

CHRONICLE OF FORCED LABOUR IN UZBEKISTAN

Issue 2, September 16, 2016



Uzbekistan's acting president Mirziyoev (Artist: Adolat, www.eltuz.com)

Since September 10, 2016, the mass mobilization of the population for the cotton harvest has been in full swing. The Uzbek German Forum for Human Rights (UGF), together with Uzbek human rights activists, are monitoring this forced labor.

So far, UGF monitors have interviewed about 100 people who are directly involved with the cotton harvest: among them there are students, heads of organizations, entrepreneurs and representatives of various professional spheres. Preliminary data indicates that the majority of state organizations' employees are being forced to pick cotton, resulting in significant financial burdens for the families.

The system of forced mobilization has remained the same. Cotton collection is under the control of the heads of local governments, known as khokims, for whom the completion of the cotton harvest quota in these days is a priority.

In the document entitled „Information on the mobilization of employees of the education sector, relating to the system of the Regional Public Education Office on Sunday 18 September, 2016“, it is stated that 852 people of the educational staff coming from 7 institutions were mobilized to harvest cotton on a single day in just one region. (The name of the region has been temporarily withheld to protect the security of the person who passed the document to UGF).

The person responsible for the cotton harvest has traditionally been the former Prime Minister, and now is embodied by the acting president Shavkat Mirziyoev, who has been responsible for the country's agriculture since 2003.

In this chronicle, we present some of the materials gathered by our monitors, as well as independent media reports published during the cotton season.

For more information about the cotton harvest 2016, please visit:
<http://harvestreport.uzbekgermanforum.org/>

Source: (www.eltuz.com), September 21, 2016

Health Professionals from Angren Forced to Harvest Cotton in Buka district

September 28, 2016/in Regions, Tashkent Region, Teachers /



Cotton pickers reading information leaflets about the prohibition of forced labor 2016 © UGF

On September 23, 2016 the activists Malokhat Eshonkulova and Elena Urlaeva went to the Buka district in the region of Tashkent to conduct fact-finding on forced labor in the cotton harvest.

Malokhat and Elena discovered that the medical staff of the city of Angren was currently employed in the cotton harvest. On September 12, 2016 they were sent to work in the cotton fields in the village of Bakhmal, located in the Buka district.

200 medical workers of the unit 619 were accommo-

dated in the school No. 46, whose director is Mavlyuda Kurbanov.

Doctors are sleeping in the school gym, in the kitchen and in the homes of Bakhmal villagers.

A list of doctors, with their daily schedules and the name of their chief, in this case Sobirjon Dzhumakulova, can be seen hanging on the wall. Doctors get up at 5 am and start working in the fields at 6 am. The daily cotton quota they have to collect is 60 kilograms, for which they receive 264 Som per kilogram.

Doctors from multidisciplinary clinics in the town of Angren are accommodated close to the school, in the building of Bakhmal's local administration. There are 67 people working in unit № 625, whose chief is Karimjon Madusmonov.

Elena and Malokhat distributed flyers containing information on the prohibition of forced labor to doctors working in the cotton fields.

Cardiologists, nurses, and nurses' assistants reported that they were all sent to the cotton fields against their will and that they were threatened to lose their job if they refused to harvest cotton.

The Buka district is party to a World Bank project, which prohibits the use of forced labor.

Malokhat Eshonkulova and Elena Urlaeva,

September 23, 2016,
Tashkent

“You work like a slave from morning till night, you do not have not enough food, and you should sleep, but you wake up hungry again”

September 28, 2016/in Andijan Region, Students /



I'm studying at the Andijan Agricultural Institute, in the Faculty of Economics. Due to the days of mourning, classes began on September 4. On September 8, our curator said that starting from September 10 we all will go and pick cotton. I rested a day at home, where I mainly gathered my things for the departure. I took my bed, bedsheets, clothes and food. I had to buy few things to wear though. Besides, I took 10 pieces of flat bread, sugar, butter, condensed milk, biscuits, gingerbread and medicines. I spent 600 thousand Uzbek

Sums (\$95) to buy the food and clothing I needed for cotton-picking. Two warm trousers costed me 50 thousand Uzbek Sums. I also bought 8 warm socks, a jacket, a jumper, slippers, and underwear. My relatives will need another 600 thousand Sums to visit me while I am gone for cotton picking.

We were ordered to gather near the Institute at 6am on September 10. Having spent 20 thousand Sums for the road expenses, I arrived at 6.30am. My uncle helped me get to destination. At 9 am our

column set off towards the area called Sawai in the Kurgantepa district. We were accommodated in the local school. There were approximately 2000 students from my institute. We were placed in different schools though. In the school where we were accommodated, there were mainly my classmates. It was a two-story school. Boys were placed at the gym and those who did not get a corner in the gym were placed in the corridors and in the lobby. Girls were placed in classrooms on the first and second floor. Rooms were emptied before we arrived. Only blackboards were left. Despite the fact that the beginning of the school year was close, classrooms were not repaired and looked pretty old. There were holes in the walls and wind was blowing through them. This year the weather is pretty cold. No matter how sunny the day may have be, cold wind is always blowing. So

I was glad that I took warm clothes with me. But my feet were still cold. Mom told me to take makhsi (national leather shoes), but I was too shy to do so. Many girls wear makhsi over here. I took overshoes, slippers and sneakers. When I leave for picking cotton, especially in the mornings and evenings, my feet get cold. My aunt, who's also a student, got rheumatism 2 or 3 years ago during the cotton harvest. She fainted during the cotton harvest. Local doctors kept her at the hospital until midnight. Then a friend of my aunt secretly called her mother. They arrived immediately and called the ambulance. My aunt had a surgery the same day. She had an intestines' obstruction. My aunt's parents spent a lot of money on her treatment back then. There was a lot of rumours in the institute.

I am scared and so I am wearing warm clothes. So far it has been a week since we have arrived here. Every day, we collect 50-60 kg of cotton. What we earn is only enough to cover food expenses. In the school where we live conditions are very bad. There is always a queue of



people waiting to go to the bathroom. There are two toilets for boys and two for girls. There is no shower though. There is a long tube made of steel. There are 3-4 holes in it for water to come out. We wash our faces and hands standing in a row next to the tube in groups of 3-4 people. The water is cold. In the mornings in the courtyard there is a samovar with boiled water for tea. When we run out of boiled water, there is nothing left but cold water. Everyone eats its own bread and drinks tea. By the way, during the Khaity days we were given bread twice. It is good, and I put sugar and butter on it. We share what we have with friends and eat. Some girls did not bring any food with them. They probably did not know. There are 14 girls in every room. They are all split into 2-3 teams and eat.

We wake up at 5 am. By the time we had breakfast

and brushed our teeth it is already 6.30 am. Then they bring us to the cotton field. When the fields are far they take us by bus, but if they are close we walk. We have lunch right in the field at 1pm. We weight what we collected by 12 pm. Then we have lunch. Sometimes we are given mastava (rice soup) or pasta. We had pilaf in Khaity days. Once they made "dimlama" (fried). There was mainly pumpkin in the "dimlama". Due to the fact that I do not like pumpkin, I could not have "dimlama". Returning from the cotton picking back to the dorm I bought cookies at the local shop. Mom left 50 thousand Sums in cash for minor expenses. In the evening at 6 pm we leave the field and weigh the harvested cotton. Dinner takes place in the field again. For the dinner we are normally given watery soup. We are girls, but the boys stay hungry after dinner. Not everyone has enough food. After such an awful food we head off back to the dorm to get some sleep. They again boil water in the samovar. Generally water is boiled for us to wash our hands, but we use it for tea and to eat our sup-

plies. Then we go to bed. The school building is bad because when we need to go to the bathroom during the night, we have no other way but to pass through the sleeping boys. They sleep undressed. We are ashamed. We are not so close to each other.

As senior year students told us, conditions were better last year. Students were given breakfasts and dinners in the sleeping area. They said: – “This year there is no the president of the state anymore ... That’s why it is so different.” We have not been paid for the harvested cotton yet. Every day we pay for the food we eat. I can’t believe that we will keep suffering.

It would be better not to go to the fields. We have 5-6 people who did not come to pick cotton. They paid \$300 each. One of them is Khakim’s nephew. However, as far as I know, he did not pay for it. He shared this information with our girls. Our rates are slightly less expensive. My friend studies at the medical institute. The administration did not agree to exempt him from picking cotton even for \$400. She

was asked to pay \$500. Now she is picking cotton in the Ulugnor district.

They said, cotton picking will last for a month only. Am I here on my own will? I would never pick cotton



in my entire life. Those who do not show up to pick cotton, especially freshmen, get quickly expelled from studies. The reasons for that are normally faked, such as failing to pay tuition fees. Senior year students suggested picking cotton slowly, just formally. I am thinking whether I should tell my father about this. I cannot stay here anymore. What will I do if I get ill here? My father is coming back from Kazakh-

stan at the end of the year. The money he earned there will be spent to renovate our house and to pay for my studies. Besides that, money is also needed to feed me and my brothers until spring. I am thinking

whether I should take \$300 and pay for being exempted from picking cotton. But this would mean that I am taking my brothers’ share. I have no strength left. You work like a slave from morning till night, you do not have not enough food, and you should sleep, but you wake up hungry again. I am feeling homesick. Other girls say the same. Tomorrow mom and uncle will come visit me. Even though I call

them every day, I still miss them. When mom asked me what she has to cook and bring me, I said 3-4 meals. I know I asked my mother too much, but I am starving here. Sometimes I think "God when will this be over!". If mom comes two more times to visit me, she will spend \$300 in total. It would be better if she didn't come. I am not sure whether I will be paid for the collected cotton. And the cotton is not good; not a lot of cotton actually. I overheard a conversation between two farmers. Cotton was exposed to insects and was harmed in the summer. May God grant patience to the end of cotton!!!

Taking baths? They say they will bring us there tomorrow. After lunch, we will leave cotton at 5 pm instead of 6 pm. Only girls will be taken to have a bath. Boys will go another day. Will also wash our clothes. It's good that I took the soap and washing powder with me. I have spent 18 thousand Sums of the 50 that my mom gave me.

I do not know how much they will pay per kg. They

said 250 Sum per kg. Some boys did not collect cotton. Others collect on their behalf. A boy named Abbos from our course, said that he buys 50 kg of cotton for 16 thousand sum.

We have some students who are good at picking cotton, especially girls. There are 7-8 of them. They collect up to 100 kg. But for 5 days they were paid only 30 to 40 thousand Sums. We were surprised. They should have got 200 thousand. Then they were

said that the money for the meals was deducted from it. Since I did not collect much, they said that they will deduct it from my first semester's stipend. Eh, let this cotton be over, let's wait and see.

Name of the student is not disclosed at her request.

Interview with the student of Andijan Agricultural Institute

September 17, 2016.

Physicians from Quyichirchiq District pick cotton under supervision of the Federation of Labor Unions

September 26, 2016/in Doctors, Tashkent Region /

On September 25, 2016, the human rights activist Elena Urlaeva went down to the cotton fields located in the Quyichirchiq district of Tashkent region in order to verify changes in the use of forced labor during the cotton harvest.

On September 17 2016, Elena Urlaeva met with the doctors of the Central

Hospital of Dustabad, who complained that they were obliged to pick cotton every day.

On the same day, Elena Urlaeva reported on the use of forced labour during the cotton harvest via the helpline of the Federation of Labour Unions (1092) and the law enforcement agencies. However, the



Employees from the Central Hospital in Dustabad on their way to the cotton field © UGF 2016

Federation of Labour Unions has not reacted to these reports so far. 9 days passed from the day it was reported.

Moreover, the oncologist of the Central Hospital of Dustabad – Mahmud Mustaev was appointed as foreman of the cotton-picking unit No. 840 on September 13, 2016. It should be noted that

Mahmud Mustaev is also chairman of the labour union of the Central Hospital of Dustabad. The unit No. 840, which he currently supervises, consists of 200 employees from the health and care sector. All these employees are forced to pick cotton.

Mahmoud Mustaev is forcing doctors to collect 70 – 80 kilograms of cotton

per day. Doctors have not yet been paid for picking cotton. Elena Urlaeva also distributed leaflets containing information regarding the prohibition of the use of forced labour. However, Mahmud Mustaev affirmed that all hospital employees came to pick cotton voluntarily.

Elena Urlaeva learnt from conversations with medical staff that they were all forced to sign a voluntary participation letter. Doctors who refused to pick cotton are threatened with dismissal.

Elena Urlaeva noticed a banner of the Federation of Labour Unions containing information on the prohibition of forced labor. The same poster was placed on the front door of the District of Khokimiyat. Nevertheless, the information has not improved the compulsory nature of the cotton harvest.

Press Center Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan

September 25, 2016,
Tashkent



Doctor from the Central Hospital in Dustabad on the cotton field © UGF 2016

The Head of Kyzryk District Forced People to Pick Cotton until Morning

September 26, 2016/in Khokimiats, Surkhandarya Region /

On September 22 the head of administration of the Kyzryk district in the Surkhandarya region of Uzbekistan made chairmen of the local mahalla (Neighborhood) and public organizations gather for an evening meeting at the cotton gin plant. They were also forced to pick cotton until 3:30 am. The head of the district threatened the cotton plant accountant with jail if he did not include non-existent cotton in his accounts.

Harvesting Cotton in the Light of Tractor Headlights

According to "Ozodlik", a source close to the gineries in the Kyzryk district of the Surkhandarya region, the head of the district, Olim Alimardonov, made local governors (mahalla) and directors of some public organizations pick cotton during the night of September 22.

A resident who participated in the meeting told

Ozodlik on September 22:

„Every evening the local governor (hokim) holds a conference at the cotton gin plant. I can not tell you how he insults the people gathered at the meeting. Last night, he drove the chairmen of the local district to the cotton field with their secretaries and staff of different organizations, saying that they were being sent to pick cotton because they did not have enough people. He forced them to pick cotton in the headlights of tractors until 3:30 am. The week after Shavkat Mirziyayev, the acting president, is going to visit us. That is why he is in such a panic.”

Accountants were Threatened at the Ginning Factory

One of the farmers from Kyzryk reported that the district governor (hokim), Olim Alimardonov, is forcing local farmers to fulfil the quota by buying cotton and demanding that the ginning factory

accountants include it in their accounts to make up for the deficit in the quota.

On September 20, 50 students harvested 600 kilograms of cotton from an area of 18 hectares and on September 21, 400 kilograms from the same area. There is no more cotton in the fields. An employee of the cotton plant M.Sh. (the name has been withheld for security reasons – Ed.) said “this year, there is not much cotton in the fields”. He sent the regional headquarters the exact amount of harvested cotton. “The local governor however ordered him to ascribe cotton, but he refused”, said a local farmer, who asked not to disclose his name for security reasons.

“It is difficult to achieve even one quarter of the quota”

According to an official close to the cotton headquarters, the district is able to produce only 10 tons of cotton from the 40 tons demanded by the state.

Some farmers are already sowing wheat instead of cotton. But the local governor wants to fulfil the plan on paper using all means according to a source at "Ozodlik".

Throughout the day on September 22, our radio reporter repeatedly tried to call the local governor, Olim Alimardonov, or another official of the district administration. However all

attempts by our reporter to get through to the Kyzyryk local authority area were unsuccessful.

<http://www.ozodlik.org/a/shavkat-mirziyoyev-paxta-surxondaryo/28006871.html>

"Why should I leave my kid and pick cotton?"

September 25, 2016/in Andijan Region, Mothers, PaxtaBrief /

"I was born in 1994 in Andijan. I have a child. I was accepted studying in one of Andijan's universities. I was given a scholarship for my studies, too. Nevertheless, just a week after my studies had begun, we were all taken to pick cotton.

Even though I have a son and I have to look after him, my teacher and dean told me that I was forced to pick cotton.

'It is a political order, and you will be expelled from your studies if you refuse to pick cotton. It does not really matter whether you have child or not.'

There are three students with children in our group. One of them approached our head teacher and explained her that he could not leave his kid alonw. The head teacher requested 150 US dollars to exempt him from cotton picking. Afterwards, another student and myself approached the same teacher.

She increased the fee after seeing that there are more of us. She was asking for 200 US dollars from each of us.

'The rest will pay 300 US dollars', she told us. So, I submitted my marriage

certificate, my child's birth certificate and 150 US dollars to the head teacher. However, she called me back just 5 days after to say that I still would have to pay the outstanding 50 US dollars. I have to confess, I was arguing with her. She told me that after all her 'father works in the state apparatus, nobody could do any harm to her'.

Is it right that I have to pick cotton now, even though I have a child? And, is it normal that I paid 150 US dollars and was still treated this way?"

Alimony payers are punished with cotton harvest mobilization

September 25, 2016/in PaxtaBrief /

One of the readers messaged “Ozodlik” to tell about how people are being forced to pick cotton in Uzbekistan:

“According to “Ozodlik”, alimony payers in Uzbekistan are being forced to

pick cotton. Uzbek bailiffs are indeed forcing alimony payers to participate in the cotton harvest by saying that the ‘prosecutor’s office’ gave such command.

As it can be observed, the Uzbek government is using

several ways of forcing people to pick cotton. As it was reported earlier, some mothers are threatened to be cut off from governmental social benefits for their kids if they refuse to pick cotton.”



Statements of “voluntary participation” in the cotton harvest are additionally mocking people

September 28, 2016/in Andijan Region, Students /

This year’s forced mobilization of people to the cotton fields, which started two weeks ago and has been carried out in all regions of Uzbekistan, has turned out to be particularly aggressive. People working in different sectors, far from the agricultural one, do not only have to leave their families and go to the fields to pick cotton, but they also have to hide their profession from the representatives of the International Labour Organization. They also have to assure the authorities that they went to harvest cotton voluntarily and worked hard enough to fulfill the prescribed daily amount.

Being lazy or unable to pick cotton and refusing to pay oneself free from picking cotton will have negative consequences on people’s working or study life.

“I guarantee that I will fully participate in the 2016 cotton harvest, and that I will

collect 80 kg of cotton per day and comply with all the rules of the cotton season. If I do not fulfill the above requirements, I agree to be expelled from university”.

This letter, written on September 9, 2016, on behalf of the dean of the university, Mr. Umidullaev, was disclosed by a student of the Samarkand State University.

These days, during the peak season for the cotton harvest in Uzbekistan, statements of voluntarily participation in the harvest are collected from students and employees of various government agencies in order to show cotton pickers that in case they get dismissed or fired from work, they will have to blame themselves in the first place.

This video shows how Alia Madalieva, head nurse in the Clinic No. 8 in Kokand city, dictates to the clinic employees the text for

their letter of commitment. Seated next to a clinic employee, who sadly looks down on the paper, she dictates: “If I do not collect 50 kg of cotton a day, I will voluntarily hand in my letter of resignation. I wrote this on my own.”

“You will leave your job on the same day”, assures her boss while collecting the letter guaranteeing the diligence and discipline of a lazy nurse.

Cotton, as a strategic raw material of which Uzbekistan is in need, shall be collected and given to the state, regardless of the moral humiliation and the material losses common people have to face.

During the last few years, Uzbek official representing the Chairman of the Federation of Trade Unions, Tanzila Narbaeva, has not denied that with the beginning of fall, students and people working in different sectors went to

pick cotton. However, according to the Uzbek officials, people go to harvest cotton voluntarily in order to earn some extra money. This is a wrong assumption, as nobody would oblige volunteers to perform such duties.

The following dialogue took place this year on September 14, between a police officer in the city of Jizzakh and an employee of a private store. It clearly shows that the system of forced labor in the cotton sector of Uzbekistan remains a state policy.

On the audio recording, a police officer, introducing himself as Laziz Fayzikulov, requests the businessman to close his shop and go to harvest cotton. Asked about the legality of such a requirement, Fayzikulov argues that the order comes from the acting President Shavkat Mirziyoyev and has to be considered binding.

Laziz Fayzikulov: When are you going (to harvest cotton)?

Entrepreneur: I am not.

Who is going to work for me then? I'm paying taxes. What does cotton have to

do with entrepreneurs?

Laziz Fayzikulovym: What does it have to do with it?

Entrepreneur: If I go to pick cotton, how am I supposed to pay my taxes? One should not interfere with business.

Laziz Fayzikulovym: Sorry... This is a state policy. Private enterprises are very recent, while cotton ... Since the independence of our country, 25 years so far, cotton is a state policy.

Entrepreneur: There is such a thing as a Labour Code. I am not obliged...

Laziz Fayzikulov: (almost starting to shout). You have to! Go! You're living in this Makhalla (district), so you have to do what is expected from you. You have to! You are going! You live in this state, you wear clothes made of cotton...

Entrepreneur: It is written somewhere in the law? Is it written in the constitution?

Laziz Fayzikulov: This is an order coming from the Prime Minister. Do you understand that? This is an order of the acting President. You have no right not to follow the rules.

Entrepreneur: Then specify it in the legislation. I will follow it. Show me the order. Otherwise it is only an oral instruction...

Laziz Fayzikulovym: an oral

order is also an order! Then put your signature here stating that you are not going to the fields and will not carry out the order. We will see. You're provocative. Do you understand it? You have to!!

Entrepreneur: No, I do not have to. I am a free person.

Laziz Fayzikulov: Do not agitate here, on the contrary, stay on the side of Uzbekistan and incite the neighbors not to go to harvest cotton either. If you do not go to the fields, at least shut up and do not instigate others, understand? You have no right to incite others not to go! Who are you anyways? Kid ... You have no rights not to execute the orders of the state!

It is important to note that in Uzbekistan it is very difficult to find someone who would openly refuse to pick cotton. Therefore this is a unique case. Starting from early age, children are told that cotton is not a plant, but a source of well-being and security, and that harvesting it is something sacred.

This year, the Uzbek government allowed the International Labor Organization to again conduct a "joint" monitoring of labor

rights violations in the cotton fields.

The joint monitoring surprisingly showed that the ones responsible for the use of forced labor, are in charge of the monitoring, and that the representatives of the ILO, for the third year since the start of the Decent Work Program in Uzbekistan, apparently do not understand how this criminal machine of coercion actually works.

Parents who refuse to pay for cotton harvest must pick cotton on their own

**September 22, 2016/
in Andijan Region,
PaxtaBrief /**

“Parents of kids studying at schools in the Asaka district in Andijan region are being extorted to pay money for the cotton harvest. The school administration is collecting from 5 000 to 10 000 Uzbek Som from pupils

of all years and levels. I witnessed it myself.

All parents were asked to come to the schools for a parent meeting. We were told that it (the cotton harvest) was an “honorable holiday” and that we would have to pay for it. We were also told that parents who refused to make a contribution for the cotton harvest must pick cotton on their own.

As we were told, each group must hire a worker and send him/her to the cotton field. Teachers also warned us “not to spread this information on the internet”.

My daughter is a first-year pupil in School No.58, and my son is a fifth-year pupil in School No.59.”

“If you don’t pick cotton, you will be expelled from the university”

September 22, 2016/in PaxtaBrief, Students, Syrdarya Region, Tashkent Region /

A disabled student from Tashkent is being forced to pick cotton. Here is his message sent to Radio Ozodlik:

“I am a first-year student at the Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Melioration. We (the students) were mobilized to go to the cotton harvest in the Syrdarya region on Sunday, September 10. The very next day after our arrival, we were sent out to the cotton field

to pick cotton. In the afternoon some of the students who could not pick cotton well enough were scolded. Furthermore, we are threatened to get expelled from university if we do not pick cotton well enough.

I am a third-level disabled student and I receive a pension monthly. I need to be under medical treatment permanently. Thus, I demonstrated the relevant papers and my medical

card to the Department of Economics, where I study. However, I was told:

“You perfectly know that all students must be mobilized for the cotton picking. These papers and your medical card cannot be accepted as an excuse. You have to resign from your studies to refrain from the cotton mobilization.”

I have no money to pay myself free from the cotton mobilization. The farmers I’ve talked to don’t have any possible solution either, so I have to talk to my teachers.

I have been picking cotton for 2-3 days so far. Some

of the students could not stand it and have already left home. But, they were warned that they would be expelled from university.

What can I do? It is not easy to get admitted to another university again once you’ve been expelled”.



Teachers and doctors in Buka are harvesting cotton

September 22, 2016/in Politics, Tashkent Region /

Elena Urlaeva went to the Buka district in the Tashkent region for distributing leaflets with information on the prohibition of forced labor during the cotton harvest. These leaflets were given to teachers

and doctors who were forcibly picking cotton.

On September 20, 2016, a meeting was held at the World Bank office in Tashkent. The primary agenda of the meeting was to

assess the real situation concerning the use of forced labor in Uzbekistan and Karakalpakstan. It was attended by representatives of the World Bank, officials from Washington representing the United

States, representatives of the International Labour Organisation and human rights activists.

The human rights activists Shukhrat Ganiev, Uktam Pardaev, Elena Urlaeva, Haidvay Yakubov reported that forced labour was used during the cotton harvest in the Uzbek regions of Tashkent, Bukhara, Jizzakh, Navoi, Khorezm, Ferghana, Andijan, as well as in Karakalpakstan. Doctors, teachers, university students and others are being forced to pick cotton. It was also noted that there have been some positive changes. For example, college students are not mobilized to pick cotton anymore and are studying on a regular basis.

Also, the human rights activists received some information materials on the prohibition of forced labor and promised to reproduce and distribute it among the population in the regions in which they live.

At 9am on September 21, 2016 Elena Urlaeva met with the teachers of the Schools No.6, No.12 and No.38 in the cotton field near the village Alhodzhar in the Buka district. Obviously, they were picking cotton instead of teaching children.

Teachers reported that they were taken to the cotton fields on a daily basis. The daily quota of cotton that must be collected equals 60 kilograms

and teachers are paid 285 Uzbekistani Som per kilogram. Teachers are mobilized to pick cotton against their will.

Elena Urlaeva distributed the leaflets and photos taken on the cotton fields among the teachers, and promised to protect them. Urlaeva also took a photo of the cars of the Khokimiyat personnel and the prosecutors guarding the teachers on the field.

Afterwards, Elena Urlaeva headed off to see doctors who had been mobilized for a few days to pick cotton. These physicians are employed in hospitals and clinics in the Buka district. Elena Urlaeva had already met with them on September 16, 2016.

However, Elena was not able to find them on the same field near the cotton headquarters in Buston village where they had met last time. A driver named Ruzimurod took Elena to other fields in a remote area to meet with the above mentioned physicians.

When Elena arrived at the fields, there were cars and people in camouflaged



Cotton pickers reading information leaflets about the prohibition of forced labor 2016 © UGF

civilian clothes standing across the road. One of those men in civilian clothes named Saidkasim snatched Elena's leaflets, shouting and swearing at her.

Having decided to hold some talks, Elena and Ruzimurod drove to the area of the Kyrgyz Aul village.

Afterwards, before departing to Buka at 6am, Elena visited the Kuylyuk market. She could observe many unemployed people – "mardikors", who apparently were looking to be hired for some job.

The key question is why the Khokim of the Buka district Davron Sultanov would not hire mercenaries instead of forcing teachers and doctors to pick cotton.

On September 20, 2016, Elena Urlaeva formed a peaceful picket in front of the building of the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan demanding to stop the outrage committed by Khokims of the Buka, Chinaz, Nizhnechirchik districts. Elena also claimed to take those doctors and teachers away from the cotton fields and bring them back to their homes. Elena was sur-

rounded by police officers during the picket. Eventually, Elena could submit her complaints and requirements to the Cabinet of Ministers.

The activists of the Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan will continue their campaigns.

The Press Center of the *Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan*,
21 September 2016,
Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Management staff demands up to 150 \$ for exempting people from the harvest

September 20, 2016/in Doctors, PaxtaBrief, Samarkand Region /

With the beginning of the seasonal cotton harvest in Uzbekistan, employees of public institutions are being extorted to pay a fee of 150 US dollars to be dismissed from the cotton picking.

The Metropolitan Children Hospital No. 1 in Samarkand follows the same

path. Managers and directors of the hospital demand up to 150 US dollars from doctors and nurses who want to refrain from picking cotton.

However, none of the directors cares about their staff's living conditions and salaries, or whether they have enough to make a

living. Also, the directors never report on how the collected money is spent.

In fact, nurses are forced to pay a bribe of 400 to 1000 US dollars to be accepted to work in the hospital in the first place.

Source: Ozodlik

Pregnant women suffered a miscarriage on the cotton fields

September 21, 2016/in Jizzakh Region, PaxtaBrief /

This piece of information was sent to us by one of the cotton pickers who was forced to pick cotton during the first term of cotton harvest. This message describes an awful scene that has been witnessed by him in the cotton field:

“I have just returned from the cotton harvest. And I will never go there again. This year’s cotton harvest was very different from the previous years.

The chairman of the Mustaqillik Makhalla (district) administration in the Zardor district of the Jizzakh region has been forcing a pregnant lady to pick cotton. She was seven months pregnant. He sabotaged her by saying that she would not receive any state benefits for her newborn baby in case she refused to pick cotton. Additionally to that, the makhalla chairman brought a police officer with him to scare

her even more. Apparently, she could do nothing about this, and eventually agreed to go to the cotton harvest. On the first day of the harvest, the lady suffered a miscarriage and lost her baby. It happened right on the field, during the cotton picking process. I cannot recover after witnessing all this over there. I would really like to see those people responsible for all this prosecuted and convicted.”



Residents of the Quyi Chirchiq district in the Tashkent region forcibly mobilized to the cotton fields

September 19, 2016/in Doctors, Tashkent Region /

Residents of the Quyi Chirchiq district in the Tashkent region were forcibly mobilized to the cotton fields.

On September 17, 2016 the human rights activist Elena Urlaeva met with the doctors of the central hospital in the city of Dustabad (Tashkent region). Doctors explained that the doctors – surgeons, neuropathologists, therapists – are forced to go from door to door and try to persuade the residents to pick cotton.

Each doctor is assigned to one street, and he/she must visit each home and persuade one person in each family to pick cotton. On weekends, all doctors are required to pick cotton, together with the head of the hospital Gulbahor Sagieva.

Moreover, a doctor working in the village clinic said that he and all the me-

dical staff of the clinic are forced to pick cotton in the village “Новая жизнь” (New Life).

In the cotton fields located near the village Agamay, in the group №868, doctors of the infectious hospitals and the clinic №9, teachers and kindergarten nurses, and schools teachers №14, №42 and №31 were forced to pick cotton.

Parents of the students going to the school №28 said that the director of the school obliges parents of each student to either pick cotton or give money to pay for a hired worker.

Residents of the mahalla “Yunusov” and the mahalla “Ming Chinor” in the city Dustabad told that the police and the representatives of the National Security Service go from door to door and force one person in each family to pick cotton.

The mobilization of the city residents follows the orders of Jahongir Abdurazakova, the hokim of the district Nizhnechirchikskogo.

Human Rights Alliance demand the law enforcement bodies of Uzbekistan to investigate all the facts, and require prosecution of the hokim Jahongir Abdurazakov and the school directors who extort money and force parents to pick cotton.

Press Center of the Human Rights Alliance.
17 September 2016,
Tashkent

