO Convention No. 105 concerning Abolition of Forced Labour, adopted June 25, 1957, entered into force, January 17, 1959, at Article 1b, stating "Each Member of the International Labour Organisation which ratifies this Convention undertakes to suppress and not to make use of any form of forced or compulsory labour...(b) as a method of mobilising and using labour for purposes of economic development."

3  ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, adopted June 17, 1999, entered into force November 19, 2000, prohibits participation of children in hazardous labour, defined as "work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children."


5  Prime Minister of Uzbekistan, Sh. Mirziyieev, “Decree of Cabinet of Ministers of Republic of Uzbekistan ‘On additional measures on implementation of conventions of International Labour Organization (ILO) ratified by Republic of Uzbekistan in 2014-2016,’ Tashkent, 27 May 2014, No. 132, at point No. 25.


7  World Bank project areas include the regions of Andijan (Ulugnor district), Bukhara (Alat district), Fergana (Yazyavan district), Karakalpakstan (Beruni, Ellikkala, Turtkul districts), Kashkadarya (Mirishkor district), Namangan, Samarkand, Syrdarya (Bayavut district), Tashkent. See the following documents for the Uzbek government commitments to the World Bank: [1] Inspection Panel, Report and Recommendations on Request for Inspection, Republic of Uzbekistan: Second Rural Enterprise Support Project and Additional Financing for Second Rural Enterprise Support Project (P126962), Report No. 83254-UZ, (December 9, 2013), at ¶ 25 “all of the following documents have been revised to include provisions that require the beneficiary/beneficiaries to comply with national and international laws and regulations on forced labour, alongside those for child labour: (i) the Rural Enterprise Investment Guidelines; (ii) the Subsidiary Loan Agreement among the Ministry of Finance, the Rural Restructuring Agency (RRA) and the Participating Financial Institutions (PFIs); (iii) the Project Implementation Plan; and (iv) the sub-loan agreement between the PFIs and the beneficiaries. [2] World Bank, “Financing Agreement (South Karakalpakstan Water Resources Management Improvement Project) between Republic of Uzbekistan and International Development Association,” Credit Number 5490-UZ, 29 October 2014, http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/ECAP/2014/11/17/090224b082867c9a/1_0/Rendered/PDF/OfficialDocumoZooClosingoPackage0.pdf, at ¶ 4.01 “Article IV: Remedies of Association.” [3] World Bank, “Loan Agreement (Horticulture Development Project) between Republic of Uzbekistan and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development,” Loan Number 8393-UZ, 8 April 2015, http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/ECAP/2015/05/05/090224b082867c9a/1_0/Rendered/PDF/OfficialDocumoUZClosinigoloPackage0.pdf, at Schedule 2 Project Execution, Section I, Implementation Arrangements, A. Institutional Arrangements, 2. (iv), Schedule 2 Project Execution, Section I, Implementation Arrangements, C. Subsidiary Loan Agreements, 4., Schedule 2 Project Execution, Section I, Implementation Arrangements, C. Subsidiary Loan Agreements, 5.e, Schedule 2 Project Execution, Section I, Implementation Arrangements, D. Sub-financing, 3(c), Schedule 2 Project Execution, Section I, Implementation Arrangements, E. Safeguards, 2., Schedule 2 Project Execution, Section I, Implementation Arrangements, E. Safeguards, 4-6.


9  Mahallas are traditional Uzbek neighborhood, overseen by a mahalla committee that controls distribution of social benefits payments.

10 “Headquarters” are the district- and regional-level organizations of officials that serve to oversee cotton production by meeting regularly, typically daily at the district or regional administration office (hokimiyat), with farmers and administrators of institutions to check progress towards harvest quotas. The meetings enable the regional governors (hokims) to keep the Prime Minister informed of progress towards their respective regional production targets.

11 Ibid.
The Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights presents the latest reports from the 2015 cotton harvest in Uzbekistan in this fourth issue of the Chronicle of Forced Labour in Uzbekistan 2015, detailing instances of forced labour by the government of Uzbekistan, in violation of international law and national law and its commitments to implement these laws.

The Uzbek government has committed to not use forced labour, particularly for the purpose of economic development, has established laws prohibiting forced labour, and has committed to develop a voluntary labour market for the cotton sector, to prevent cotton picking by education and medical staff, and to ensure there is no forced or child labour in World Bank project areas.

The Uzbek government is a member of the International Labour Organization and has ratified ILO conventions concerning forced labour, Nos. 29 and 105, and, concerning forced child labour, No. 182. Article 37 of the Uzbek constitution prohibits forced labour and guarantees the right to work in fair labour conditions, and Article 241 of the Labour Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan prohibits the employment of persons under 18 years of age in hazardous work, including cotton picking. In 2014, the Uzbek government issued a decree committing to the “Creation of institutional base for ensuring of free employment of the cotton pickers by farmers through labour market institutes.” In August 2015, the Uzbek government committed “to prevent the mobilization of education and medical personnel for the cotton harvest,” at a round table with International
Trade Union Confederation, International Organization of Employers, UN, UNICEF, EU and Embassies of the US, Germany, Switzerland, France, Korea and Russia in Uzbekistan. In 2014 and 2015, the Uzbek government signed loan agreements with the World Bank agreeing to the suspension of finance if there is child or forced labour in the project areas. Furthermore, the Uzbek government has committed to respect the inalienable civil rights of its citizens, including freedom of expression and the exchange of information of all kinds through any media, by ratifying the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Despite its commitments, the Uzbek government continues systematic forced labour on a mass scale. From the president to the local neighborhood committees (“mahalla”), all levels of government are orchestrating the forced labour system, and the government is harassing, detaining and suppressing citizens’ attempts to document the cotton harvest and to distribute information about national laws and human rights.

UGF calls on the Uzbek government, International Labour Organization and World Bank to address the following reports of violations of its commitments.

Violations reported in the Chronicle of Forced Labour in Uzbekistan 2015, Issue 5:

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Report 1: Uzbek government officials are threatening to withhold payments to pensioners and women who receive childcare welfare benefits in order to mobilize them to pick cotton, forcing teachers and doctors to pick cotton, and on one farm permitting children to pick cotton in the Kuyichirchik district of Tashkent region.

Violations reported:

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Officials in Kuyichirchik district of Tashkent region have forcibly mobilized residents to pick cotton since September 10. The majority of forced labourers are pensioners, women receiving child care benefits and public-sector workers. Children picked cotton between September 10 and 13 on the “Atadjanov” farm, apparently to help their parents fulfill assigned cotton picking quotas. Officials in Tashkent region have assigned daily cotton picking quotas of 60 kilograms per day, and the rate established is 240 soum (~5 cents USD) per kilogram of harvested cotton. Anyone picking cotton is required to register at the mahalla (“neighborhood committee”).


Report 2: The Uzbek government’s school administrators are forcing teachers to pick cotton and to pay for hiring cotton pickers in Tashkent region.

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Administrators of school No. 62 in Zangiota district of Tashkent region required each staff person to pay 800,000 soums (~$160), purportedly for the hiring of day labourers to pick cotton instead of the school staff. The administration also ordered staff to pick cotton on the weekends and to sign documents stating their agreement with the orders. Many of the teachers have sought additional work to earn income to fulfill the required payments to the cotton harvest.

Teachers from the school said:

“They are collecting 800,000 soums. At the moment, people give as much as they can. One person gave 200,000, another 300,000. They told us to pay the remainder quickly. Soon we will get our salary. They told us after that we have to pay the remainder,” said one teacher 1 of school No. 62 in Zangiota.
“The highest salary in our school is 1,300,000 soums (~$260), and the lowest is 300,000 soums (~$61). Those who receive higher salaries can fulfill the requirements, but even the teacher who receives the highest salary is left with only about 500,000 soums (~$100). Can you imagine how to live in Uzbekistan with this? And imagine the situation of the teachers with lower salaries. For example, some receive 300,000 or 500,000 soums per month and have to pay 800,000 soums to not participate in the cotton harvest. Now one teacher is tutoring, another trading at the market,” said a second Zangiota teacher.

“Our director made us sign the statement. It says, ‘For family reasons, due to childcare duties or other reasons, I ask you to hire a worker to pick cotton instead of me.’ We asked the principal to send us to the cotton fields for 10 days or two weeks, but he refused. It turns out, we all have to pay immediately. We were ready to pick cotton in order to avoid paying the money, but our director did not agree,” said a third Zangiota teacher.

“We were told that 4-5 times per month we will go on buses to pick cotton in groups of ten people. Teachers will go to the cotton harvest when there are no lessons of his/her subject in school. But who is thinking now about school. In the first place stands the cotton,” said a fourth Zangiota teacher.


Report 3: The administration of the Uzbek government’s Pedagogical College of Tashkent is penalizing students with fines of 700,000 soums (~$142) for refusing orders to pick cotton and forcibly mobilizing the students to pick cotton in Buka district, Tashkent region.

Violations reported:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ILO Conventions No. 29 &amp; 105</th>
<th>ILO Convention No. 182</th>
<th>ICCPR Article 19</th>
<th>Uzbek national law</th>
<th>2014 GOU decree to enable voluntary labour</th>
<th>2015 GOU commitments to not send education / medical staff to pick cotton</th>
<th>GOU - World Bank covenants prohibiting forced or child labour</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</table>

The administration threatened parents who paid only 400,000 soums that the police would visit their homes to collect the remainder. The school principal refused to speak with the BBC and Elena Urlaeva, head of the Alliance for Human Rights in Uzbekistan.

“The college administration told her that if she cannot pick cotton, then we have to hire a workers from Kashkadarya instead and give them money. We have to pay 700,000 soums, they said. But my daughter has a fungal infection on her foot. We showed it to a cutaneous specialist. Two of her nails have fallen off. Now she can’t walk. But the college said, ‘Bring the doctor’s certificate stating ‘freed from the cotton harvest.’ But which doctor can give such a document? They can only give a certificate confirming her illness,” said Bahodir Malikov, father of 18-year old Shohsanam, a 3rd-year student in the Pedagogical College of Tashkent.

“It is not easy for us to find that kind of money. Where can I get so much money? There is no work, no salary. To earn 700,000 soums, I have to work more than 1 month, 2 months. I have
three children. My wife works in a kindergarten, but at the moment she also does not work,” Mr. Malikov added.


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**Report 4:** The administration (hokimiyat) of the Kibray district in Tashkent region issued an order that doctors, teachers and staff of kindergartens would pick cotton for two months.

Violations reported:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ILO Conventions No. 29 &amp; 105</th>
<th>ILO Convention No. 182</th>
<th>ICCPR Article 19</th>
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**Report 5:** The Uzbek government has denied citizens’ right to exchange information so thoroughly that citizens are afraid to carry pamphlets that explain national laws prohibiting forced labour.

Violations reported:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ILO Conventions No. 29 &amp; 105</th>
<th>ILO Convention No. 182</th>
<th>ICCPR Article 19</th>
<th>Uzbek national law</th>
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</table>

UGF prepared a pamphlet that explains the national laws in Uzbekistan that prohibit forced labour, and the Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan has been distributing the pamphlets. Alliance member Malohat Ishankulova reported,

“There is nothing inflammatory in the pamphlet, only advice on how to protect rights guaranteed by the law. It explains how to proceed if you are mobilized for forced labour and how to protect your rights against future violations. Nevertheless, when I distributed the pamphlets, people feared reading it, even people with higher education,” said Ms. Ishankulova.

“Reading about the protection of their rights, people wonder and ask us, ‘You must be from Mars. How should this be possible here? There is no law left in our country,’” the Ms. Ishankulova added.
Caricature: The Uzbek authorities have handed out leaflets which inform about the prohibition of forced labour. At the very same time, a mass mobilization for the cotton harvest is taking place across the whole country.


**Report 6:** Alik Nurutdinov, CEO of the Uzbek Metallurgical Industrial Complex “Uzmetkombinat,” a joint venture of the Uzbek government and private companies, ordered 3,500 workers to pick cotton in the Bekobod district of Tashkent region.

Violations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ILO Conventions No. 29 &amp; 105</th>
<th>ILO Convention No. 182</th>
<th>ICCPR Article 19</th>
<th>Uzbek national law</th>
<th>2014 GOU decree to enable voluntary labour</th>
<th>2015 GOU commitments to not send education / medical staff to pick cotton</th>
<th>GOU - World Bank covenants prohibiting forced or child labour</th>
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</table>

Uzbek Metallurgical Industrial Complex “Uzmetkombinat” CEO Mr. Nurutdinov issued a written order for 3,500 staff to work on the farms Bekobod, Navbahor, Oybek, O‘zbekiston, Mavlonov and Avangard in the Bekobod district of Tashkent region. The order detailed instructions for each group to include overseers, pickers, cooks, medical staff, and persons organizing entertainment.
Uzemetkombinat is a joint venture in which the Uzbek government owns 74% of shares. The Uzbekmetkombinat website lists as major private shareholders “UzDaewooAuto,” AGMK and NGMK. However, in 2008 General Motors and the state-owned company UzAvtoSanot purchased UzDaewooAuto and established GM Uzbekistan.


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**Report 7:** Administrators of clinic No. 2 in Urgench city forced staff to pick cotton in the village of “Bashkirshih” in the Yangibazar district of Khorezm region or to pay a fine of 10,000 soums (~$2) per day, purportedly for the hiring of a day labourer to pick cotton in their place.

Violations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ILO Conventions No. 29 &amp; 105</th>
<th>ILO Convention No. 182</th>
<th>ICCPR Article 19</th>
<th>Uzbek national law</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</tbody>
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The bus transporting 80 people, including staff from clinic 2 and day labourers, rolled over, on Sunday, September 20 at approximately 8:00 AM. Twenty-three people were injured, and two clinic employees were treated for injuries at the hospital.


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**Report 8:** Administrators of kindergarten No. 13 in Buka district, Tashkent region and the head nurse of the Buka children’s hospital forcibly mobilized staff to pick cotton in the region. The Toytepa district forcibly mobilized students to pick cotton in the Huja farm in Buka district.

Violations reported:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ILO Conventions No. 29 &amp; 105</th>
<th>ILO Convention No. 182</th>
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</table>

Employees of the kindergarten and sports center in Buka district picked cotton as Brigade No. 170 on the farm Kokaral, each day until lunchtime. Khilola Juraeva’s daughter was one of the nurses at the hospital in Buka who was sent to pick cotton, and Ms. Juraeva reported that her sister Barno Khodijieva, a kindergarten teacher, had been forced to pick cotton in 2014 and was fired after a theft occurred in her classroom while she was in the cotton fields. Employees of the Buka prosecutor’s office picked cotton on the Dustlik farm on September 23, reported a Buka resident.
Report 9: The administrators of schools and hospitals in Jizzak region used coercion to mobilize employees to pick cotton and ordered the employees to lie by saying they voluntarily pick cotton to anyone who asks.

Violations reported:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ILO Conventions No. 29 &amp; 105</th>
<th>ILO Convention No. 182</th>
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</table>

“I do not know a single nurse or teacher who went out to harvest cotton on his or her own will. Those who go to the fields these days do so only because of orders they received from their superiors. They were also instructed what to say in case a foreigner asks them questions while in the cotton fields. They have to say that they pick cotton voluntarily to make money, and no one is forced to do so,” said a teacher in Jizzak region interviewed by UGF.

Report 10: School administrators mobilized students and teachers to pick cotton in the Bayaut district of Syrdarya region.

Violations reported:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ILO Conventions No. 29 &amp; 105</th>
<th>ILO Convention No. 182</th>
<th>ICCPR Article 19</th>
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</table>

“We sleep at the local school while here to harvest cotton in the Bayaut district. It has been two weeks since the start of the harvest season. The work is not easy. Our teachers wake us up at 5:30 in the morning. We dress, have breakfast and go to the fields. By 7 AM, we are already working in the fields. The weighing of cotton picked starts at 5 PM, and around 7 PM we return to our accommodations. There are no washing facilities, only 10-15 places to wash for more than 400 students. We have to fill water containers ourselves, and wait in long queues. There is no hot water. Most students rent apartments for 4,000 – 5,000 soums (~$1) per night. Our bedroom is the school’s gym, and more than 60 people sleep there. There is no fresh air, since everyone keeps everything, including clothes and shoes, her,” said a 19-year old first-year student at Gulistan State University.


Photo: Students are preparing food for themselves at the cotton harvesting.
**Report 11:** Police arrested, detained and beat Dmitry Tihonov in retaliation for his work to document practices during the cotton harvest.

Violations reported:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ILO Conventions No. 29 &amp; 105</th>
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The police arrested Dmitry Tihonov while he was observing the mobilization of people for the cotton harvest at the city administration office in Angren city, Tashkent region. Police took Mr. Tihonov to room 22 of the police station and interrogated him, and an apparently senior ranking officer beat him.

“He started to insult and intimidate me, yelling at me, threatening to use force. I sat there in silence. Then he came closer and raised his fist at me. Naturally I wanted to defend myself, but I realized that if I hurt him I could be accused of attacking a police officer. In such a situation it is difficult to prove anything. Knowing this, I sat without moving. Then he picked up a stack of papers, 200 sheets, and started beating me on the face with it, shouting, ‘Cotton is our wealth, our pride! You interfere with us. What right do you have to interfere with our business?!’” reported Mr. Tihonov.

“I am consulting with lawyers about my detention and the beating by the police, but I will not stop monitoring. I will continue. But if they tie me up and people follow me at every turn, monitoring will not be very successful. I will continue this work. What happened to me cannot be the reason to end my work,” Mr. Tihonov added.


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**Report 12:** School administrators forced teachers to pick cotton and penalized teachers who refused with fines in the Bukhara, Samarkand and Tashkent regions.

Violations reported:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</table>

Eid Al-Adha is one of two annual holidays celebrated by Muslims globally and a national holiday in Uzbekistan. Administrators of schools in the Bukhara, Samarkand and Tashkent regions forced teachers to pick cotton on the holiday and fined teachers who refused between 30,000 and 40,000 soums (~ $8 - $10). In Samarkand, the school administrators mobilized teachers under orders from the district mayors (hokims). A secondary school teacher from Samarkand reported that the administration of his school is sending 20 members of the 60-person staff to pick cotton every 10 days in the Pastdargom district of Samarkand region.
“Why are teachers in Uzbekistan forced to pick cotton? Even though Eid Al-Adha is an official public holiday, we the teachers are forced to go pick cotton. What an injustice. Why do other countries not take strict measures against such oppressive and foolish policy of the government of Uzbekistan? How long shall this go on?! They demand 30,000 soums to not pick cotton on the holiday. Half of our teachers will pick cotton, and the other half will pay and stay home to celebrate the Eid Al-Adha,” wrote a secondary school teacher from Samarkand in a letter to Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty “Ozodlik.”


1 ILO Convention No. 29 concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour (Forced Labour Convention), adopted June 28, 1930, 39 U.N.T.S. 55, entered into force May 1, 1932. Article 2, stating “forced or compulsory labour shall mean all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily.” The ILO has further explained that “menace of penalty” includes various forms of coercion, such as physical violence, psychological coercion, and the loss of rights or privileges. [ILO, “Giving Globalization a Human Face,” 2012, ILC.101/III/18, Para 308 http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_norm/@relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_174846.pdf, at paragraph 270.]

2 ILO Convention No. 105 concerning Abolition of Forced Labour, adopted June 25, 1957, entered into force, January 17, 1959, at Article 1b, stating “Each Member of the International Labour Organisation which ratifies this Convention undertakes to suppress and not to make use of any form of forced or compulsory labour…(b) as a method of mobilising and using labour for purposes of economic development.”

3 ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, adopted June 17, 1999, entered into force November 19, 2000, prohibits participation of children in hazardous labour, defined as “work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.”


7 World Bank project areas include the regions of Andijan (Ulugnor district), Bukhara (Alat district), Fergana (Yazyavan district), Karakalpakstan (Beruni, Elikkala, Turtkul districts), Kashkadarya (Mirishkor district), Namangan, Samarkand, Syrdarya (Bayavut district), Tashkent. See the following documents for the Uzbek government commitments to the World Bank: [1] Inspection Panel, Report and Recommendations on Request for Inspection, Republic of Uzbekistan: Second Rural Enterprise Support Project and Additional Financing for Second Rural Enterprise Support Project (P126662), Report No. 83254-UZ, (December 9, 2013), at ¶ 25 “all of the following documents have been revised to include provisions that require the beneficiary/beneficiaries to comply with national and international laws and regulations on forced labour, alongside those for child labour: (i) the Rural Enterprise Investment Guidelines; (ii) the Subsidiary Loan Agreement among the Ministry of Finance, the Rural Restructuring Agency (RRA) and the Participating Financial Institutions (PFIs); (iii) the Project Implementation Plan; and (iv) the sub-loan agreement between the PFIs and the beneficiaries. [2] World Bank, “Financing Agreement (South Karakalpak Water Resources Management Improvement Project) between Republic of Uzbekistan and International Development Association,” Credit Number 5490-UZ, 29 October 2014, http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/EC/A2014/11/17/090224b082867eca/1_0/Rend red/PDF/OfficialDocumentZooClosingPackage00.pdf, at ¶ 4.01 “Article IV: Remedies of Association.” [3] World Bank, “Loan Agreement (Horticulture Development Project) between Republic of Uzbekistan and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development,” Loan Number 8393-UZ, 8 April 2015, http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/EC/A2015/05/05/090224b082e0e816/1_0/Rend ered/PDF/OfficialDocumentZooClosingPackage00.pdf, at Schedule 2 Project Execution, Section I., Implementation Arrangements, A. Institutional Arrangements, 2. (iv) Schedule 2 Project Execution, Section I., Implementation Arrangements, C. Subsidiary Loan Agreements, 4., Schedule 2 Project Execution, Section I., Implementation Arrangements, C. Subsidiary Loan Agreements, 5.e, Schedule 2 Project Execution, Section I., Implementation Arrangements, D. Sub-financing, 3(e), Schedule 2 Project Execution, Section I., Implementation Arrangements, E. Safeguards, 2., Schedule 2 Project Execution, Section I., Implementation Arrangements, E. Safeguards, 4-6.

9 Mahallas are traditional Uzbek neighborhood, overseen by a mahalla committee that controls distribution of social benefits payments.
The Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights presents the latest reports from the 2015 cotton harvest in Uzbekistan in this fourth issue of the Chronicle of Forced Labour in Uzbekistan 2015, detailing instances of forced labour by the government of Uzbekistan, in violation of international law and national law and its commitments to implement these laws.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) Forced Labour Convention defines forced labour as “all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself [or herself] voluntarily,” and the ILO explains that “menace of penalty” includes various forms of coercion, such as physical violence, psychological coercion, and the loss of rights or privileges. The ILO Abolition of Forced Labour Convention explicitly prohibits forced labour for the purpose of economic development.

As a member state of the ILO, the Uzbek government has ratified the forced labour conventions and committed to prohibit forced labour. Article 37 of the Uzbek constitution prohibits forced labour and guarantees the right to work in fair labour conditions. In 2014, the Uzbek government issued a decree committing to the “Creation of institutional base for ensuring of free employment of the cotton pickers by farmers through labour market institutes.” In August 2015, the Uzbek government signed loan agreements with the World Bank agreeing to the suspension of finance if there is child or...
forced labour in the project areas.\textsuperscript{vii}

In this fourth issue of the 2015 Chronicle, UGF reports violations of each of the commitments by the government of Uzbekistan (GOU). The violations are listed in the following chart, referencing the articles that follow and provide additional details.

**Violations reported in the *Chronicle of Forced Labour in Uzbekistan 2015, Issue 4*:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Report</th>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>ILO Conventions</th>
<th>Uzbek national law</th>
<th>2014 GOU decree to enable voluntary labour</th>
<th>2015 GOU commitments to not send education / medical staff to pick cotton</th>
<th>GOU – World Bank covenants prohibiting forced or child labour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>District administrator orders private and public organizations to send employees to pick cotton</td>
<td>Tashkent (Uchtepa district)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Officials extort labour or money from business owners for the cotton harvest</td>
<td>Tashkent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Imams urge parishioner to pick cotton</td>
<td>Tashkent</td>
<td></td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4, 5</td>
<td>Mahallas\textsuperscript{viii} threaten to cut pensions of those who refuse to pick cotton</td>
<td>Fergana, Jizzak, Karakalpakstan (Beruni and Chimbay districts)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Government orders mahallas to mobilize cotton pickers</td>
<td>Kokand</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Hospital and healthcare administrators order employees to pick cotton</td>
<td>Jizzak</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mahallas threaten to cut childcare payments to those who refuse to pick cotton</td>
<td>Jizzak</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>University threatens students with expulsion for not working the cotton harvest</td>
<td>Tashkent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6, 8</td>
<td>3rd-year high-school and university students sent to pick cotton</td>
<td>Tashkent, Jizzak, Syrdarya</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Public-sector workers, including tax office and medical personnel, sent to pick cotton</td>
<td>Jizzak</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Businesses ordered closed until after cotton harvest</td>
<td>Samarkand</td>
<td></td>
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**Reports by the Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights (UGF)**
monitors

Report 1: The administrator (hokim) of the Uchtepa district of Tashkent city, A. Dosmukhamedov, issued an order to organizations of all types to contribute labour to the cotton harvest. The order applies to both public institutions and private companies, to submit a list of employees who will pick cotton to the district administration (hokimiyat). Copies of the order and its annexed form to assemble the list follow. Translated into English, the order states:

“In keeping with the order issued by the Cabinet of Ministers during its meeting on 28 August 2015, as well as taking advantage of favorable weather conditions in order to collect the cotton crop without any loss, all organizations, enterprises and business entities of Uchtepa district (Tashkent city), regardless of the form of management, are informed to participate in the cotton harvest.”

“Based on the above, please select 18 employees for the cotton harvest. Submit a list of these employees (with copies of passports) using the attached form to the headquarters of the Uchtepa district hokimiyat (5th floor), by ______ hour ______ (date) _______ 2015.”

“District Khokim signature A. Dosmukhamedov”

The order and annexed form

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Independent Media Reports

Report 2: “Business owners in the largest markets in Tashkent complain about ‘cotton fees’”
The owner of a business in the “Karvon” market in Tashkent reported in an interview with Radio Ozodlik that each business owner was ordered to provide a cotton picker for ten days and, in some cases, up to a month. “When we said that we do not have extra people, the city hall and tax officials told us: ‘Then pay for ten days, 400,000 soums (approximately $84).’ In fact, we don’t have much staff; where could we get the money to pay another salary? We have to pay the compensation; there is no other way for us,” said the businessman.

Shoira Sodikbekova, a resident of Tashkent, reported that the other major market in Tashkent, “Abu Sahiy,” had started raising money for the cotton harvest. “My sons rent space for a trading shop at this market. They were told, ‘Give heartily, as much as you can afford, and we will hire workers and take them to the fields. Help with the cotton harvest.’ They collect from the shop owners. This can be observed every year,” said Ms. Sodikbekova.


Report 3: “Mosques are calling on parishioners to help with the cotton harvest”

During recent Friday prayers at many mosques in Uzbekistan, the imams urged parishioners to participate in the cotton harvest and to pray to Allah for an abundant harvest. “Today at the Friday prayer, the Imam asked us to support the cotton growers, both financially and spiritually. It seems the cotton harvest has nearly the status of a Sunna, approved by the Prophet Muhammad. Next it might be considered a farz, an action required of every Muslim following sharia instructions,” reported a Radio Ozodlik listener.

A staff person at the cathedral mosque of Khoja Alambardor in Tashkent confirmed that the imams are now delivering sermons that urge people to pick cotton, on orders of the “Spiritual Administration of Muslims in Uzbekistan.” “There is an order from the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan to read these sermons. All communities pray to God for a good cotton harvest. They also research the value of cotton to the country,” said the mosque representative.

This year the imams themselves will also go pick cotton, according to the regional offices of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims in Uzbekistan. Under the influence of international pressure in recent years, the Uzbek government has stopped forcing children to work in the fields, particularly school children. However, now, rather than students, millions of adults are forcibly mobilized to the cotton fields.


Report 4: “In Uzbekistan state employees, pensioners and women with young children asked to participate in the cotton harvest”

Fergana

The higher education institutions in Fergana region began sending students and teachers to pick cotton, in fields in the Yazavansky district, according to regional residents. A pensioner from Fergana city told Radio Ozodlik that all the neighborhood committees (mahallas) compiled lists of people who receive pensions and childcare allowances from the government, and everyone listed was ordered to go to the cotton harvest. A human rights activist from Fergana, Abdusalom Ergashev, confirmed the reports, adding that 18 buses took people to the cotton fields in the region on September 7.

Kokand

Each neighborhood committee (mahalla) was instructed to organize groups of 10-15 people to send to pick cotton, reported an employee of one of the committees. “We were told to provide 10-15 cotton pickers from each mahalla. These are people who either receive state pensions or are public-sector workers. We drew up a list of them and gave it to the administration [mayor’s office]. So far they have been told they will pick cotton starting September 10,” said the committee employee.

Jizzak
The belongings of staff of hospitals and medical clinics were brought to facilities near the cotton fields in the Dustlik area of Jizzak region, reported the human rights activist Uktam Pardaev.

“Their belongings were sent on September 3 and 4. The employees were told that they should be ready to go to the cotton harvest at any moment. This year they do not know in advance the day they will have to leave for the fields. Earlier they said September 5, but now they say within 2-3 days. All the neighborhood committees also have to be ready to go at any time,” said Mr. Pardaev.

In Gallyaral district, neighborhood committees have visited homes and warned women that receive state childcare benefits that it is mandatory to pick cotton, according to Mr. Pardaev. If the mothers do not comply with the orders, the committees threaten to suspend the childcare payments.


Report 5: “Students of the Irrigation Institute wrote a ‘commitment letter’ to harvest cotton”

Students at the Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Melioration wrote to Radio Ozodlik to report that they signed agreements to be suspended from school if they do not pick cotton. The document, called an “obligation,” refers to the students’ participation in the cotton harvest as “educational practice.”

The students provided a copy of the obligation letter to Ozodlik. The document states:

“I, ______________, a student in the ______ course of the Faculty of Land Use and Land Registry, have been notified about participation in the cotton harvest of 2015, in order to implement the protocol ‘On Assembly on the preparation
to cotton harvest in Syrdarya region in 2015,’ of the Cabinet of Ministers from 15th August 2015.”
“I will fully participate in practical work during the internship, and will follow the rules of study, discipline, and safety.”
“If I violate academic rules, internal regulations of the higher education institution and practical procedures, I agree to be expelled from the ranks of students.”

The Irrigation Institute closed on September 8, and the administration of the Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Land Reclamation did not comment on the “letter of commitment.” An Institute staff member answered the phone and said that the institute would be closed from September 8 until the end of the cotton harvest and added that the documents shared by the students cannot confirm anything.

“I cannot say anything about this. Everyone went to Sayhunabad. The institute is closed today. On all matters, please contact the headquarters in the Sayhunabadskom area,” he said.

The collection of cotton is considered an educational practice in the document sent to Ozodlik. Therefore, if a student does not participate in the educational practice of harvesting cotton, he or she is considered to be in breach of internal institute regulations. Therefore, the student may be suspended from school.


Report 6: “Pensioners forced to pick cotton or submit 50% of their pension”

Pensioners are becoming the next victims of the cotton harvest, Radio Ozodlik is informed. In some areas, the chairmen of neighborhood committees (mahallas) have threatened pensioners with a 50% cut in their pension payments if they do not either pick cotton or hire someone to participate instead of them.

“In our area, there are no state workers or people receiving benefits for childcare. There is only one elderly man who receives a pension from the state. The chairman of the neighborhood committee said, ‘Well, you have a pensioner. Let him either pick cotton or find someone. Otherwise, we will cut 50% of his pension,’” reported a Radio Ozodlik listener from Chimbay district, Karakalpakstan.

In the neighboring district of Beruni, many elderly people are picking cotton and are afraid of losing their pensions, reported a local resident.

“I have not seen very old people, but those picking cotton are around 60 and have retired. What else can they do if they (the mahallas) tell them ‘Go, or you will not get your pension,’” reported the resident, who added that his own family faced this situation.

An official from the Beruni local administration (hokimiyat) told Ozodlik that all public-sector workers are to pick cotton, and mahallas are going to pensioners’ homes and recruiting them to help in the fields.

“If the young people see the old people picking cotton, they will have no reason to refuse. They will be ashamed of themselves and therefore go to the fields,” said the official.

In Jizzak region, neighborhood committees also visited pensioners and urged them to participate in the cotton harvest, reported Ziydulla Razzokov, a human rights activist in the region. Mr. Razzokov said he witnessed one pensioner refuse the mahalla representative’s demand to work in the fields.

Ozodlik is receiving numerous reports from different areas of the country that public-sector institutions, especially hospitals and educational institutes, are sending staff to the cotton harvest. Currently, the third-year college and lyceum students and all students of university and other higher-education institutes are out in the fields.


Report 7: “In Samarkand, weddings are banned during the cotton harvest”

The Samarkand regional government banned wedding celebrations at restaurants and other common venues prior to the start of the cotton harvest. On September 6, the local heads of government (hokims) ordered wedding and other large event venues to close for one month.

“We wanted to celebrate my sister’s wedding on the 10th [of September]. But no one would take our request for a
reservation. The owners of these facilities said that they were ordered not to host any weddings until October 10, due to the mobilization of people to the harvest. With that, we immediately rescheduled my sister’s wedding to another date, September 5,” wrote a resident of Ishtihan district, Samarkand region to Radio Ozodlik.

Residents of the Kattakurgan district of Samarkand reported to Ozodlik that they had to host wedding celebrations at home, due to the ban on facilities hosting weddings. An owner of one of the wedding venues in Kattakurgan reported that the district administration ordered them to not host weddings during the month.

“Every year during the cotton season we are left without work for a month. This was also the case last year. The [district] administration summoned us to a meeting on September 2 and asked us not to host gatherings of people in one location, because it would impede the cotton harvest,” said the wedding venue owner.


**Report 8: “The mobilization has started- ‘Everyone to the cotton fields’”**

A massive mobilization of people to pick cotton is underway in Uzbekistan since September 10. The Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Melioration and the Abdulla Kodiriy State Pedagogical Institute of Jizzak sent all of their students to the cotton fields on September 10, on trains and buses. All of the public-sector institutions sent part of their staff to pick cotton and stay overnight near the fields.

The Jizzak State Pedagogical Institute sent 1st-4th-year students to the cotton fields in Dustlik district, Jizzak region, the morning of September 10. The officials are expected to send the students to the fields in two stages, according to the Jizzak resident and human rights activist Uktam Pardaev, who has been observing the mobilization.

“The mobilization of students from the Pedagogical Institute to pick cotton began this morning. I am standing here watching their departure, on vehicles loaded with food and bedding. Approximately 50-60 busses are filled with students. They say that the students will be sent to the farms in Dustlik district,” said Mr. Pardaev.
Also on September 10, the Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Melioration sent its students to pick cotton. According to an official from the Institute, the students were sent to the Sayhunabad district in Syrdarya region.

“Today, the students’ train will arrive in Gulistan. From there, they go by bus. A place to stay and other amenities were prepared for them,” said the official.

In Karshi city, all university students were sent to pick cotton between September 9 and 10, according to residents. In other regions, the higher-education institutions are preparing to send students to the cotton fields. In Termez and Samarkand, the higher-education and college students will be sent to pick cotton in the next two days.

“Tax Collectors asking for Beds”

The employees of the tax office of Jizzak were sent to pick cotton on September 8 and complained about poor working conditions, reported Mr. Pardaev.

“The Jizzak district tax officers were sent to the Amasay district to pick cotton and stay overnight. A day later, they began to call their homes and ask for beds to be sent, because there were no such thing; the rooms were damp and cold,” Mr. Pardaev said.

“If you are approached by UN representatives, tell them you are here on your own accord”

Medical institutions in Tashkent instructed staff to begin picking cotton this upcoming Sunday in various parts of Jizzak region. One of the doctors ordered to go reported that he and his colleagues were instructed what to say if the inspectors showed up: ‘we came to pick cotton on our own free will.’

“We’re going to the cotton fields on Sunday morning and will stay there for one month. The chief doctor told us that if we meet UN experts, we should say that we came on our own will,” said the doctor.

“Ҳамма пахтага” – оммавий сафарбарликка старт берили,

September 2015, http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/27236925.html

\[\text{ILO Convention No. 29 concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour (Forced Labour Convention), adopted June 28, 1930, 39 U.N.T.S. 55, entered into force May 1, 1932.}
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\[\text{Prime Minister of Uzbekistan, Sh. Mirziyev, “Decree of Cabinet of Ministers of Republic of Uzbekistan ‘On additional measures on implementation of conventions of International Labour Organization (ILO) ratified by Republic of Uzbekistan in 2014-2016’,” Tashkent, 27 May 2014, No. 132, at point No. 25.}
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\[\text{World Bank project areas include the regions of Andijan (Ulugnor district), Bukhara (Atak district), Fergana (Yazyavan district), Karakalpakstan (Beruni, Elikkala, Turtkul districts), Kashkadarya (Mirishkor district), Namangan, Samarkand, Syrdarya (Bayavut district), Tashkent. See the following documents for the Uzbek government commitments to the World Bank: [1] Inspection Panel, Report and Recommendations on Request for Inspection, Republic of Uzbekistan: Second Rural Enterprise Support Project and Additional Financing for Second Rural Enterprise Support Project (P126962), Report No. 83254-UZ, (December 9, 2013), at ¶ 25 “all of the following documents have been revised to include provisions that require the beneficiary/beneficiaries to comply with national and international laws and regulations on forced labour, alongside those for child labour: (i) the Rural Enterprise Investment Guidelines; (ii) the Subsidiary Loan Agreement among the Ministry of Finance, the Rural Restructuring Agency (RRA) and the Participating Financial Institutions (PFIs); (iii) the Project Implementation Plan; and (iv) the}
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viii Mahallas are traditional Uzbek neighborhood, overseen by a mahalla committee that controls distribution of social benefits payments.

ix Editor’s note: A Sunna or Sunnah is an Islamic custom or practice based on Muhammad’s words and deeds.
Reports by the Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights (UGF) monitors

In Bukhara region, the tax inspectorate began collecting payments for the cotton harvest from local business owners on August 20. Officials collected an average of 400,000 ($100) from each business. They told business owners that the money was to hire cotton pickers, but offered no further information about the amount collected or how it would be accounted for.

In Jizzak region, the heads of the district government offices (hokimiyats) convened a meeting with the administrators of public-sector institutions and neighbourhood committees (mahalla[1]) to plan mobilization for the cotton harvest, on August 15. The district governors ordered each mahalla chairman to organize 100-200 residents to pick cotton, focusing on those who receive social welfare benefits. The governors ordered administrators of public institutions—primarily primary schools, high schools and hospitals— to organize their employees into shifts to pick cotton. The administration of the Jizzak Pedagogical Institute arranged a camp to accommodate its students when they pick cotton in the Dustlik district, and local residents noted that the camp has bunk beds and insufficient space to have separate...
rooms for female and male students.

Several administrators from public institutions in Tashkent visited Jizzak to arrange accommodations for their employees to sleep during their shifts picking cotton. For example, the administration of the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Education, located in Tashkent, plans to send 30 employees to pick cotton in Jizzak for one month.

In Kashkadarya region, administrators of several hospitals required staff to sign a commitment to perform agricultural work and an undated resignation letter. One document read, “I (NAME) commit to actively participate in public and agricultural work. In case of failure to do so, I agree to be dismissed. This document has been written by me.” The other read, “It is my request to resign from this post.” Hospital staff report their concern that if they refuse to pick cotton, a date will be added to the resignation letter to fire them at “their own will.”

In Syrdarya region, school administrators ordered teachers to distribute leaflets encouraging residents to pick cotton. The administrators also obliged the teachers to collect signatures from people indicating their agreement to harvest cotton, and lists of the signatures were shared with the neighbourhood committees (mahalla). Residents reported that they fear reprisals if they do not sign up.

In Tashkent region, the Angren city administration convened a meeting with administrators of public institutions and company managers to plan mobilization of their employees to the cotton harvest. The Angren city administration is coordinating with the Buka district administration for Angren residents to pick cotton in Buka. Angren administrators sent some employees to Buka on August 20 to arrange accommodations for those sent to pick cotton. Notably, Buka district is a project area of the World Bank, which has committed to suspend its lending to the Uzbek government if there is forced or child labour in its project areas.

**Independent Media Reports**
“I'll pick cotton for you”

The cotton harvest begins in a few days. Health care workers, teachers, students, soldiers, and other professionals will pick cotton “voluntarily,” it is reported. The money earned from the cotton harvest has never been enough to pay for their food and transportation to the fields.

And there is always someone too “lazy” to go, the BBC notes. For them, there are workers for hire who can collect their assigned cotton harvest quota. The BBC spoke to one of the workers offering the service.

“In one day, I will collect 30 kilograms of cotton for you. If you need to find 10 more cotton pickers, I can find them,” the man said. He is 20 years old and works as a loader. It is no secret that he is not alone in Uzbekistan.

Elderly teachers, doctors, and employees of other public institutions, particularly those who are not in good health, are required to hire a substitute to pick their assigned quota of cotton if they do not do it themselves, and they must pay the worker out-of-pocket.

A doctor told the BBC that he was fed up with these payments. “Last year I paid 300,000 soums ($90) to hire a worker to pick my quota, 50 kilograms of cotton a day.”

On Facebook, an advertisement was posted in Uzbek, stating “I'll pick cotton for you.” On her Facebook page, Yulia Drozdova wrote, “We received orders from our institution that three people should pick cotton in Jizzak.” On his page, Timur Allayarov wrote,

“It’s very sad. Imagine yourself in the place of a kindergarten teacher. Their wages are 200,000 – 400,000 soums. They are forced to write that they will pick cotton ‘voluntarily’ and are sent to the field for 1.5-2 months. The hired worker who goes instead of someone charges 20,000 – 30,000 soums per day. Those who do not want to pick cotton are forced to retire.”


“In Uzbekistan the cotton campaign has begun. Health workers, students and other citizens are forcefully sent to the cotton fields.”

The Uzbek government ordered students in their 3rd and 4th year at the National University of Uzbekistan to prepare for departure to the cotton fields. According to Radio Ozodlik sources, students from NUU (formerly known as Tashkent
State University) will pick cotton in Dashtabad city in the Zaamin district of Jizzak region. Representatives of the school already visited Jizzak to arrange accommodations for the students during their time harvesting cotton.

“This is the first time the National University will send the students. Previously, only students enrolled there with scholarships for having served in the army went to the cotton harvest. This year the others will go as well,” reported Radio Ozodlik sources.

Meanwhile, health care workers are already working in the fields. Employees of the Medical Association of Yangiariq District (formerly “Guliston”) in Khorezm region sent a letter to Ozodlik, reporting that the institution is sending between 350 and 400 doctors and nurses to the cotton fields every day. The workers cited unsatisfactory conditions in their letter:

“At 7:30 in the morning we are taken to the field on a crowded bus. In the evening, often after 8:00 PM, we are taken back. They take us to impassable fields where our boots get filled with sand and the buses get stuck. There is no way to avoid it. When the bus gets stuck, the nurses have to push it. And there is no payment for the harvested cotton. Food is not provided. Everyone must bring their own bread and tomatoes. The cotton is very low. In the sand there are a lot of snakes.”

The medical workers added that anyone who refuses to go to the harvest must pay, “It costs 10,000 soums (about $2.50) per day.”

However, head of the Medical Association of Yangiariq, Umid Jumaniyazov, denied the allegations in the letter. In an interview with Ozodlik, Mr. Jumaniyazov said, “The cotton season will begin soon. It has not yet started. It’s all a lie. We will leave for the field only after the official order is given.”

In the Yangiariq district administration office (hokimiyat), staff report that the cotton harvest has begun but the official order to mobilize people has not yet arrived from the regional administration. Official reports state that mobilization to the cotton harvest began in Syrdarya, Surkhandarya and Kashkadarya regions and that in villages throughout the country leaflets have been distributed calling on people to participate in the harvest. Teachers, neighbourhood committees (mahalla), the veterans organization “Nuroniy,” and the youth organization “Kamalot” are visiting residences and collecting signatures of people confirming that they are willing to participate in the cotton harvest. The owner of the residence, household members, their passport details and signatures of consent to participate in the cotton harvest are recorded on a form, and completed forms are submitted to the chairman of mahallas, who in turn give them to their municipal and regional administrations.

If someone tries to refuse to commit to participate in the cotton harvest, they threaten to cut their pensions and benefits or to deny certificates required by various services. However, to avoid the field, you can pay for an exemption, for 300,000 soums (approximately $62).
“For several years in our area, natural gas has been cut off, so we have to use propane. When you call the gas company to get propane, they require you to present a certificate from the mahalla. In the mahalla, they say, ‘You’ll get a certificate if you send someone to the cotton field.’ In our family, my father is disabled; all my younger siblings go to school; and I earn a living working as a taxi driver. The mahalla threatens that if you don’t participate in the cotton harvest, we won’t have any gas, and no pension for our father,” said a resident of Bakhmal district, Jizzak region.

The resident of Bakhmal, in an interview with Ozodlik, reported that picking cotton means going to Mirzachul district from morning until the evening without being paid.

“Those who have gone to pick cotton returned with ticks and lice. If you see the so-called ‘drinking water’ and toilet, you will be scared. They feed people with very bad food and keep the money for the collected cotton. Having worked in the field for two months, I will return home in debt for the food, and the mahalla will demand compensation. Therefore, no one wants to go to pick cotton,” the Bakhmal taxi driver explained.

He added that it is most difficult for those whose relatives work abroad. “They have to pay the mahalla for at least four people.”


“Mass mobilization to the cotton harvest to start September 5”

Officials ordered public-sector workers and employees of neighborhood committees (mahallas) to start harvesting cotton on September 5 for those in Tashkent and September 10 for those in Andijan. The cost to avoid picking cotton is 800,000 soums (approximately $180) per person. Officials are also requiring businesses to contribute to the cotton harvest.

In Jizzak region, medical, education, and banking institutions will send staff to pick cotton for 45 days, starting September 5. Private companies have received the same order for their employees. In an interview with Radio Ozodlik, the owner of an auto repair shop in Jizzak city reported that local officials ordered him to send two employees for 45 days to the cotton harvest. “So far, two of my employees have agreed to go. They say participation in the cotton harvest is compulsory, everyone should go,” said the businessman.

Another businessman in Jizzak reported that the neighborhood committees (mahallas) are visiting homes and forcing people to sign a commitment to send a family member to work the entire cotton harvest.

The commitment form includes the name and surname of the family members, their passport information, and signature.

Maintenance staff of a secondary school in Andijan region and an employee of the Buka district hospital in Tashkent region reported that the mobilization to the harvest will start September 10 for them.

Anyone who cannot or does not want to participate must pay a fee, and Ozodlik sources have reported that demands for the payments have already begun. A public-sector worker in Tashkent said employees from his institution have to pay 800,000 soums ($160) if they cannot go.
Over the last two years, the massive involvement of the adult population in the cotton harvest has taken on unimaginable proportions.

This year, the government of Uzbekistan is expected to obtain $1 billion in profit from cotton sales. Officials report that President Islam Karimov signed a decree to set the XI International Uzbek Cotton Fair in Tashkent, October 15-16.


“Uzbekistan is once again sending minors to the cotton fields”

The mayor of Bukhara ordered 2\textsuperscript{nd}-year students in the medical college, who are under age 18, to sign a form stating their agreement to voluntarily participate in the cotton harvest. The 2\textsuperscript{nd}-year medical college students will be sent to the cotton fields starting September 5, along with 3\textsuperscript{rd}-year students and teachers from all other colleges in the district.

A student in the Bukhara medical college wrote to Ozodlik,
“Our principal said this year’s cotton harvest is difficult, so we will also be taken to the cotton fields. He asked us to write a form agreeing to voluntary participation in the cotton harvest, and he dictated the text of the statement. We all had to write it,” reported the student, whose identity is anonymous for security concerns.

The following is the text of the statement that students had to write:

“I NAME, a student in group NUMBER at Bukhara Medical College agree to go to pick cotton on my own will. I wrote this statement myself. DATE and SIGNATURE.”

In an interview with Ozodlik, a teacher at Bukhara Medical College confirmed, on condition of anonymity, the involvement of the students in this year’s cotton harvest:

“They announced that 3rd-year students would go to the cotton fields starting September 7. Then the acting director of the college Uktam Gaffarov instructed staff to collect from all 2nd-year students a statement of voluntary desire to participate in the cotton harvest. Now all the statements have been collected and delivered to the director,” said the teacher.

The teacher added that teachers will also be sent in groups to pick cotton:

“Nobody wants to pick cotton. But we have to. Last year, one of our colleagues was bitten by a snake during the harvest. They barely saved his life. Such incidents are suppressed, so much that hardly anyone knows about them. Last
year, teachers had to pay $200-$300 to avoid the cotton harvest,” he said.

Staff of the Bukhara pedagogical college also reported to Ozodlik that colleges in the region are mobilizing students and teachers to pick cotton.

“All 3\textsuperscript{rd}-year students of colleges in the region, including ours, will be taken to the cotton fields. Teachers will be sent for ten-day shifts. This is the verbal order from the Bukhara regional hokim. They say if there is a need, 2\textsuperscript{nd}-year students will also go,” said the employee of Bukhara pedagogical college.


[1] Mahalla are neighborhood committees, typically led by elders of the community, and used by the Uzbek government to implement policies at the local level.
Uzbek government uses local organizations to mobilize cotton pickers

The government of Uzbekistan has begun preparations for the 2015 cotton harvest. In at least two regions, the government appears to be using local organizations with close links to the government to support the mobilization of cotton pickers for the harvest.

In Syrdarya region, an appeal under the names of the Charity Foundation Mahalla, Nuroniy Foundation, and youth-focused organization Kamolot was circulated that called on residents to work for the president and pick cotton:

“Our people traditionally consider such work to be an honourable occupation. Therefore, those who are able to work and who consider themselves part of our society must not stay away from this worthy cause, and from the beginning of the cotton harvest must go to the cotton fields. During the harvest, everyone should consider oneself a cotton picker. This is the way to prove our patriotism and devotion to our homeland. We can thus show our esteemed president that we are hardworking, honest people with an open heart.”

Residents of Syrdarya reported that the neighbourhood committees, known as mahallas, asked them to sign a document stating that they agree to take part in the upcoming harvest.

Report by Uzbek-German Forum monitors, Uzbekistan, 15 August 2015
Prime Minister checks on cotton production in Jizzak

In Jizzak region, the Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyoyev visited to check on the status of cotton production, on August 15, 2015.

In advance of his visit, regional officials ordered public-sector institutions to prepare the area, and administrators of schools and medical institutions in particular sent their employees to clean the highways and roads. The day of the visit, school administrators organized teachers to stand in the cotton fields along the Prime Minister’s route and pretend to pick cotton with joy and enthusiasm. The teachers remained in the fields from 9 AM until 2 PM.

Following the Prime Minister’s visit, Jizzak’s regional governor (hokim) Saifuddin Ismoilov convened a meeting with officials and farmers in the region. The governor told them that people from Tashkent will not be brought to harvest cotton this year; instead, each farm will need to recruit workers. He added that farmers will be expected to assign 2 hectares to each cotton picker and provide his office with copies of passports for each picker. Farmers reacted to the meeting reporting that they have heard similar statements in previous years, and people were nevertheless sent from Tashkent to their farms.

Report by Uzbek-German Forum monitors, Uzbekistan, 15 August 2015

In Uzbekistan, local officials destroyed farmers’ crops to force them to plant cotton instead of vegetables

Farmers from the Shahrisabz district of Kashkadarya region reported to Radio Ozodlik that the head of the district administration Fakhriddin Norov and district prosecutor Sherali Ashirov ordered the destruction of crops on several hectares of farmland during the last week of July.

According to one of the farmers, Azamat Azimov, the prosecutor sent a tractor to destroy his ripening corn and tomato crops.

“I planted corn on two hectares and tomatoes on one. The tomatoes had already grown, but the corn was not ripe yet; it needed another 10-15 days. The prosecutor destroyed the entire crop. They allowed us to plant it, and now they destroyed it. The prosecutor told me that he destroyed it because I had planted less cotton this year,” said Mr. Azimov.

The farmer tried to resist the destruction of his crops but was met with insults and a beating.

“As I arrived at my field, I heard the prosecutor order ‘clear it!’ I told him, ‘But wait, I have a contract for the corn and spent all the money.’ In response, the prosecutor began insulting and beating me,” reported Mr. Azimov.

Another farmer, who requested anonymity, reported the district prosecutor ordered the destruction of his corn crop as well. This farmer was able to collect a tiny portion of ripened corn from more than a hectare planted.

Other farmers in Shahrisabz district reported that local officials sent tractors that destroyed two other farmers’ clover crops. According to the farmers, only the land of farmers close to the local officials remained untouched.
An employee of the district government, who requested anonymity, confirmed the farmers’ reports of destroyed crops and added that the district prosecutor Ashirov often insulted and beat farmers during public meetings at the district administration office (hokimiyat).

Radio Ozodlik called Mr. Ashirov by telephone, and he did not deny the destruction of the local farmers’ land but claimed that he had nothing to do with it. He asked Ozodlik to call back at another time but did not answer subsequent calls.

The head of the district, Mr. Norov, told Ozodlik that he would only communicate with radio reporters face-to-face in his office, and then hung up the phone.

The chairman of the Shahrisabz district Farmers Association, Qodirov Odil, told Ozodlik that he was unaware of any problems of local farmers.

Radio Ozodlik, “В Узбекистане местные чиновники целенаправленно уничтожают урожай фермеров,” 5 August 2015, http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/27171258.html

**Tashkent health care workers’ salaries partially withheld until the cotton harvest**

In Tashkent, government officials withheld a portion of medical workers’ salaries as a fee for cotton even though this year’s crop is not ripe much less harvested, according to the Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan (HRAU).

The wife of the human rights activist and HRAU member Abdurazak Sodikov is a nurse in Almazar district, Tashkent region. Mr. Sodikov reported that for three months straight her salary was docked 30,000 soums ($11.70 at the official exchange rate, $6.50 at the black market rate) as payment for cotton, based on harvest plans to be carried out in autumn. Doctors were charged twice as much, 60,000 soums each month.

Staff of all medical institutions in the Almazar district saw their salaries docked, according to HRAU. It is possible that this method of implementing “the plan” for cotton is used in other areas of Tashkent as well.

“In 2014, Almazar physicians were forced to work during the cotton harvest in a remote district of Jizzak region for several days,” said the head of HRAU Elena Urlaeva. “Abdurazak Sodikov visited his wife then and witnessed the slave labour.”

Fergana recalls that each autumn hundreds of thousands of Uzbek citizens are forced to work in the fields to harvest cotton- they are a strategic resource for the state. Many people, organizations and institutions that are unable or unwilling to fulfill their assigned daily quotas of cotton prefer to pay for exemptions.

Previously, Fergana reported that medical workers in the Buka district of Tashkent region were victims of forced labour earlier this year, to weed and till cotton fields. According to HRAU, the head of the Buka district administration (hokimiyat), Mr. Ibrohimov, forced doctors and teachers to weed cotton fields from April until July 19. Only after several workers fainted, suffering from extreme heat and poor quality water, he stopped sending medical workers to the fields.

Ms. Urlaeva filed a complaint against Mr. Ibrohimov, but the district head refused to accept it. Another official, E.
Yusupov shouted at the HRAU leader and said human rights defenders are involved in illegal activities and revealed state secrets.

In response, Ms. Urlaeva staged a picket outside the hokimiyat, demanding the district head accept her complaint. Police officers immediately surrounded her. Through negotiations, Mr. Yusupov accepted Urlaeva’s complaint but told her that she would receive no response from the district or Prime Minister Mirziyoyev.


“Tashkent nurse persecuted for revealing ‘state secrets’ about illegal fundraising”

Following previous reports of officials docking the salary of medical workers for cotton, officials have persecuted the nurse who blew the whistle on the practice.

Local officials threatened Saodat Sodikova, a nurse at a medical clinic in Almazar district of Tashkent, according to a statement issued by the Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan (HRAU). On August 13, Ms. Sodikova was summoned to pass a certification test at the Tashkent Pediatric Medical Institute and told that she would be fired if she did not pass. Sodikova fears that the clinic administration is trying to get rid of her after she disclosed information about the upcoming cotton harvest.

The nurse told human rights activists that her salary was docked 30,000 soums for three months in a row to pay for cotton that has not yet been harvested. According to HRAU, all the medical institutions in Almazar district dock their employees’ salaries for cotton. Nurses are charged 30,000 soums and doctors 60,000 soums.

The human rights activists filed a complaint alleging illegal extortion to the prosecutor, but instead of investigating the district administration arranged the persecution of Ms. Sodikova. Several times administrators summoned her for interrogations, asking her why she disclosed “state secrets” about the collection of money for the “cotton fund,” a practice conducted annually. During the interrogations, they threatened her with dismissal.

Now, HRAU activists are distributing pamphlets entitled, “What to do if you are forced to pick cotton.” They intend to inform doctors, teachers and other citizens that such forms of labour and extortion are illegal.

Download here: http://uzbekgermanforum.org/downloads

During the annual cotton harvest in Uzbekistan, hundreds of thousands of citizens are involved whose actual professions are not related to agriculture. Currently, there is no mass use of child labour in the cotton fields has been observed; however, adult employees of public institutions are being used for the harvest more.


Uzbek Government Coerced Elders to Mobilize Cotton Pickers in 2014
Chairmen of neighborhood committees known as “mahallas” in Uzbekistan reported that the government ordered them to contribute persons to pick cotton in 2014. The local leaders, traditionally respected as elders of their communities, reported the practice to the Initiative Group of Independent Human Rights Defenders of Uzbekistan (IGIHRDU).

The mahalla committees’ chairmen approached the IGIHRDU this summer to report on the practices of Bahodir Goibnazarova, Senator in the national parliament of Uzbekistan (“Oliy Majlis”) and the mayor (“hokim”) of the Almazar district of Tashkent region.

According to the chairmen, during the 2014 cotton harvest Mr. Goibnazarova ordered them to mobilize five people to pick cotton every 10 days or to pay 400,000 soums per cotton picker. Mr. Goibnazarova then assigned two persons from each shift to work as a janitor at the district government office, known as the hokimiyat. Goibnazarova reportedly enforced the orders with verbal and physical abuse, despite the elderly age of the chairmen.

*Independent Human Rights Defenders of Uzbekistan (IGIHRDU), August 14, 2015.*

**Police in Tashkent confiscated pamphlets explaining laws against forced labor from human rights defender Elena Urlaeva**

Police in Uzbekistan assaulted Elena Urlaeva, head of the Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan, at the “Buyuk Ipak...”
Yuli” metro station in Tashkent on August 16, 2015. The police officer kicked her leg, took her camera, and called for back-up from other policemen.

The police arrested Urlaeva and took her to the police station in Mirzo Ulugbekskogo district. In room No. 28 police officer Ilyas Mustafayev searched her belongings and confiscated 200 pamphlets that explain Uzbek laws prohibiting forced labour, published by the Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights.

Ms. Urlaeva suffered severe pain in her leg, where the police officer kicked her. After 7 hours in detention, she asked the police to call an ambulance. Ms. Urlaeva was suffering from high blood pressure and felt chest pain.

The police did not call an ambulance. Ms. Urlaeva’s husband arrived at the police station at 5 PM and took her to the Traumatology Institute, where doctors treated her leg.

Instead of investigating the assault of Ms. Urlaeva, the Mirzo Ulugbek police department sent officers to her home that evening, where they demanded her husband provide a false testimony explaining the cause of her injuries.

Ms. Urlaeva plans to protest outside the National Security Service, the police, building and demand the return of the 200 pamphlets confiscated from her.

*Press Center of the Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan, Tashkent, August 16, 2015*
INTRODUCTION

Each year, the Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights presents independent reporting on state-orchestrated human rights violations in the cotton, silk and other sectors in Uzbekistan in the Chronicle of Forced Labour in Uzbekistan. In the first issue for 2015, we present reports that the Uzbek government continued to use forced labour in the agriculture sector, including cotton and silk production, and for public works throughout the first half of the year.

In May and June, the government forcibly mobilized citizens, primarily health-care workers and teachers, nationwide to weed and tend to the cotton fields. In the Tashkent region the forced mobilisation to the cotton weeding continues and is expected to last until the beginning of August. Some hospitals, such as the Central hospital in Buka city, sent nearly all the nurses and technicians starting the beginning of May. The government did not pay for the additional work.

Also in May 2015, regional and district-level government officials throughout the country forced employees of state institutions to deliver quotas of silkworm cocoons, for another strategic sector for the government, silk.

Throughout the first half of the year, the local officials also systematically forced public-sector workers to clean the streets and public facilities.

REPORTS

Zukhra Kabilova, employee of secondary school №24, died while forced to clean the highway in Angren, Tashkent region

June 12, 2015
Zukhra Kabilova (left) and her hundred year old mother-in-law

55-year-old Zukhra Kabilova died immediately after being hit by a car on Friday, June 4, on the highway in Angren city, Tashkent region. Ms. Kabilova was a cleaning lady at the local school for 22 years. Under instruction by the city officials, her school’s administration ordered her to clean a section of the highway.

Ms. Kabilova, a resident of the Appartak village, was identifying the section of highway assigned to her, when a Volga car hit her, at approximately 10:00 Friday morning. She died on the spot with a fractured skull, ribs and legs.

Obviously, Kabilova should have been at her workplace, the school, rather than cleaning the city streets.
Why was she on the road?

Ms. Kabilova worked for the Angren school district, at school No. 24. According to her colleagues, the Angren city administration (hokimiyat) regularly orders the municipal office of the Department of Education, to send school staff to clean public spaces. The Education Department orders the school administrators, who in turn forcibly mobilize their staff. The school workers cannot refuse, or they risk losing their jobs. The government claims this forced labour is emergency community work (khashar).

There are more than forty secondary schools and nine high schools in Angren. In recent years, their administrations have regularly forced teaching and maintenance staff to work throughout the city. Each school has a site assigned by the city. School staff members clean sidewalks, roadsides, and dump sites; pull weeds; and plant flowers. In other words, they, alongside many other public-sector workers and some businesses’ employees, do the Angren municipality’s work for free.

Forced labour in Uzbekistan is traditionally associated with cotton production. However, this abuse is basically embedded in almost all forms of employment, in both the public and the private sectors. The Uzbek government misrepresents forced labour as “hashar,” an Asian tradition of charitable community work to address an emergency. Work on the improvement of the city cannot be called “hashar” fundamentally because of the involuntary character of the work done by the people. They work because they fear to be dismissed or punished in other ways. Ms. Kabilova’s death is a reminder that the Uzbek authorities have signed the UN Conventions with one hand but approve the use of
forced labour with the other.

The medical report of the death of Zukhra

Zuhra Kabilova was 55 years old. Her neighbors reported that she was providing a living for her family on her own. Her husband is disabled, and her mother-in-law is 100 years old. The family has very little. Following Ms. Kabilova’s death, her school colleagues collected $50 and gave it to the family; the Education Department provided $120; and the insurance company paid $120. That’s all.

Ferghana Information Agency,
http://www.fergananews.com/articles/8584

Following UN Secretary-General visit, Uzbek government continues forcing public-sector workers to work in the cotton fields

June 16, 2015

During the official visit of the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to Tashkent, Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyayev released the government employees from forced cotton harvesting. They hoped it was a miracle— but it was only a mirage.
United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon met with Uzbek President Islam Karimov in Tashkent on June 12. During their meeting, Ban Ki-moon urged the Uzbek government to end forced labour in the cotton sector.

At the day of their meeting Uzbek Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyayev convened regional, district, and city administrators and the police for a teleconference and instructed them to not mobilize any government employees for the cotton harvest in the whole country.

A secondary school director from the Jizzakh region reported:

“The Prime Minister instructed everyone that state employees, including health professionals and school staff would no longer conduct agricultural work, effective immediately. I could not believe it, really?! I wondered, ‘Is there a miracle happening?’ Some claim that perhaps this decision was the result of the meeting with Ban Ki-moon. After the teleconference, we all went home happily’”

However, the miracle did not happen.

After the UN Secretary General left the country, state employees of the Jizzakh and Tashkent regions, including teachers and doctors, were once again forcibly mobilized to work in the cotton fields.

In an interview with Ozodlik, a Jizzakh farmer, who asked not to be named, said that those who took part at the meeting with Shavkat Mirziyayev hoped that the Prime Minister’s order will be permanently valid.

“The Prime Minister ordered hakims not to mobilize teachers, school, college and university students for the field work. ‘Otherwise, I will flay you! It’ll be your head! Now all institutions have their own farms,’ Mirzijaev said. But the next day they still sent state workers to the cotton fields” – reported the farmer with clear disappointment.

Uzbek service of Radio Europe / Radio Liberty
http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/27075858.html

Deliver or pay: Authorities in Jizzakh forced people to deliver silkworm cocoons by any means necessary

Deliver or pay the fine
The governor of Jizzakh region Akmal Abdullayev strongly scolded every farmer who failed to fulfil the quota for the production of raw silk at a meeting on Wednesday, June 17th.

One of the farmers present at the meeting reported that the governor ordered each farmer, school principal, and even a doctor from the district to procure silkworm cocoons.

“He told everyone: “Get the cocoons at any cost, or pay the money”. This spring, mulberry trees were damaged by frost, so no one attempted to grow silkworms. Now, every farmer must deliver 250 kilograms, each school director – 75 kilograms, each head of a kindergarten – 50 kilograms of silkworm cocoons to the state or pay the value of their quota,” said the farmer.

According to the farmer, the governor demanded 15,000 soms (about $3.50 USD) per kilogram of cocoons.

Upon further investigation, Radio Ozodlik discovered that Governor Abdullayev ordered even the elders in the region to deliver silkworm cocoons.

“We, like many others, were told to grow silkworms. But I did not take caterpillars, because I feared that I could not find enough mulberry leaves to feed them and produce the cocoons. Now I need to find 55 kilograms of cocoons,” said one of the elders of Jizzakh.

Silkworms are a source of foreign currency for the Uzbek government. Most of the crop is exported. Therefore, silkworm cultivation is an obligation for the citizens in Uzbekistan.

Uzbek service of Radio Europe / Radio Liberty
http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/27097521.html

**Verbal abuse by the authorities in Uzbekistan led a farmer to commit suicide**

July 4, 2015

*Another farmer committed suicide in the Izbaskan district of Andijan region. 29-year-old farmer Nodirbek Khaydarov hanged himself after harsh treatment at the hands of local officials.*

Swearing, indecent words and threats preceded the latest farmer suicide in Uzbekistan. On July 2, after a meeting in the Paytug city mayor’s office (hokimiyat), Nodirbek Khaydarov was found hanged. Mr. Khaydarov was the 29-year-old head of the farm “Hasanboy hoji Barakat.”

Another local farmers who participated in the meeting reported:

“They were mainly abusing and swearing at the farmers who did not fulfil the quota for the wheat harvest. This year, Nodirbek Khaydarov had delivered 25 tons less than his assigned quota to the state. At the beginning of the meeting, he was severely abused by the mayor, and afterwards by the prosecutor. Both swore harshly at the young farmer, and threatened him with imprisonment,” said the farmer.
The district police confirmed the farmer's suicide.

"After the meeting, he was found hanged in the bathroom of the agriculture department. There was no suicide note. A criminal case has been initiated. There is an ongoing investigation," – said the police.

A resident of the district and acquaintance of Mr. Khaydarov shared the background, while also requesting anonymity. The resident reported that Mr. Khaydarov had committed suicide due to the enormous pressure exerted by the authorities.

“For several years, he could not meet the quota, but the local authorities told him: ‘No matter what, you have to comply with the plan and fulfil the quota.’ Not knowing what to do, the young man has committed such an act. It is a pity for the guy,” said the resident.

The mayor Ulugbek Abdullaev declined to comment. After the reporter introduced himself on the telephone, the mayor hung up, and he did not respond to Ozodlik’s additional attempts to contact him.

Leave or suicide

In the twenty-five years since Uzbekistan’s independence, the government has subjected farmers to fines, humiliation and criminal prosecutions for not fulfilling the state-assigned quotas for wheat and cotton production. In response, some Uzbek farmers fled the country, and some committed suicide.

Over the past two years, the Ozodlik radio reported about at least four cases of farmer suicides.

In November 2013, the 54-year-old farmer Nemat Sulaymonov committed suicide, succumbing to the pressure from authorities in the Bayavut district of Syrdarya region.

In August 2013, the farmer Ismat Shodmonov hanged himself after being beaten up in the administration office in the Qo‘shrabot district of Samarkand region.

In 2014, Habibullo Egamberdiev did not meet his assigned annual cotton quota. The mayor of his district, Khazarasp in Khorezm region scolded and threatened him at a meeting October 17. Thereafter, the farmer hanged himself at his home.

On June 22, 2015, the 44-year-old farmer Kurbontoy Usmonov hanged himself in his summerhouse in the Chust district of Namangan region. According to local residents, the farmer had problems with his farm.

Uzbek service of Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty
http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/27109836.html

Violence and abuse drove 27 Uzbek farmers to appeal to the President

July 10, 2015

On July 7, Azizbek Astrakulov, the head of the Azizbek farm in Akkurgan district of Tashkent region, was mowing the...
wheat that remained after delivering his production quota when the police arrived, beat him up and arrested him.

One of the local farmers who witnessed the incident, told “Ozodlik” that Astrakulov had fulfilled his annual, state-assigned quota for wheat production and that, according to the contract, the remaining wheat on his field belongs to him as head of the farm. However, the police took it away from him.

“Sobir-aka, the police chief of the Akkurgan district and Shukhrat Yuldashev, the head of the Department for Combating Corruption of the Tashkent Regional Directorate of Internal Affairs, arrived that day and tried to force Azizbek to hand over the remaining wheat. Azizbek refused to comply. Police officers tied his hands, put him into a car and drove him to the local police station,” said a local farmer, who requested anonymity.

According to him, the law enforcement officers began to insult Azizbek and his 63-year-old father, who also tried to protest the officers’ action. After eight hours of detention, Azizbek was released, but by then the local authorities had already managed to mow all the wheat from his field.

The same day, the local authorities forced another farmer, Shukhrat Astrakulov, head of the “Jahongir Agro” farm and Azizbek Astrakulov’s uncle, to turn over the rest of the wheat on his fields.

“They tied Shukhrat-aka’s hands too, put him into a car and took him to the police department of Akkurgan area. After having mowed all wheat from his field, the police released him,” – reported an observer to Ozodlik.

An officer the Akkurgan district police told “Ozodlik” that Colonel Shukhrat Yuldashev was sent from the regional police to Akkurgan to control the wheat harvest. Mamurjon Dadajonov, the mayor of Akkurgan, was unavailable for the comments, his phone was switched off.

On July 8, twenty-seven farmers from the Akkurgan district went to Tashkent and filed a complaint with the Prosecutor General. A representative of the Prosecutor General informed them that their complaint will be reviewed within ten days. The farmers then made their way to Aksaray, the residence of the president of Uzbekistan. A member of the presidential administration redirected the farmers to the governor of Tashkent region, Ahmadjon Usmanov.

“The governor said that this year the state had problems fulfilling the plan for grain harvest and asked farmers to hand over the remaining wheat to the state. He promised that our wheat will be sold for the market price to those farmers who had not been able to fulfill their quotas. Therefore, we were forced to give the state all our excess wheat,” said one of the farmers who filed the complaint.

It should be noted that the farmers in Uzbekistan work under difficult conditions. Every year, the authorities require them to fulfill quotas of cotton and wheat or to pay a monetary compensation, and they enforce the quotas with intimidation, verbal and physical abuse, threats to take away the farmland, and criminal charges.

_Uzbek service of Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty_

http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/27120414.html

**In Uzbekistan, as temperatures hit 50 degrees Celsius, forced labourers faint in the cotton fields**

July 27, 2015
Dilbar Djurabaeva, the nurse of the central hospital of Buka city, Tashkent region, fainted in the cotton field, where hospital administrators sent her to the cotton weeding, on July 24.

Ms. Djurabaeva, a 19-year-old nurse at the hospital, reported the incidents in an interview with radio Ozodlik. According to her account, her two colleagues, Iroda and Mahliyo, were already sick after drinking dirty water brought by a local farmer. Iroda confirmed the account to Ozodlik, adding that during the cotton field work many people drink the dirty water from the irrigation canal.

According to eyewitnesses, the day when young girl fainted was unbearably hot, the air temperature having reached 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit).

Initially, Ozodlik received a letter from Buka written by woman named Khilola reporting concerns about her child’s health while being forced to work in the cotton fields. Khilola is the mother of Dilbar Djurabaeva. As detailed in her letter, for the past five months the administration of the central hospital in Buka sent the staff to the cotton fields three or four times each week. She worried that her daughter’s health was suffering.

“It turns out that if the mayor of the city is coming, the workers are given bottled water. When he leaves, no more bottled water is provided. Yesterday the farmers did not bring any water. When the girls said that they were very thirsty, the farmer brought dirty water from somewhere, with floating algae and tadpoles,” the letter stated.

Khilola said that she works in the public education department of Buka. She reported that during the last five months high-school teachers and kindergarten teachers were also forcibly sent to the cotton fields.

“No one can say ‘no, we don’t want to go.’ Each school and kindergarten is instructed to send 5 to 10 employees each day, and on the weekends everyone should show up,” she wrote.

Ozodlik called the mayor of Buka city for his comments, but the mayor’s office hung up the phone when we asked about the reports.

According to the Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan, these days public-sector workers are forcibly sent to the cotton fields all across the country.

“According to our monitoring, within two months, people in Almalyk, Buka, Chirchik, Chinaz and other places have been sent to the fields. In addition, in the Republic of Karakalpakstan, all the students and staff of higher education institutions were forced to work in the cotton fields starting July 16,” reported Elena Urlaeva, the head of the Alliance.

_Uzbek service of Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty_
_http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/27154362.html_

**In Uzbekistan, an elderly woman died while forced to work in the cotton fields**

_July 28, 2015_

Momohol Daminova, 58-year-old resident of the village “Rabotak” in Kizirik district, Surkhandarya region died while
picking weeds from a cotton field, on July 14.

Ms. Daminova, maintenance worker in secondary school №2 was sent to weed the cotton field by the school director.

A resident of Kizirik district and an eyewitness of the incident reported, “On that day, she felt very bad, but the director forced her to go to the field. Fearing that if she refused, she might fire her, she went to the fields. The extreme heat clearly worsened her condition. She was taken home, and she died that evening.”

Another eyewitness told, that despite of the extraordinarily high temperatures and the death of Ms. Daminova, the local authorities continue to send the public-sector workers to weed the cotton fields. In an interview she said, “The mayor (hokim) and the prosecutor gather the heads of the state institutions every night for a meeting. They ask only one thing: ‘How many people have you brought to the field?’ For three months, employees of hospitals, schools and colleges are weeding cotton fields. –It’s a real hell. After the death of Momohol Daminova people began to be sent less, but it still continues.”

“We have not yet seen such a tough policy”

An administrator of one of the public institutions in Kizirik district reported to Ozodlik that the tough policy on forcing people to work is from district prosecutor.

“Every morning, the prosecutor personally counts the number of people who went to the field. Then he begins to divide people, '20 to one farmer, 50 to another farmer.' However, there is not a single word on how to provide people with lunch or water. We have not yet seen such a tough policy.”

“Ozodlik” telephoned to the head of the department of education in Kizirik district, Akbar Yuldashev. He denied that Momohol Daminova was forcibly sent to the field. “No, no, no one forced this woman to go out in the field. The woman died at home due to illness,” the official reported.

After an “Ozodlik” reporter called the Kizirik district prosecutor Uktam Yusupov and introduced himself, the official hung up and stopped responding to the calls.

_Uzbek service of Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty_

http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/27156917.html

Tags: Cotton chronicle, forced labor in uzbekistan, forced labour in uzbekistan, uzbek cotton, Uzbekistan