



March 11, 2013

Mr. Abdulaziz Komilov
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Republic of Uzbekistan

Dear Mr. Komilov:

We are writing to you to follow-up on our request to meet with you during your visit to Washington, DC, March 10-12, 2013, to which we have not received a response from the Deputy Chief of Mission. The purpose of meeting with you, and this letter, is to share with you our deep concerns regarding the continuous and systematic forced labor of children and adults in the cotton sector of Uzbekistan, regular harassment and detention of human rights defenders and journalists, and the enduring problem of torture in detention facilities.

The government of Uzbekistan demonstrated in the 2012 harvest that it has not made serious and sustained efforts to end forced labor of children and adults in the cotton fields. Though fewer of the youngest children were sent into the fields, the system of large-scale, government-organized forced labor in the cotton harvest was implemented in 2012 just as it has been in previous years. In its 2013 report, the International Labour Organization Committee of Experts highlights the “evident contradiction” between the government of Uzbekistan’s position and continued reports from civil society organizations and numerous UN bodies that forced labor of children and adults continues. Therefore, the Committee of Experts urges the government of Uzbekistan to accept a high-level ILO tripartite observer mission.

The business community has also made substantial efforts to bring about an end to forced labor in your country. As of March 6, 2013, over 130 of the world’s largest apparel brands and retailers have contacted their suppliers informing them of company policies not to source cotton harvested in Uzbekistan. Daewoo International, which as you know is a major investor in Uzbekistan’s cotton processing sector, has lost three factories and the business of major western brands, including Ikea, C&A and Hennes & Mauritz. The international community of business, investor, labor, human rights and multinational organizations continues to demand that trade in Uzbek cotton be conditioned on ILO verification of the end of forced labor in cotton production.

We are also deeply concerned by the continued imprisonment of over a dozen human rights defenders and journalists and the enduring practice of torture in Uzbekistan’s criminal justice system. We are appalled that several Uzbek citizens who attempted to observe the 2012 cotton harvest were subjected to harassment and detention for their efforts.

Today, we once again invite you to meet with us to discuss our concerns and a path towards a cotton production system in Uzbekistan in which human rights are fully respected. We believe it is imperative that the government of Uzbekistan immediately take the following measures:

- Invite the high-level ILO tripartite observation mission to conduct unfettered monitoring during the cotton harvest;
- Take immediate and effective time-bound measures to eradicate forced labor of children and adults in the cotton sector;
- Allow unhindered access for independent monitors, including the eleven UN monitors who have been unable to visit due to the government's refusal to issue the required invitations, and implement recommendations by independent monitoring bodies, including UN treaty bodies and special procedures.

We thank you for your immediate attention regarding this critically important matter, and look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely

American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations
United States of America

AFL-CIO



American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
United States of America

Anti-Slavery International
United Kingdom



Aquinas Associates
United States of America



Awareness Projects
United States of America



Calvert Investment Management Inc.
United States of America



C&A
Netherlands



Child Labor Coalition
United States of America



Dignity Health
United States of America



Eileen Fisher
United States of America



European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights
Germany



Environmental Justice Foundation
United Kingdom



Protecting People and Planet

Ethical Trading Initiative
United Kingdom



Ethical Trading Initiative
Respect for workers worldwide

Eurasian Transition Group
United States of America and European Union



GES Investment Services
Sweden



Gonggam Human Rights Law Foundation
Republic of Korea



H&M
Sweden



International Labor Rights Forum
United States of America



Korean Teachers and Education Workers Union (KTU)
Republic of Korea



National Consumers League



United States of America

National Retail Federation
United States of America



Open Society Foundations
United States of America



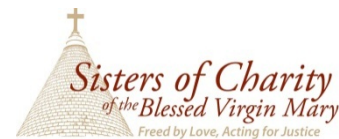
p.h. balanced films
United States of America



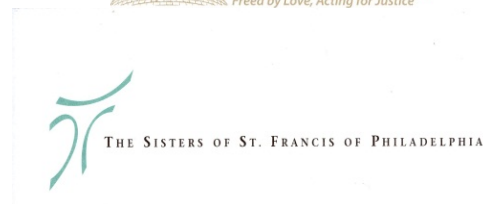
Responsible Sourcing Network
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Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
United States of America



Sisters of St Francis of Philadelphia
United States of America



Sunshine Uzbekistan: The Coalition for National Unity
Uzbekistan



Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania,
Justice & International Mission
Australia



Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights
Germany and Uzbekistan



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