



April 21, 2015

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

We appreciate your direct engagement in the fight against human trafficking, including chairing the annual meeting of the President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. In advance of the release this spring of the State Department's annual report on Trafficking in Persons, we write today to urge the State Department to keep the government of Uzbekistan at Tier 3 in the *2015 Global Trafficking in Persons Report*.

A decade of global pressure, including placing Uzbekistan at Tier 3 in the 2013 and 2014 TIP Reports, encouraged the Uzbek government to significantly reduce its use of forced child labor and to sign a framework agreement with the International Labour Organization (ILO) in which it committed to work with the ILO to apply labor conventions, including eradicating forced labor. Yet the core of the state-orchestrated forced labor system remains unaltered.

The Uzbek government continues to operate one of the largest state-orchestrated systems of forced labor in the world. In 2014, Tashkent once again forced farmers to meet state quotas for cotton production and forced more than a million of its own citizens to work in the cotton fields. Following international pressure, starting in 2012 the government took steps to substantially reduce forced child labor, and in 2014 did not mobilize children nationwide. However, it increased the use of forced adult labor to compensate, which degraded education and health services and led to widespread extortion of individuals and businesses. Furthermore, authorities suppressed any attempts by citizens to report on these abuses and continued to publicly deny the use of forced labor. Because the government of Uzbekistan is not only failing to end forced labor but is in fact the driving force behind its mass use, Tier 3 is the only appropriate placement for Uzbekistan in the 2015 TIP Report.

The TIP Report is an important means to shine light on modern-day slavery and to press governments to do more to eradicate it. We believe that ranking Uzbekistan at Tier 3 will not only accurately reflect the reality on the ground in Uzbekistan, it will also help press the Uzbek government to take meaningful steps to end the use of forced labor.

Sincerely,

The Cotton Campaign:



Advocates for Public Interest Law

American Apparel & Footwear Association



AFL-CIO



American Federation of Teachers



Anti-Slavery International



Aquinas Associates



Association for Human Rights in Central Asia



Australian Council of Trade Unions



Calvert Investments



CEE Bankwatch network



Child Labor Coalition



Daughters of Charity, St. Louise Province



Dignity Health



Eileen Fisher



Environmental Justice Foundation



Protecting People and Planet

The Eurasian Transition Group, e.V.



Gonggam Human Rights Law Foundation



Human Rights Watch



Inditex



International Labor Rights Forum



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns



Mercy Health



Mercy Investment Services, Inc.



National Consumers League



National Retail Federation



Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment



Open Society Foundations



Portfolio Advisory Board, Adrian Dominican Sisters



Responsible Sourcing Network



Retail Council of Canada



Retail Industry Leaders Association



St. Joseph's Health



Solidarity Center



Textile Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia



Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania



United States Fashion Industry Association



Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights

Walden Asset Management



cc: Pamela Spratlen, United States Ambassador to Uzbekistan
Thomas E. Perez, Secretary of Labor
Nisha Desai Biswal, Assistant Secretary of State, South and Central Asian Affairs Bureau
Tom Malinowski, Assistant Secretary of State, Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Bureau
Patricia A. Butenis, Acting Director, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons

Enclosure:

1. "The Government's Riches, the People's Burden: Human Rights Violations in Uzbekistan's 2014 Cotton Harvest," by The Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights