



We pick cotton out of fear:
systematic forced labor and
the accountability gap in Uzbekistan

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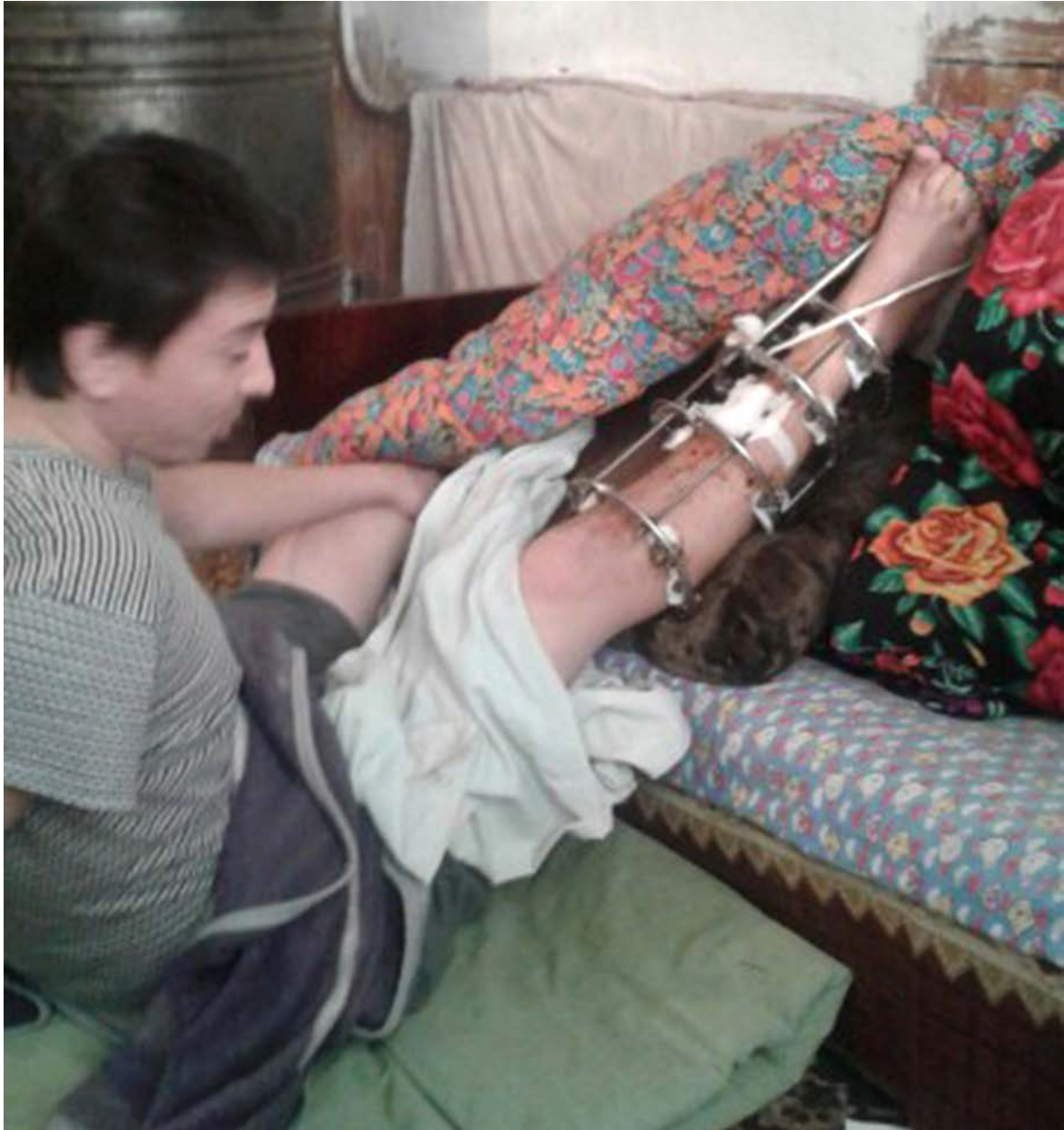
Summary

“The quota assigned was 80 kilos per day. If you don’t pick the quota you get humiliated in front of everyone. They force you to fulfill the quota. You are forced to, or you have to buy cotton. In these conditions who would go to pick cotton of his own will? We pick cotton out of fear, because there is no alternative. We were ordered to go by the department of health. They told us we are required.”

— Doctor, Shahrisabz, Kashkadarya region, November 28, 2017

In September 2017 Gulhan Avezova, a nurse at the Central Hospital of Turtkul in Karakalpakstan, went to Qumbosgan to pick cotton. Avezova did not want to leave her job or her family but her supervisor told her that she would lose her job if she refused, telling her “there are many other people I could hire in your place.” Although Avezova went to the fields involuntarily, her son, Sardorbek Salaev, aged 22, accompanied her voluntarily, hoping to earn some money picking cotton for the hospital. However, people not only faced punishment for refusing to pick cotton but also for failing to work hard enough. Salaev said that the hospital, which was under pressure to meet a government-imposed cotton picking quota, required all pickers to pick 80 kilograms per day and threatened punishment against anyone who fell short. Salaev said that when he failed to pick 80 kilograms the head doctor, who was responsible for fulfilling the hospital’s quota, punished him with extra work. After working in the fields all day he had to deliver the cotton to the gin and wait for it to get weighed and accepted, a process that lasted all night. He was not given food until he returned to the barracks at 4 a.m., and then ate only whatever scraps were left. He slept for just a few hours before returning to the fields to continue picking. Salaev said that after three days of this treatment, working more than 20 hours per day and deprived of food and sleep, he collapsed in the field. As he lay unconscious, a tractor taking a shortcut across the field drove over him where he lay, severely breaking his leg. Salaev, who was only able to earn 60,000 soum (approximately \$7.50) in 10 days of work, has since undergone four operations on his leg. His leg has not healed and Salaev remains incapacitated, in severe pain, and unable to walk or work.

Qumbosgan, where Salaev and his mother picked cotton, is one of the districts where the World Bank has funded an irrigation project on the condition that the Uzbek government comply with national and international laws prohibiting forced labor and child labor. Although the Bank can suspend its loans if there is credible evidence of violations, the government has continued to force public sector employees such as Gulhan Avezova, to pick cotton. The government, through its chain of command for cotton production, uses penalties to force people to work, punish people who refuse, and even to punish people like Sardorbek Salaev, if they do not meet picking quotas. It also compels other people who depend on government jobs or services to pick cotton, such as people receiving child or welfare benefits and businesses, threatening to withhold benefits or interfere with businesses in case of refusal. People forced to pick cotton can only get out of it if they hire and pay for a replacement picker to pick cotton for them. People living in poverty are particularly vulnerable to forced labor because they cannot risk their jobs or welfare benefits by refusing to work and cannot afford to hire a replacement picker to work in their place.



Sardorbek Salaev (22), Turtkul, December 2017

In 2017 the government undertook several unprecedented steps to acknowledge and address forced labor in the cotton harvest. In a speech at the United Nations General Assembly, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev said that Uzbekistan had taken measures to eradicate child and forced labor. Following Mirziyoyev's speech, World Bank president Jim Yong Kim urged Mirziyoyev to implement reforms to end forced labor. The next day Uzbekistan recalled university students and some health and education workers from the cotton fields. These developments underscore the importance of the Bank's engagement on forced and child labor and the government's ability to implement immediate changes to practice when it has the political will to do so. The government also increased wages paid to pickers, called on people to use feedback mechanisms to report forced labor and extortion, and held meetings with civil society activists.

However, the quota system for cotton production, a fundamental root cause of forced labor, remained in place in 2017. While many cotton pickers voluntarily participate in the cotton harvest to earn money, hokims, regional and district governors, who are personally responsible for meeting their quota, do not have sufficient resources to attract enough voluntary labor. This is particularly true in the later stages of the season, when less cotton is available to pick and therefore pickers can earn less money. As a result, hokims resort to drawing involuntary labor from the sectors over which they exert enormous influence: public sector institutions, mahallas, and businesses.

Based on interviews with public sector employees, mahalla employees, owners and employees of businesses, and people hired as replacement pickers, as well as statements by government officials, government documents, and complaints by victims of forced labor in the media and social media, the Uzbek-German Forum found systematic forced labor throughout the 2017 cotton harvest in regions monitored, including in the World Bank's project area in South Karakalpakstan. The Uzbek-German Forum also documented unprecedented levels of extortion of money from citizens to pay for replacement workers and cotton, including the extortion of money from public sector employees ostensibly recalled from forced labor.

Although the government focused its efforts to recruit cotton pickers from among unemployed people, the Uzbek-German found that government instructions continued to involve public sector institutions and employees, including from the health and education sectors, to mobilize workers and as leaders of picking brigades. People responsible for mobilization, such as mahalla council employees and heads of institutions, had direct control over the employment or financial well-being of the people they mobilized and supervised. They required public sector employees and people receiving benefits to pick cotton, and business owners to send their employees to the fields, involuntarily, under threat of loss of job, benefits, or other penalty if they refused. This practice was consistent across the regions monitored, even in regions with high population densities and, therefore, a large pool of potential voluntary pickers. For example in the Andijan region, the most densely populated in Uzbekistan, some kindergartens, schools and colleges, resorted to extorting pupils, staff, and parents directly for money and, in some cases, cotton, and penalizing children or their parents for not complying.

In mid-October the government announced a "shock month" of intensive work and undertook extraordinary measures, such as the mass transfer of cotton pickers from regions in the Fergana valley to other areas to pick cotton. Although some workers agreed to the transfer voluntarily, there are serious concerns that some transferred workers were coerced, given false information about working conditions and length of deployment, did not receive promised incentives, and that living conditions for deployed workers were extremely poor.



*Announcement on the door of a kindergarten in the city of Andijan:
„Dear parents, cotton is our national wealth. Help pick it. The bus leaves every day at 7 a.m.“*

Some universities and colleges also sent students back to the fields toward the end of the season as regions came under pressure to meet quotas. Many public sector workers also remained in the fields through mid-November, and had to break unopened cotton buds or pluck cotton from dried cotton stalks gathered for firewood to find any cotton.

Measures to address risks of forced labor remained weak and ineffective. Usage of the Ministry of Labor and Federation of Trade Unions (FTUU) feedback mechanisms to make complaints related to the cotton harvest was extremely low, increasing only slightly in 2017 as compared to the first two years of operation. The effectiveness of the mechanisms continued to be hampered by low public confidence in their independence, efficacy, lack of awareness, and fear of reprisals. Further, threatening and abusive behavior by local officials, coaching of respondents to say they are unemployed and voluntary, and the pervasive involvement of public sector employees in other unpaid “public” work, undermined other messages that cotton work should be voluntary. Many people said they did not believe a government-controlled mechanism could help them, when it is the government that requires them to work and many do not perceive the FTUU as independent. In several cases the FTUU feedback mechanism conducted only a superficial investigation and did not provide effective redress to the complainants.

In 2017 the government undertook to hold some officials to account for violations that occurred during the cotton harvest. However enforcement actions appeared to be sporadic and arbitrary, holding a few low level officials to account while failing to move up the chain of command or examine policies that contributed to violations. For example, the labor inspectorate fined a schoolteacher for requiring children to bring cotton to school without ever investigating why the director needed cotton or on whose orders she acted. A court imposed a fine on the mayor of Andijan for using insulting language at a cotton meeting but took no action for his use of coercion to force public sector workers to pick cotton.

Reprisals against independent activists monitoring forced labor decreased in 2017, a significant development. Activists also engaged with the ILO and Ministry of Labor at a series of roundtables. However, neither the ILO nor the government appeared to reflect activists’ findings in their public reporting. Further, the government has not yet taken steps to remedy larger problems in the climate for civil society, which include stifling legal restrictions as well as persecution from authorities for perceived government criticism, problems that threaten to undermine the value of the emerging engagement. Several activists continue to face charges or other restrictions as a result of their human rights activities.

The Way Forward for the Government of Uzbekistan

The government of Uzbekistan has a primary responsibility to end forced labor in its cotton sector, as established in international and domestic law and recognized at the highest level by President Mirziyoyev. The government should work in cooperation with U.N. bodies, especially the ILO, civil society organizations, local activists, and international stakeholders, who play an essential role in promoting and supporting accountable actions to end systematic forced labor. The government should commit sufficient financial and administrative resources – and coordinate the work of national ministries together with other stakeholders – to ensure that each level of action to dismantle the forced labor system is complementary and mutually reinforcing.

Uzbekistan has an historic opportunity to implement its recent commitments to end forced labor in its cotton sector, but significant action is required to make changes in practice. The government should take immediate action to ensure the end of systematic forced labor by the 2018 cotton harvest and undertake a process of reform to establish a culture of accountability and prevention for forced labor. To achieve this goal, the government should commit to a comprehensive roadmap, including time-bound credible, measurable, and accountable steps to implement sustainable and irreversible structural and operational progress on the ground. Such a roadmap should include reform of the agricultural system, including ending the quota system; legal and policy changes to alter recruitment practices, protect fundamental labor rights, and ensure work is voluntary and fairly compensated; increase financial transparency; improve engagement with civil society; and establish a culture of accountability to allow for independent investigations and to hold officials to account for forced labor.

It is also essential that when a roadmap is developed and implemented, the government and its partners emphasize its commitments publicly and not prematurely declare systematic forced labor to be ended until that achievement can be verified by independent monitoring.

The Way Forward for the World Bank and International Finance Corporation

The World Bank should acknowledge the violation of its loan agreements because of credible evidence of forced labor in its project area that is grounds for suspension. The World Bank should agree to an action plan to bring the government into compliance with its commitments not to use forced or child labor in its project areas. Such a plan should include an immediate end to systematic forced labor in the 2018 spring fieldwork season and the fall 2018 harvest and a comprehensive plan for reform, including to change recruitment practices and to establish a culture of accountability and prevention. The World Bank should urge the government of Uzbekistan to initiate independent, thorough, and robust investigations into allegations of forced labor that target those responsible for directing forced labor. The World Bank should engage a truly third party monitor completely independent of the government, to monitor its project areas in Uzbekistan, in line with its commitments, as well as the government's efforts to bring project areas into compliance. The selection and oversight of the third-party monitor should include participation by a range of expert stakeholders, including workers, workers' representatives, and experts. Third-party monitors should be highly skilled and knowledgeable of both the country context and the cotton industry, and engage with the stakeholders mentioned above in the development of a robust monitoring methodology. The World Bank should make clear that it will suspend disbursements in agriculture and irrigation financing if the government does not bring project areas into compliance. The World Bank should also acknowledge that the feedback mechanisms remain weak, ineffective, and not perceived as independent and, as such, do not fulfill the Bank's obligation. It should establish an independence grievance mechanism and provide effective remedies in line with its commitments.

In addition, the World Bank and the IFC should take all necessary measures to prevent reprisals against monitors who document and report on labor conditions or other human rights abuses linked, directly or indirectly, to their projects in Uzbekistan. The World Bank and the IFC should monitor closely for reprisals and, should they occur respond promptly, publicly, and vigorously, including by pressing the government to investigate and bring to account anyone who arbitrarily interferes with or threatens persons reporting human rights concerns. They should also independently investigate alleged violations and ensure harms are remedied.

In addition, the World Bank and IFC should publicly and regularly report on reprisals linked in any way to their investments, as well as the actions they took to respond. The Bank should amend its project agreements in Uzbekistan to require the government to allow independent journalists, human rights defenders, and other individuals and organizations access to monitor and report on forced and child labor, along with other human rights abuses in all World Bank Group project areas. The agreements should also require the government to ensure that no one faces reprisals for monitoring human rights violations in project areas, bringing complaints, or engaging with monitors.

Recommendations

To the Government of Uzbekistan

- Introduce ahead of the 2018 harvest a public roadmap for immediate termination of forced and child labor in the cotton sector covering the entire system of production, from field preparation through the harvest. Ensure this plan is sustainable and irreversible, which includes accountability for violations and prevention of forced labor in the future.
- Enforce national laws that prohibit the use of forced and child labor in alignment with ratified ILO conventions.
- Enforce the ILO Conventions No.87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize and No.98 on Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining, which both ensure effective social dialogue and prohibit any interference of government in trade unions and employers' organizations.
- Instruct government officials at all levels and citizens that act on behalf of the government not to use coercion to mobilize anyone to work and ensure that all cotton work is voluntary and fairly compensated.
- End the practice of involving public sector institutions and their employees, including regional and district departments of health and education, kindergartens, schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, and clinics as brigade leaders or in recruitment or supervision of people picking or weeding cotton.

- End the practice of involving law enforcement officials, including police, prosecutors, and tax authorities, in recruiting or supervising people picking or weeding cotton, and in supervising fields or farms.
- To avoid the possibility of coercion, ensure that anyone involved in the recruitment or supervision of cotton pickers does not control or have influence over their employment or material well-being, including by benefits payments, outside cotton work.
- Eliminate the practice of requesting fees for replacement pickers or contributions from businesses and entrepreneurs to support the harvest. Make sure that no recruiter should ask for such payments, and that no one should feel obliged to make them.
- Eliminate all penalties or punishments for cotton pickers who do not pick required quotas.
- Initiate independent, thorough, and robust investigations into allegations of forced labor and ensure that investigations target those responsible for directing or causing forced labor. Initiate fair judicial processes consistent with international standards, against government officials found to have forced or directed or caused others to force citizens to weed, thin, top or pick cotton. Hold accountable those found guilty with penalties that are proportionate to the severity of the crime and serve as a deterrent for future crimes.
- Involve independent national and international civil society organizations in the development and implementation of the roadmap to establish accountability to ensure the prevention of forced labor in Uzbekistan.
- Allow civil society, including independent journalists, human rights defenders, and other individuals and organizations, to document and report concerns about the use of forced labor without fear of reprisals.
- Take immediate steps to provide effective protection of independent journalists, human rights defenders, and other activists against any actions that may constitute harassment, persecution, or undue interference in the exercise of their professional activities or of their rights to freedom of opinion, expression, and association. Ensure that any such acts are promptly, thoroughly, and independently investigated, prosecuted and sanctioned, and that victims are provided with effective remedies.
- Cease arbitrary harassment of and interference in the work of civil society activists and journalists, including by the police and security services. Drop all criminal and administrative charges and penalties, or other legal restrictions both pending and resolved, against Fakhridin Tillayev, Elena Urlaeva, Malohat Eshonkoulova, and Dmitry Tikhonov in retaliation for their work in monitoring forced labor and child labor or as a result of their peaceful human rights work and provide effective remedies for harms suffered.

- Abolish mandatory cotton production quotas and grant farmers rights to autonomous land management, including freely deciding what to grow.
- End the imposition of labor and production quotas on public institutions.
- Ensure financial transparency in the cotton sector, including by ensuring national budgets reviewed by the Oliy Majlis include expenditures and income in the cotton sector, ensuring taxes paid and collected revenues in the sector go to the national budget. Full transparent accounts should be made to the public at the end of each cotton harvest.
- Establish an accountability mechanism for cases of forced labor and child labor. Examples include: an Independent Anti-Slavery Commission or Ombudsman; a special commission, similar to special courts; and/or an Audit Office to provide independent oversight of public finances. Such a body should have the authority to receive, independently investigate, and remedy complaints, launch its own investigations, and protect complainants from reprisals.
- Establish an effective, confidential, and accessible grievance mechanism and provide effective remedies, including legal and financial, to any person subjected to forced or child labor, and issue a public report of remedies provided.
- Refrain from referring to cotton work, including spring fieldwork, as khashar, community service, or public duty, and instruct local officials and people responsible for recruitment, including regional and district hokims and mahalla councils not to use this term.
- Publish in print and online a formal government roadmap for establishing a system of accountability that fosters an environment that protects citizens from forced labor which has measurable milestones, a fully-funded budget for enacting measures, and independent annual appraisals supported by a clear process in place for incorporating feedback from independent monitors, the Cotton Campaign, and other stakeholders. Report back on how feedback is incorporated into future management of the cotton sector.

To the World Bank

- Agree to a plan with the government of Uzbekistan to cease the use of forced and child labor in project areas in the spring 2018 fieldwork season and the fall 2018 harvest and bring the government back into compliance with loan agreements. Independently monitor the plan's implementation and make clear that loans will be suspended if the government does not come into compliance with loan agreements.
- Amend existing irrigation, agriculture, and education project agreements to allow independent parties to monitor World Bank project areas and to prohibit reprisals against monitors, people who bring complaints or use the feedback mechanism, and people who engage with monitors. Insist publicly and privately that a condition of

financing is that independent human rights defenders, journalists, and other monitors be able to work without impediments or fear of reprisals.

- Engage a third party monitor fully independent from the government to robustly research and report on compliance with core labor conventions in project areas. The selection and oversight of the third-party monitor should include participation by a range of expert stakeholders, including workers, workers' representatives, and experts. Third-party monitors should be highly skilled and knowledgeable of both the country context and the cotton industry, and engage with the stakeholders mentioned above in the development of a robust monitoring methodology. Such monitoring should:
 - o Include independent civil society organizations; and
 - o Cover forced and child labor in the cotton sector during the spring field preparation season, as well as in the lead-up to and during the harvest;
- Establish a confidential and accessible grievance mechanism and provide effective remedies, including legal and financial, to any person who is subjected to forced or child labor in the project areas or otherwise linked to the projects.

To the International Finance Corporation

- Suspend disbursement to all cotton sector investments in Uzbekistan until borrowers can demonstrate that they do not source from fields where forced or child labor is used.
- Encourage borrowers to make regularly and publicly disclose all farms from which cotton is sourced, the level of production, and when the unit was most recently inspected by independent monitors.

To the International Labor Organization

- Insist publicly and at the highest levels that independent monitors be able to work unimpeded and safely, highlighting that this is a key indicator of the government's good faith and a requirement for ILO assistance. Raise concerns about attacks on independent monitors, harassment and legal restrictions faced by them, and barriers to civil society operation.
- Include the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF), which represents agriculture workers, in discussions planning and developing methodologies for the ILO's work in Uzbekistan.
- Cease providing a monitoring role for the World Bank, instead focusing on the promotion of fundamental labor rights and decent work for all.
- Ensure that any monitoring conducted

To Indorama and Other Textile Companies Operating in Uzbekistan

- Adopt, publish, and implement a clear policy commitment to respect human rights, embedded in all relevant business functions.
- Identify and assess actual and potential adverse human rights impacts in the company's supply chain and prevent and mitigate adverse impacts, particularly forced and child labor as well as other labor abuses. If the company cannot address the significant risk of forced and child labor in its supply chain in Uzbekistan, cease sourcing cotton from Uzbekistan.
- To avoid perpetuating forced and child labor, ensure that pricing and sourcing contracts adequately reflect the cost to suppliers of labor.
- Establish regular and rigorous internal and third party monitoring in Indorama's supply chain, including through unannounced inspections. Engage qualified, experienced, and independent monitors trained in labor rights. Include private, confidential interviews with workers, as well as farmers, as components of inspections. Make the results of internal and third party monitoring public.
- Regularly publicly disclose all farms from which cotton is sourced, indicate the level of production, and disclose when the unit was most recently inspected by independent monitors.
- Verify and publicly report whether adverse human rights impacts are addressed.
- Establish a meaningful and effective complaint mechanism whereby people can submit complaints about labor abuses or other human rights violations without fear of reprisal. Ensure that adversely affected people can secure remedy for being subjected to labor abuses or other abuses and receive appropriate protection from reprisals, including legal representation to defend themselves against vexatious lawsuits or criminal complaints filed by the government.



Andijan region, November 5, 2017

Terms and Abbreviations

College	Equivalent to high school in the United States. Students attend for three years, usually from 16-18 years old.
Cotton gin	A machine that separates cotton seeds from cotton fibers. The term also refers to the state-controlled cotton association that is responsible for raw cotton procurement and ginning.
Hokim	Head of city, district, or regional administration, similar to a mayor or governor. The same term is used for all levels of government.
Hokimiat	City, district, or regional administration. The same term is used at all levels.
IFC	International Finance Corporation, an arm of the World Bank Group that finances and provides advice for private sector ventures in developing countries.
ILO	International Labour Organization, a tripartite UN agency made up of governments, employer organizations, and worker representatives.
Khashar	Uzbek tradition of community service whereby community members engage in “voluntary mutual support,” for example, helping each other with farm work or building a new house.
Mahalla	Neighborhood or local community, which can refer to the physical location, a community, or a state administrative unit.
Mahalla council	A form of local self-government in practice directed by and financially dependent on the district and city hokimiat.
Soum	Uzbek currency. In 2017, the exchange rate was approximately 8000 soum/US\$1
World Bank	The public sector lending arms of the World Bank Group, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the International Development Association.
World Bank Group	The World Bank Group consists of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the International Development Association, the International Finance Corporation, the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, and the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes.

Methodology

This report is based on research carried out by 10 Uzbek-German Forum monitors in Andijan, Fergana, Syrdarya, Jizzakh, Tashkent, and Samarkand regions, as well as the Republic of Karakalpakstan. The research in Karakalpakstan took place in Nukus and Ellikkala, Beruni, and Turtkul districts, the three districts where the World Bank's South Karakalpakstan Water Resources Management Improvement Project is being implemented. The Uzbek-German Forum also conducted several interviews on brief visits to Kashkadarya region. Research began in late August 2017 and continued through early 2018. With the exception of Kashkadarya, monitors live in the regions where they work. All monitors have received extensive training in International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions, as well as the ILO's mission, structure, operation, supervisory bodies, and procedures, and have several years' experience monitoring for UGF. UGF monitors developed a list of forced and child labor indicators specific to Uzbekistan based on all ILO conventions ratified by Uzbekistan.¹

Monitors conducted in-depth, confidential interviews in private with 78 people, including teachers and technical staff of schools and kindergartens, employees of government institutions, including mahalla councils, medical professionals, entrepreneurs, students, union officials, voluntary pickers, people receiving benefits, and people hired as replacement pickers. Interviews were conducted in the interviewee's primary language without an interpreter. The Uzbek-German Forum prioritized interviews with those most vulnerable to forced labor, such as public sector employees, and those with direct knowledge of the forced labor system, such as local government and mahalla council employees.

In each region, monitors visited numerous sites, including mobilization sites, schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, clinics, local government agencies, markets, private firms, cotton fields, and worker housing and conducted approximately 300 brief interviews. The Uzbek-German Forum also monitored social media and Uzbek and international press, including Radio Ozodlik, the Uzbek service of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (referred to hereafter as Ozodlik), which has reported extensively on the cotton harvest and receives reports directly from people affected by the harvest. Monitors also gathered information from documentary sources, including directives ordering participation in the harvest, ledgers tracking mobilization, government instructions indicating the organization of mobilization, including the reliance on public sector institutions, and statements by students and public sector employees declaring "voluntary participation in the harvest." The Uzbek-German Forum has also received more than 100 reports

¹ The ILO's guidelines on effective monitoring methodology recommends the development of indicators for forced and child labor tailor made specifically for the national context of each country. "Manual on child labour rapid assessment methodology," Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC), International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). ILO, UNICEF, Geneva, 2005. "Guidelines for Developing Child Labour Monitoring Processes," International Labour Organization. Geneva, 2005. "Hard to see, harder to count. Survey guidelines to estimate forced labour of adults and children." International Labour Office, Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour (SAP-FL), International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), Geneva. 2012.

about forced labor via social media and more than 100 posts in its Cotton-2017 Facebook group, which were used to corroborate information gathered during interviews. The Uzbek-German Forum published frequent updates on the 2017 harvest on its website.²

Тимур Акбаров *I am a private entrepreneur. Today I received a call from the tax office and was told to come to the hokimiyat (administration) of the Yashnabad district concerning the cotton. Is there anyone in the group who has encountered this issue this year? It's clear what they will offer. They will say, "give us a man to pick cotton or pick it yourself." I need to know - I'm a private entrepreneur who works alone. Do I have to pick cotton by closing my store? There are employees of the tax office, the fire department or the epidemiological department. If someone refuses they kind of hint that we may have different problems and write down our names and data...*

*Post from the Facebook group „Dialogue with the people“ (Диалог с народом)
3 October 2017*

Алла Нестерова *And again it's about the cotton! People can you tell me, is it happening everywhere? Students, teachers and doctors have been returned. Now we have twice the burden. Every day we pay money to send someone to pick cotton. We work not to live, but to pick cotton! What kind of mockery is this!?*

*Post on the Facebook group Reforms of Sh. Mirziyoyev in Uzbekistan. Problems and their solutions. (Реформы Мирзиёева в Узбекистане. Проблемы и их решения).
September 29, 2017*

2017 Developments

2017 saw several significant and unprecedented steps in the effort to address systematic forced labor in Uzbekistan. Several prominent government officials publicly addressed forced labor, ending the government's previous public denials. Most notably, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev raised forced labor in his address to the UN General Assembly in September at the height of the cotton harvest: "In cooperation with the International Labour Organization, we have taken effective measures to eradicate child and forced labor."³ Although Mirziyoyev failed to acknowledge the reality of ongoing forced labor, his speech marked an important opening. In his first ever meeting with Mirziyoyev the next day, World Bank president Jim Yong Kim urged Mirziyoyev to implement comprehensive reforms to end the practice.⁴

² See: <http://harvestreport.uzbekgermanforum.org/>

³ H.E Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, at the General Debate of the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, September 19, 2017, https://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/72/uz_en.pdf (accessed February 2, 2018).

⁴ "World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim Discusses Reforms with President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev," World Bank press release, September 20, 2017, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2017/09/20/world-bank-group-president-jim-yong-kim-discusses-reforms-with-president-of-uzbekistan-shavkat-mirziyoyev> (accessed February 2, 2018).

In August, as officials throughout the country undertook preparations for the cotton harvest, which begins in early September, the Cabinet of Ministers issued a decree prohibiting the involvement of medical and education personnel in the harvest, a policy commitment the government had also made in previous years.⁵ Full-scale mobilization of public sector employees, including from the health and education spheres, as well as of university students, occurred despite the Cabinet of Ministers' decree. However, during a conference call with officials on September 21, Prime Minister Abdulla Aripov ordered the decree's implementation and directed that students, health, and education workers return from the fields.⁶ Although not all health and education workers were recalled and some were subsequently extorted to pay for replacement pickers or required to return to the fields later, along with students from some universities, the recall was an unprecedented acknowledgement of forced labor and a step towards reducing it.⁷

This sequence also underscored the crucial impact of the principled and public stance taken by the World Bank and the importance of continuing to use this influence to press for comprehensive reform in line with its commitments related to its current investments.⁸ It was only after Kim's intervention that the government implemented its own decree and for the first time took a meaningful step to stop forced labor for some adults. The Bank, which is heavily invested in projects that benefit the agricultural sector in Uzbekistan (see below), can suspend some loans if there is credible evidence of forced or child labor in the project areas.

In an attempt to attract more voluntary workers, the government also increased the wages paid to pickers. Although the increase was not sufficient to end forced mobilization of workers, particularly in the later stages of the season when earning potential drops as less cotton is available to pick, it represents an attempt by the government to address one of the structural issues that drives the use of forced labor.

Also for the first time in 2017, the government engaged with some civil society activists on forced labor. Along with improved government rhetoric, this gave rise to hope for greater government transparency on forced labor.

In several speeches following the harvest, Mirziyoyev appeared to acknowledge serious structural problems in Uzbekistan's cotton production system. During a visit to Karakalpakstan he

⁵ "Правительство запретило привлекать к сбору хлопка учителей и медработников [The Government Prohibited the Recruitment of Teachers and Medical Workers to the Pick Cotton]," *Gazeta.uz*, August 23, 2017, <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2017/08/23/cotton/> (accessed February 3, 2018).

⁶ "Разбудили в 3 часа ночи. Сказали ехать домой [They Woke Us at 3 a.m. and Told Us to Go Home], *Gazeta.uz*, September 22, 2017, <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2017/09/22/cotton/> (accessed February 2, 2018).

⁷ "Uzbekistan: Some Workers Excused from Cotton Fields," *Cotton Campaign*, October 5, 2017, <http://www.cottoncampaign.org/uzbekistan-judge-progress-vs-reality.html> (accessed February 3, 2018).

⁸ See "World Bank Presses Uzbekistan to End Forced Labor," *Jessica Evans, Human rights Watch*, October 18, 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/10/18/world-bank-presses-uzbekistan-end-forced-labor> (accessed February 2, 2018).

noted that if farmers cannot profit from cotton production they could grow other crops.⁹ These statements accompanied structural changes to the cotton industry,¹⁰ a commitment to reduce the amount of land under cotton production, and an announcement that companies will be able to start contracting directly with farmers to produce cotton for their supply chains.¹¹ While not substitutes for other comprehensive reform needed to address ongoing forced labor, these statements and measures point to the government's awareness of underlying problems in the sector and may signal a willingness to enact changes.

Perhaps the most significant development of the 2017 harvest season was the role played by domestic Uzbek media sources that, after decades of de facto censorship, began to publish some critical reporting on government policy. Although still tightly controlled, some Uzbek media for the first time reported on forced labor in the cotton harvest, and gave voice to people forced to pick cotton or extorted for payments. This is a long-awaited and much-needed step toward greater openness, and also provided a crucial reality check on narratives that sought to minimize the reality of forced labor.

World Bank and International Finance Corporation Projects in Uzbekistan and Concerns over Forced Labor

The World Bank has invested heavily in projects that benefit the agriculture sector in Uzbekistan.¹² In response to concerns over forced and child labor linked to World Bank projects, the World Bank in 2014 agreed to measures to mitigate the risk of forced and child labor linked to its existing and proposed projects.¹³ The measures as enacted include requiring the government and sub-loan beneficiaries to comply with applicable labor laws and regulations, incorporating these into training materials for projects that include training, monitoring of labor practices in the Bank's project areas by the ILO, and establishing a complaints mechanism. The ILO does not

⁹ "Мирзиёев предложил отказаться от хлопка и выращивать солодку в Каракалпакстане [Mirziyoyev proposed giving up cotton and growing licorice in Karakalpakstan instead]," Saddridin Ashur, Ozodlik, December 18, 2017, <https://rus.ozodlik.org/a/28923329.html> (accessed April 4, 2018).

¹⁰ "На костях хлопкового монстра. Кому Мирзиёев доверит экспорт «белого золота» [On the bones of the cotton monster. Whom does Mirziyoyev trust to export 'white gold']," Alisher Ilkhamov, Fergana News, October 23, 2017, <http://www.fergananews.com/articles/9599> (accessed April 4, 2018).

¹¹ Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, No. UP-5285, On Measures for the accelerated development of the textile and garment and knitting industries, December 14, 2017, <http://president.uz/ru/lists/view/1345> (accessed April 4, 2018).

¹² For details of World Bank Group investments in Uzbekistan and responses to concerns over forced and child labor, see Uzbek-German Forum and Human Rights Watch, „We Can't Refuse to Pick Cotton“ - Forced and Child Labor Linked to World Bank Group Investments in Uzbekistan, 27 June 2017, available at: http://uzbekgermanforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/REPORT_Uzbekistan_2017-27-06.pdf, p. 30 and p. 89.

¹³ For details of World Bank Group investments in Uzbekistan and responses to concerns over forced and child labor, see Uzbek-German Forum and Human Rights Watch, „We Can't Refuse to Pick Cotton“ - Forced and Child Labor Linked to World Bank Group Investments in Uzbekistan, 27 June 2017, available at: http://uzbekgermanforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/REPORT_Uzbekistan_2017-27-06.pdf, p. 30 and p. 89. On June 30, 2017, the Bank approved Phase II of the Ferghana Valley Water Resources Management (Phase I closed in Dec 2016); the Bank is financing \$144.90 million of the \$225 million project, <http://projects.worldbank.org/P149610/?lang=en&tab=overview>.

monitor forced labor and child labor or the impact of measures to reduce the risk of forced and child labor in spring fieldwork.¹⁴ The Bank's investments include a US \$337.43 million irrigation project in parts of Turtkul, Beruni, and Ellikkala districts of Karakalpakstan, where cotton is grown on more than 50 percent of arable land.¹⁵ According to its agreements with the government, the World Bank can suspend this loan upon receiving credible reports of forced or child labor occurring in the project area.¹⁶

In 2015 the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the World Bank Group's private sector lending arm, loaned Indorama Kokand Textile, one of Uzbekistan's leading cotton yarn producers, US\$40 million to expand its textile plant.¹⁷ Given the IFC's recognition of the loan to Indorama Kokand Textile as high-risk due to risks of forced and child labor, Indorama Kokand Textile committed, among other things, to improve monitoring and tracing of its supply chain. With the IFC, Indorama has developed a system for rating the risk level of cotton-producing districts based on data from ILO monitoring, publicly available reports, and data on the labor supply in the area. Indorama has committed not to source from districts it classifies as "red" or high-risk based on this index. However, the IFC confirmed that Indorama's index does not include information on forced and child labor in spring fieldwork, further weakening this already inadequate monitoring system.¹⁸ The IFC and Indorama have refused multiple requests by NGOs and activists to provide a list of the districts where Indorama Kokand Textile sources cotton or which districts it has classified as low- or medium- risk. This project is subject to a formal complaint with the IFC's accountability mechanism.

¹⁴ In 2015 the ILO conducted monitoring from September 14- October 31. ILO, "Third Party Monitoring of the use of child labour and forced labour during the Uzbekistan 2015 Cotton Harvest—An assessment submitted to the World Bank by the International Labour Office, 20 November 2015, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_norm/@ipece/documents/publication/wcms_427620.pdf, p. 6. In 2016, monitoring took place from September 14- October 28. ILO, "Third-party monitoring of measures against child labour and forced labour during the 2016 cotton harvest in Uzbekistan—A report submitted to the World Bank by the International Labour Office, "January 2017, available at: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipece/documents/publication/wcms_543130.pdf, p. 6.

¹⁵ The World Bank is funding \$260.79 million of the 337.43 cost of the South Karakalpakstan Water Resources Management Improvement Project, referred to throughout this report as the South Karakalpakstan irrigation project. World Bank, "South Karakalpakstan Water Resources Management Improvement Project: Project Appraisal Document," May 14, 2014, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/286581468308642099/pdf/PAD3290PADoP12010Box385222BooOUO090.pdf>.

¹⁶ World Bank, "South Karakalpakstan Water Resources Management Improvement Project: Loan Agreement," October 29, 2014, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/448461468310509839/pdf/RAD65051037.pdf>, pp. 6 and 69. 4.01.(b) of the Loan and Financing Agreements provide that the World Bank can suspend the loan if it "has received evidence, that it considers credible, of the use of child or forced labor in connection with the Project activities or within the Project Area."

¹⁷ For further details on the IFC's Indorama investment see "We Can't Refuse to Pick Cotton," p. 103.

¹⁸ Meeting between the Uzbek-German Forum, Human Rights Watch, and IFC officials, June 22, 2017, Washington, D.C. The Uzbek-German Forum found widespread forced labor in spring fieldwork in cotton production in Uzbekistan in 2017. "Fieldwork Never Ends for Us'- Forced Labor in Cotton Spring Fieldwork in Uzbekistan in 2017," Uzbek-German Forum, September 2017, http://uzbek-germanforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Report_2017.pdf (accessed February 2, 2017).

Evidence of Government Control over Forced Labor in Uzbekistan’s Cotton Sector

Despite the developments noted above, forced labor, extortion, and other abusive practices remained a systematic, integral part of the 2017 cotton harvest in Uzbekistan.

A fundamental root cause of forced labor, the quota system for cotton production, remained in place in 2017. Under this system, the central government develops a cotton production plan with a quota for each region.¹⁹ The prime minister directly oversees cotton production.²⁰ He issues directives and receives updates on harvest progress through a series of telephone or video conference meetings with regional and local officials and farmers, who gather at the *hokimiat* to participate in the calls, held throughout the harvest. In turn, regional officials distribute production quotas among districts. Regional and district officials bear the responsibility for mobilizing labor to meet production quotas and risk losing their jobs or face other penalties if they fail.²¹ The fact that no region apparently met its cotton production quota by late October 2017 suggests that quotas may not reflect true production capabilities.²²

¹⁹ See the 2017 cotton production plan by region: “Қўшиб ёзишлар фoш бўлди. Ҳали ҳеч қайси ҳудуд пахта режасини бажармаган [Quotas revealed. No region has yet to fulfill its cotton plan],” Kun.uz, October 30, 2017, <http://kun.uz/news/2017/10/30/kusib-ezisl-ar-fos-buldi-ali-ec-kajsi-udud-pahta-rezasini-bazarmagan> (accessed February 15, 2018). For a fuller description of Uzbekistan’s cotton production system, see “We Can’t Refuse to Pick Cotton,” p. 22.

²⁰ President Mirziyoev served as prime minister from 2003 through the 2015 harvest and as acting president through 2016. In 2016 it was announced that responsibility for the agricultural sector was transferred to the minister of agriculture and water resources, but Prime Minister Abdulla Aripov retained control of the cotton sector in the 2017 harvest.

²¹ In 2017 the regional hokims and prosecutors for the Tashkent and Jizzakh regions were fired for inflating the figures for cotton production in their regions, pointing to the fact that they feared consequences for falling short. „В Узбекистане главы двух областей лишились постов из-за приписок хлопка [In Uzbekistan the heads of two regions removed from posts for inflating cotton figures],“ Fergana, October 30, 2017, <http://www.fergananews.com/news/27145> (accessed December 18, 2017).

²² “Қўшиб ёзишлар фoш бўлди. Ҳали ҳеч қайси ҳудуд пахта режасини бажармаган [Quotas revealed. No region has yet to fulfill its cotton plan],” Kun.uz, October 30, 2017, <http://kun.uz/news/2017/10/30/kusib-ezisl-ar-fos-buldi-ali-ec-kajsi-udud-pahta-rezasini-bazarmagan> (accessed February 15, 2018).

Regional data on cotton harvest in 2017. October 30, 2017

№	Region	Quota in tonnes	in one day		yesterday, +/-		as of the beginning of the season, +/-		
			tonnes	percent	tonnes	percent	tonnes	percent	difference
1	Samarkand	211200	1413	0,67	-77	-0,04	209814	99,34	-1386
2	Karakalpakstan	186200	869	0,47	-307	-0,16	184198	98,92	-2002
3	Navoiy	97000	212	0,22	-275	-0,28	94645	97,57	-2355
4	Qashqadaryo	406800	1906	0,47	-40	-0,01	394492	96,97	-12308
5	Khwarezm	250400	1335	0,53	11	0,00	234182	93,52	-16218
6	Bukhara	330200	380	0,12	-1916	-0,58	307106	93,01	-23094
7	Andijan	254600	1600	0,63	-201	-0,08	235466	92,48	-19134
8	Surxondaryo	285500	688	0,24	-276	-0,10	244763	85,73	-40737
9	Namangan	219800	1117	0,51	-1546	-0,70	177534	80,77	-42266
10	Syrdaryo	230400	2535	1,10	-232	-0,10	185520	80,52	-44880
11	Jizzakh	215600	1062	0,49	-1145	-0,53	165654	76,83	-499946
12	Fergana	267400	2705	1,01	-673	-0,25	201842	75,48	-65558
13	Tashkent	225600	1239	0,55	-1154	-0,51	163663	72,55	-61937
Total		3180700	17061	0,54	-7831	-0,25	2798879	88,00	-381821

By October 30 none of the regions had met the cotton quota.

Қорақалпоғистон Республикаси ва вилоятларда 2017 йил пахта ҳосилини қабул қилишнинг бориши тўғрисида 30 октябр ҳолатига мониторинг марказлари асосида олинган
МАЪЛУМОТ

№	Худудлар номи	Қарор бўйича, тонна	бир кунда		Кечагига, +/-		Мавсум бошидан		
			тонна	фонз	тонна	фонз	тонна	фонз	фарқи, +/-
1	Самарқанд	211200	1413	0,67	-77	-0,04	209 814	99,34	- 1 386
2	Қорақалпоқ	186200	869	0,47	-307	-0,16	184 198	98,92	- 2 002
3	Навоий	97000	212	0,22	-275	-0,28	94 645	97,57	- 2 355
4	Қашқадарё	406800	1906	0,47	-40	-0,01	394 492	96,97	- 12 308
5	Хоразм	250400	1335	0,53	11	0,00	234 182	93,52	- 16 218
6	Бухоро	330200	380	0,12	-1916	-0,58	307 106	93,01	- 23 094
7	Андижон	254600	1600	0,63	-201	-0,08	235 466	92,48	- 19 134
8	Сурхондарё	285500	688	0,24	-276	-0,10	244 763	85,73	- 40 737
9	Наманган	219800	1117	0,51	-1546	-0,70	177 534	80,77	- 42 266
10	Сирдарё	230400	2535	1,10	-232	-0,10	185 520	80,52	- 44 880
11	Жиззах	215600	1062	0,49	-1145	-0,53	165 654	76,83	- 49 946
12	Фарғона	267400	2705	1,01	-673	-0,25	201 842	75,48	- 65 558
13	Тошкент	225600	1239	0,55	-1154	-0,51	163 663	72,55	- 61 937
	ЖАМИ	3180700	17061	0,54	-7831	-0,25	2798879	88,00	-381821

While many cotton pickers voluntarily participate in the cotton harvest to earn money, the cotton production system in Uzbekistan is structured to rely on a core backbone of forced labor. *Hokims*, personally responsible for delivering centrally imposed cotton quotas, do not have sufficient resources to attract enough voluntary labor or control over wages paid to pickers. As a result, *hokims* resort to drawing involuntary labor through threat of penalty from the sectors over which they exert enormous influence: public sector institutions, *mahallas*, and businesses. *Hokims* distribute quotas among these institutions, which then require their employees to pick cotton. This system, designed and directed by the central government, is laid out in a series of instructions (see below). Further, the amount of cotton available to pick and thus the amount of money possible to earn, drops significantly from early September when cotton first ripens, to mid November when the harvest ends, resulting in an unreliable flow of voluntary labor. Requiring public sector institutions to send employees to pick cotton ensures a steady labor supply for *hokims*, who face dismissal and other consequences for failure to meet harvest quotas.

While some Uzbek officials admitted that problems with forced labor persisted in 2017, they insisted that these problems were not systematic but only occurred at the regional or local level.²³ Similarly, the ILO has acknowledged “uneven implementation” and cases of intimidation or pressure by regional and local officials.²⁴ The World Bank and the IFC have also held that there are key regional differences in the level of risk of forced labor, linking a higher risk of forced labor to regions with lower population density and a smaller available pool of voluntary workers. Conversely, they allege that a lower risk of forced labor is linked to regions with greater population density and a larger available pool of voluntary pickers.²⁵ Indorama’s system for rating the risk level of cotton-producing districts, which it developed together with the IFC, relies, in part on this theory, using demographic information in addition to other reports to determine risk levels.²⁶

However, the imposition of picking and labor quotas by *hokims* on institutions and use of threats to enforce them is not a sign of “uneven implementation” of appropriate recruitment practices as suggested by the ILO. It is the result of the cotton production system in its design

²³ In his Constitution Day address President Mirziyoyev repeated his earlier claim that forced and child labor had been eliminated. „Конституция – основа нашей свободной и благополучной жизни, дальнейшего развития и процветания страны [The Constitution is the Basis for Our Free and Prosperous Life, Future Development and Flourishing of the Country,“ Constitution Day speech by president Shavkat Mirziyoyev, 1News Information Agency, December 8, 2017, <http://1news.uz/policy/konstitutsiya-osnova-nashey-svobodnoy-i-blagopoluchnoy-zhizni-dalneyshogo-razvitiya-i-protsvetaniya-/> (accessed December 15, 2017). In a speech at the European Union, the Uzbek Ambassador to the EU echoed this claim. Address to the Committee on International Trade of the European Parliament, Ambassador Dilyor Khakimov, September 25, 2017. However in a meeting with the Uzbek-German Forum, the deputy labor minister said that problems with forced labor still arise at the local level but that no one orders local officials to tell anyone to pick cotton. Meeting between deputy minister of Labor Erkin Mukhitdinov and Uzbek-German Forum director Umida Niyazova, Geneva, Switzerland, November 27, 2017

²⁴ “Summary of 2017 Observations,” ILO, February 8, 2018.

²⁵ For example, the World Bank has said, “The share of voluntary labor is expected to be positively correlated...with local labor availability. Given the pronounced regional differences in labor availability, the situation therefore varies from one region to another.” Rob Swinkels, Ekaterina Romanova, and Evgeny Kochkin, “Assessing the Social Impact of Cotton Harvest Mechanization in Uzbekistan, World Bank Group, May 2016, p. 30, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/753131468301564481/pdf/105190-REPLACEMENT-WP-P151288-PUBLIC.pdf> (accessed February 2, 2018).

²⁶ Meetings between Human Rights Watch, the Uzbek-German Forum, and IFC officials, Washington, D.C., September 22, 2016 and June 22, 2017.

FORCED LABOR SYSTEM

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ENFORCES VIA NATIONWIDE COTTON MEETINGS

- Controls all aspects of cotton production
- Sets regional quotas
- Establishes rules for organizing harvest, mobilizing pickers, and reporting
- Imposes consequences on officials who fail



REGIONAL HOKIMS

IMPOSE QUOTAS ON DISTRICTS AND INSTITUTIONS

- Enforce via regional departments



DISTRICT HOKIMS

ENFORCE VIA DISTRICT OFFICIALS

- Impose quotas on institutions



INSTITUTIONS

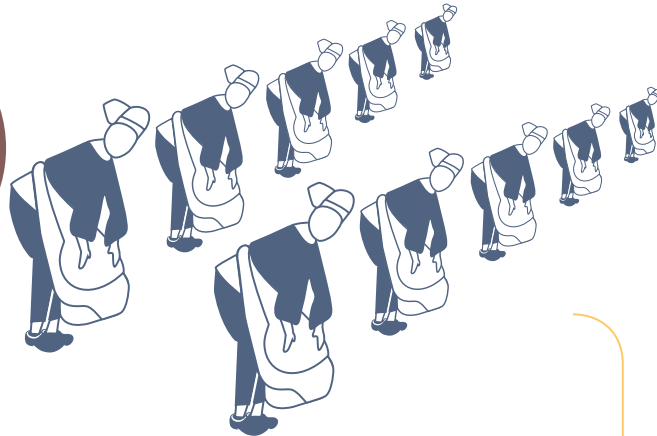
MOBILIZE PICKERS INVOLUNTARILY



MAHALLAS • HEALTH INSTITUTIONS • SCHOOLS • BUSINESSES • PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS

1 PERSON
50KG/DAY

20
DAYS
ONE METRIC TON



TEACHERS, DOCTORS, NURSES, OTHER PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEES, PEOPLE RECEIVING BENEFITS, BUSINESSES

and implementation from the top and which, in 2017 remained fundamentally unchanged from previous years. The current cotton production system has no mechanism for ensuring the complete harvest of the crop so that districts and regions can meet their centrally-imposed quotas without resorting to forced labor, given the lack of resources and control over wages or pricing afforded to districts and regions. This is especially true in the latter half of October and November when cotton is sparse and earning potential drops significantly. A look at the Andijan region, the most densely populated region of Uzbekistan, underscores the fact that forced labor was government policy or the direct result of government policy.²⁷

The Uzbek-German Forum documented evidence of forced adult labor and in all regions monitored, including in the three districts where the World Bank's South Karakalpakstan Water Resources Management Improvement Project is being implemented. In addition, the Uzbek-German Forum documented several instances of child labor in Karakalpakstan, and received credible information regarding child labor in Andijan region that was also reported by activists and the media. We have found that despite the government's change in rhetoric, agreements made with the ILO and the World Bank to mitigate the risk of forced labor, and steps to release some workers from forced labor, the Uzbek government did not alter structural root causes of forced labor, in particular the quota system, described below, which is established by the highest levels of government. As a result, in 2017, the Uzbek government and local officials continued to forcibly mobilize people for economic purposes, and to extort money from citizens to pay for cotton picking.

Based on an analysis of government documents, statements by officials, a review of Uzbek, international, and social media, information gathered by independent activists, visits to cotton fields, mobilization sites, and public sector institutions, and interviews with forced laborers, voluntary pickers, local officials, business owners, and people extorted for money, the Uzbek-German Forum found that forced labor and extortion were systematic and directed and supervised by the government.

Central Government Directs Regional and Local Officials

President Mirziyoyev has made several recent statements that clearly acknowledge the government's control over the work of *hokims* and their involvement in cotton production. At a session of deputies of the Tashkent region in January during which he discussed changes to the cotton production system, Mirziyoyev announced that *hokims* "will no longer be involved in cotton."²⁸ In his Constitution Day address, the president acknowledged that the central government orders

²⁷ The Andijan region has a population of approximately 2,756,400 in 4,200 square kilometers, see <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/uzbekistan-population/>.

²⁸ "Шавкат Мирзиёев: 'Ҳокимлар энди пахта билан шугулланмайди' [Shavkat Mirziyoyev: 'Hokims Will No Longer Be Involved in Cotton'], *Xabar.uz*, January 5, 2017, <http://www.xabar.uz/post/shavkat-mirziyoyev-hokimlar-endi-paxta-bilan-shugullanmaydi> (accessed February 5, 2018).

hokims to produce cotton but does not provide them with sufficient resources.²⁹ He also said that as a regional *hokim* for more than ten years, he never paid people a salary for the cotton they picked, a tacit acknowledgment that *hokims* rely on forced labor to meet demands set by the government.³⁰

In 2017 the government continued to order regional and district officials to meet quotas for cotton production. It is clear that central government officials knew or should have known that, in addition to voluntary pickers, local officials mobilized involuntary pickers under threat of penalty to meet quotas. The Uzbek-German Forum found credible information indicating that in some cases, central government officials directed lower level officials to mobilize pickers involuntarily to meet quotas imposed from higher up. Regional and local officials used coercion and threat of penalty to order institutions, including public sector organizations, public and private companies, small businesses, and people receiving public benefits to send people to pick cotton or pay replacement pickers.

A schoolteacher said that local officials used the president to justify forcing teachers to work. She said she and other teachers were arguing with the farmer when the district *hokim* approached them and asked what the problem was. She said she and other teachers told him they were being forced to pick cotton against the law. She said the *hokim* became furious and said “It’s your president himself who is sending you to the field!” She said after that “we couldn’t say a word and even now we are still in the fields.”³¹

Prime Minister Abdulla Aripov held a cotton conference call on the night of September 29, 2017, that lasted until 1:30 a.m. on September 30. Local officials, heads of public organizations, companies, and farmers participated in the call, along with the heads of the police, National Security Service, and the prosecutors of the Tashkent, Syrdarya, and Jizzakh regions. According to a farmer who participated in the call, Aripov ordered the heads of organizations to find “internal resources,” including, if necessary, their own “personal resources” to find or hire cotton pickers.³² Research by the Uzbek-German Forum in 2017 indicates that such orders have led to the heads of organizations mobilizing their staff to pick cotton involuntarily or to extort money from their employees to pay for cotton pickers. The farmer said that the head of the Jizzakh Polytechnic Institute, which has a staff of approximately 1500, was ordered to hire one cotton picker for each staff member and that heads of law enforcement agencies were also ordered to send cotton pickers.³³

²⁹ “President Mirziyoyev: “I have never paid people a salary for the cotton they picked,” Uzbek-German Forum, January 6, 2018, <http://uzbekgermanforum.org/president-mirziyoyev-i-have-never-paid-people-a-salary-for-the-cotton-they-picked/> (accessed February 5, 2018).

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with schoolteacher, Andijan district, Andijan region, September 26, 2017.

³² Uzbek-German Forum interview with farmer who participated in cotton meeting, Jizzakh, Jizzakh region, September 30, 2017.

³³ Ibid.



Dilmurod Rahmatullayev, mayor of Andijan

“Who is the jackal of the machine engineering college? You are filth as well. You are not a human being, you are a brute! Animal! You are not a loyal resident of Andijan! Do you think you deserve thanks from the governor of the region, you filth, look into my eyes. You filth, where are you from? Which college are you from, you filth, you animal. You ass! Do you think you deserve applause for the success of the town? Who do you think you are, you animal. Hey you, filth, did I talk to you normally yesterday? Why have you ignored my instructions, you animal. Look into my eyes, you filth. Did I tell you that you should provide 50 people? Should I make your ass talk, you filth? Do you wear trousers or a skirt (means are you a man or a woman), hey you, filth. Hey you, not everyone can be a man, you filth, and not everyone is able to make promises. Brave men, leaders make promises, you animal! You are an animal!”, says the mayor October 2017, Headquarters for cotton pickers

Another farmer told the Uzbek-German Forum that during another cotton conference meeting from 5:00 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. on October 20, a Friday, Aripov ordered school directors to send teachers to pick cotton and said that every teacher must go to the fields on the weekend, but that cotton picked by teachers would be attributed to the *mahalla*.³⁴ The Uzbek-German Forum spoke with several teachers from a school in the Jizzakh district, who confirmed that all teachers in their district picked cotton on October 21 and 22 and that throughout the harvest teachers were sent to the fields whenever they did not have classes. They also said that an ILO monitoring team came to their school but that the director had warned the staff “not to say a word about cotton,” so teachers told the ILO that they did not pick cotton and held classes as normal.³⁵

A district *hokimiat* official in Andijan confirmed that central government officials use the cotton conference calls to threaten regional and local officials and direct them to mobilize people to pick cotton including involuntarily and under threat of penalty. The *hokimiat* official, who is seconded every year from his own department to help coordinate the cotton harvest, said that both the president and prime minister “say the right things” about forced labor in public but in fact continue to direct and control the forced labor system.

³⁴ Uzbek-German Forum interview with farmer who participated in cotton meeting Jizzakh, Jizzakh region, October 20, 2017.

³⁵ Uzbek-German Forum interview with schoolteachers, Jizzakh district, Jizzakh, October 23, 2017.

If you could hear their orders at an internal cotton conference call meeting, your head would explode. The prime minister threatened ‘whoever refuses to pick cotton will have to deal with me. Fire those ingrates from their jobs!’ Do you really think they don’t know that doctors and teachers are picking cotton? Do you think it’s the local leadership who orders them to pick? They wouldn’t dare. No, all this happens from orders from the top.³⁶

In a tirade to local officials at a cotton meeting, Parkent district *hokim* Nemat Abdullayev said that *hokims* are pressured by central government officials on cotton production so severely that “you can’t even imagine it.”³⁷

A September 26 letter from the Central Bank of Uzbekistan to the heads of its regional branches and commercial banks, instructs them to get each employee to recruit and pay five people to pick cotton and to submit a list of the names of the hired pickers each day by 7 p.m. The letter provides direct evidence that central government agencies ordered regional officials to mobilize employees to pick cotton or extort money from employees to pay for replacement pickers.³⁸ A bank employee in Syrdarya said that he and other employees of his bank hired and paid for replacement workers to pick cotton in their names involuntarily, because the bank’s chairman required it. The bank’s employees also picked cotton on weekends when the chairman announced *khashar*, a traditional practice of community service. He said that it was “as clear as day” that the chairman was ordered from above to force his employees to hire replacement workers and could not refuse this order.³⁹

Government documents from 2017 show that the cotton system, including recruitment of pickers, composition and supervision of picking brigades, imposition of picking quotas, and oversight by district authorities, was centrally organized and directed. Several documents indicate that identical systems of organization were used in different regions, suggesting nation-wide policy. They also show that government officials ordered the involvement or knowingly involved public sector employees, including education and medical workers, in the harvest, and that law enforcement officials played a key role in mobilizing and supervising cotton pickers.

³⁶ Uzbek-German interview with hokimiat employee, district withheld, Andijan region, September 25, 2017.

³⁷ “Uzbek Official Unleashes Torrent of Abuse at Cotton Meeting,” Uzbek-German Forum, November 21, 2017, <http://harvestreport.uzbekgermanforum.org/uzbek-official-unleashes-torrent-of-abuse-at-cotton-meeting/> (accessed February 8, 2018).

³⁸ Letter No. 11-15/28 from Sh. Atabayev, deputy chairman, Central Bank of the Republic of Uzbekistan, to the chairmen of the boards of commercial banks and the heads of the regional branches of the Central Bank, September 26, 2017.

³⁹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with bank employee, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 7, 2017.



O'ZBEKISTON RESPUBLIKASI MARKAZIY BANKI

ЦЕНТРАЛЬНЫЙ БАНК
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2017 y. 26. sentyabr № 11-15/23

“Хизмат доирасида фойдаланиш учун”

Тижорат банклари
Бошқаруви раисларига
(руйхат буйича)

Марказий банкнинг ҳудудий
Бош бошқармалари
бошлиқларига

Республика ҳудудларида 2017 йил пахта ҳосилини йнгиб-териб олинишинига кўмаклашиш мақсадида Сизлардан банкнинг барча ҳудудий филиалларида ишлаётган ҳар бир ходим 5 тадан теримчини пахта йнгим-теримига жалб этилини ташкил қилинишингиз сўралади.

Шу билан бирга, қуйида илова қилинган 1-жадвални бегиланган тартибда тўлдириб, Марказий банкка 2017 йил 26 сентябрь соат 20.00 га қадар электрон шаклда (01stat15 эллекрон манзилга) тақдим этиш ҳамда 27 сентябрдан 1 ва 2-жадвалларни бошлаб ҳар куни соат 19.00 гача бериб боришингиз лозимлигини маълум қиламиз.

Илова 2 варақда.

Раис ўринбосари

Ш. Атабаев

On September 26, 2017, the Central Bank of Uzbekistan sent a letter to the heads of its regional branches and commercial banks, requesting each employee to recruit five people for the cotton harvest.

The Uzbek-German Forum obtained a document containing instructions for organizing the harvest that were adopted at an August meeting of the Samarkand regional *hokimiat* and confirmed by the Cabinet of Ministers. The instructions are not specific to Samarkand region but refer generally to all regions.⁴⁰ The document begins with the timeline for beginning the harvest “in the regions and Republic of Karakalpakstan.”⁴¹ The instructions describe the composition of picking brigades, fields assigned to each of them, and how sector heads are to appoint “authoritative, responsible, active employees (*mahalla* chairpersons, heads of organizations, directors of schools, colleges, etc.),” to serve as brigade leaders.⁴² While the instructions forbid including schoolchildren in picking brigades, they specify that brigades should be formed from unemployed people as well as “employees of organizations and institutions, and students of higher education.”⁴³ The instructions establish the number of pickers to be mobilized based on each person picking 50 kilograms per day over 20 days for a total of one metric tonne.⁴⁴

Another set of instructions, adopted at the same meeting, assigns authority to the brigade leader to ensure that each picker picks 50 kilograms per day.⁴⁵ A farmer told the Uzbek-German Forum that at a cotton meeting regional officials announced that Jizzakh region would have to mobilize 200,000 pickers to the cotton harvest.⁴⁶ The government’s 2017 regional quotas, first made public in late October, indicate the production quota for Jizzakh was 215,000 tonnes, which would, in fact, require approximately 200,000 pickers based on the calculation provided in the instructions. This suggests that officials used the calculation of 50 kilos per day per picker to establish labor mobilization quotas in other regions as well.⁴⁷

The central government also issued instructions, approved by the prime minister, for the creation of “cotton command units” under the regional and district *hokimiats* and headed by the deputy *hokims* for women’s issues.⁴⁸ Both regional and district level cotton command units include the chairpersons of the regional or district *Mahalla* Fund, youth organization, and trade

⁴⁰ “Order for formation of brigades in order to organize the cotton harvest without causing damage and without loss of the cultivated cotton crop of 2017,” 2nd Annex to the meeting of the Samarkand regional *hokimiat* No___, August___, 2017, confirmed by Protocol of the Meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. EDO-03/1-211, August 14, 2017.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, para. 1.

⁴² *Ibid*, para. 2.

⁴³ *Ibid*.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*. para 3.

⁴⁵ Temporary Procedure for the activity of brigades for the organized harvest of the 2017 cotton crop without loss. Annex 8 to the protocol of the meeting of the *hokimiat* of August 2017, para. 21.

⁴⁶ Uzbek-German Forum interview with farmer who participated in cotton meeting, Jizzakh, Jizzakh region, September 15, 2017.

⁴⁷ “Қўшиб ёзишлар фoш бўлди. Ҳали ҳеч қайси ҳудуд пахта режасини бажармаган [Quotas revealed. No region has yet to fulfill its cotton plan],” *Kun.uz*, October 30, 2017, <http://kun.uz/news/2017/10/30/kusib-ezishlar-fos-buldi-ali-ec-kajsi-udud-pahta-rezasini-bazarmagan> (accessed February 15, 2018).

⁴⁸ Temporary Procedure for the organization of non-governmental cotton command units to mobilize unemployed people to cotton picking and motivate them in order to ensure the timely cotton harvesting in 2017, Minutes of the Meeting of the Republican Committee on Enhancing Economic Reforms in Agriculture, approved by the prime minister, September 12, 2017; English translation available in “Third-party monitoring of measures against child labour and forced labour during the 2017 cotton harvest in Uzbekistan,” International Labour Office Report to the World Bank, hereinafter ILO TPM 2017, February 1, 2018, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_617830.pdf (accessed February 1, 2018); Annex 7, pp. 72-76.

union, all social partners of the ILO, as well as an officer from the Ministry of Internal Affairs.⁴⁹ The instructions call for the creation of two activist groups in every *mahalla*, comprised of medical officials, directors of schools and colleges, and law enforcement officers, among others, to compile lists of unemployed people and go door to door to recruit people to pick cotton, establishing a mobilization quota of “50-60 percent of able bodied citizens of the territory.”⁵⁰ The instructions specify that activists go daily to the houses of people who did not show up to the fields to “ensure their participation in the harvest.”⁵¹

The Uzbek-German Forum obtained documents showing that cotton fields in each district are divided into sectors, each supervised by a high-level district official, including heads of law enforcement agencies, who have direct oversight of farmers and picking brigades in the sector. The Uzbek-German Forum obtained warning letters sent to farmers in a district in the Samarkand region describing their obligations for the cotton harvest. The letters were adopted during a meeting at the Samarkand *hokimiat*, indicating that the district divisions were directed from above.⁵² The letters bear the signature of the official in charge of the sector where the farmer’s land is located. According to the signatures, the district *hokim* supervised sector 1, the district prosecutor supervised sector 2, the head of the district Ministry of Interior supervised district 3, and the head of the district tax authority supervised district 4.⁵³

A spreadsheet obtained from a district in the Fergana region similarly shows cotton farms divided into four sectors supervised by the *hokim*, prosecutor, head of police, and head of the tax authority. The spreadsheet lists the name, occupation, and telephone number of the brigade leaders in each sector. Brigade leaders include 38 school and kindergarten directors, and 21 medical workers, showing that officials recruited employees from the health and education sectors to work in the cotton harvest despite the prohibition of their involvement.⁵⁴ The spreadsheet also includes employees of numerous other public sector organizations, including the tax inspectorate, utility company, and veterinary clinic. In its report on the 2017 harvest, the ILO also found that “labor is provided in a way that directly or indirectly involves mahalla community officers, and in some cases school or college directors, university rectors, directors of medical facilities, heads of enterprise or state budget [public sector] organizations, local authority officials, and other organizations, such as the Kamolot youth organization.”⁵⁵

⁴⁹ Ibid, para. 2 and 3.

⁵⁰ Ibid, para. 17.

⁵¹ Ibid, para. 19.

⁵² “Warning Letter,” adopted as annex to the official minutes of the Samarkand regional *hokimiat* meeting

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ ILO TPM 2017, para 4.4, p. 26.

Regional and Local *Hokims* Forcibly Mobilize Cotton Pickers, Enforce Quotas with Threats and Intimidation

Hokims wield enormous authority in their districts and regions and tightly control all public sector institutions. Several recent reports have exposed how *hokims* threaten and punish local officials, through threats of dismissal, insults, public humiliation, and physical violence.⁵⁶ It is in this context that regional and district officials also bear personal responsibility for fulfilling the production quotas imposed by the government as well as for mobilizing the number of pickers required to meet the target. The pressure on *hokims* from the central government is clear: in 2017, the government fired at least three regional and district *hokims* for failing to meet their harvest responsibilities or for inflating their harvest figures to hide shortfalls.⁵⁷ They are also required to provide a daily accounting of cotton picked each day during the harvest. As the official responsible for oversight of the harvest in each district, the district *hokim* must obtain a written report on the amount of cotton picked by 10 p.m. each evening and submit a written report to the regional “information clearing center” by 11 p.m.⁵⁸ The regional information clearing center, under direction of the *hokim*, must also “conduct serious work with farmers who are not fulfilling their contract agreements [for producing the cotton quota] during the cotton harvest season and take all necessary steps.”⁵⁹

Regional and district *hokims* hold daily harvest meetings with farmers, heads of tax, law enforcement, education and health departments, other local officials, heads of public sector organizations such as kindergartens, schools, colleges, public utilities and services, banks, hospitals and clinics, and businesses. The meetings usually occur in the late evening and often last several hours. Officials use the meetings not only to get daily updates on the number of pickers mobilized by each institution and the amount of cotton each institution has submitted, but also to coerce and threaten heads of institutions and punish them for falling short of quotas. They often use harsh, abusive language, profanity, and threats of penalty including dismissal from employment and physical violence. These meetings, at which *hokims*, flanked by law enforce-

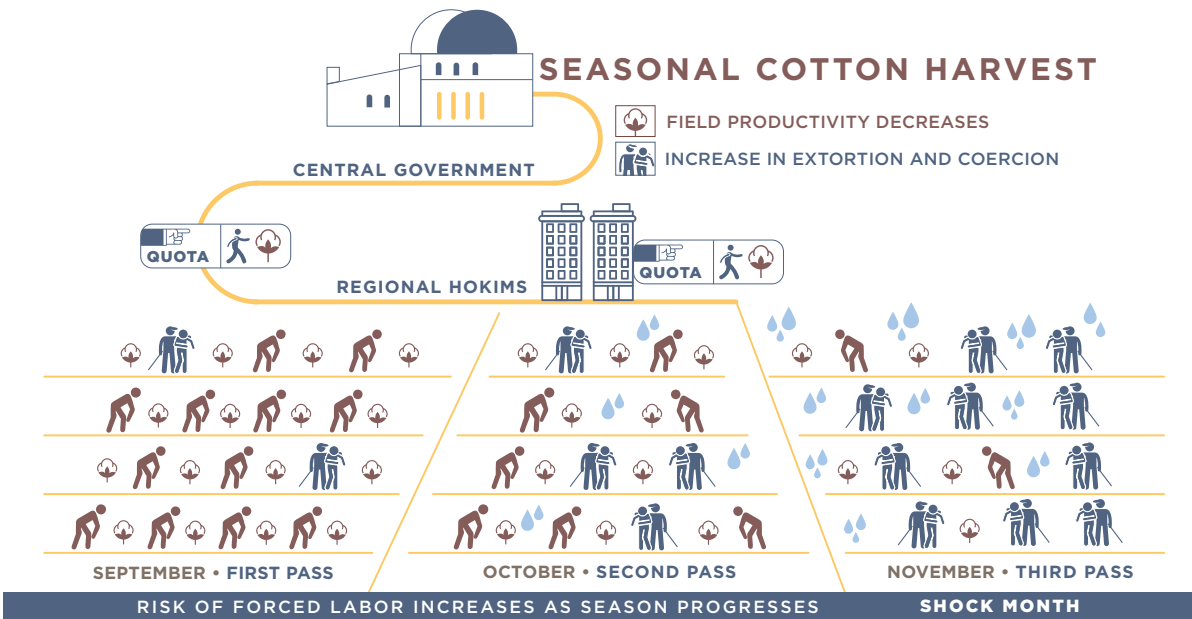
⁵⁶ A video shows a district *hokim* beating and berating school directors for failing to fulfill plans for Independence Day celebrations: “Head of Saykhunobod District Administration Assaults School Directors,” *Eltuz*, September 13, 2017, <http://eltuz.com/en/video/829/>. Ozodlik obtained a 16-minute recording of the *hokim* of Andijan district in the Andijan region insulting and swearing at farmers for not making timely payments for plastic film used in cotton planting. When confronted by a reporter, the *hokim* acknowledged that he used improper language. “Чиновник извинился перед фермерами за мат на совещании [Official Apologized to Farmers for Cursing at Meeting],” *Saddridin Ashur, Ozodlik*, January 29, 2018, <https://rus.ozodlik.org/a/29002074.html> (accessed February 6, 2018). Ozodlik reported on a physical attack by the *hokim* of Buz district, Andijan region on a local agricultural official, “Хоким приказал своим подчиненным побить чиновника [*Hokim* ordered subordinates to beat official],” *Ozodlik*, April 14, 2017, <https://rus.ozodlik.org/a/28427847.html> (accessed February 9, 2018). In January 2018, the same *hokim* excoriated officials for being late and ordered the firing of the heads of several kindergartens, “Еще один хоким из Андижана обозвал руководителей учебных заведений «тварями и сукиными детьми» [Another *Hokim* Calls Heads of Educational Institutions ‘Beasts’ and ‘Sons of Bitches’],” *Ozodlik*, December 13, 2017, <https://rus.ozodlik.org/a/28913426.html> (accessed January 10, 2017).

⁵⁷ According to the Uzbek site *Kun*, on October 14, 2017, at a meeting, Prime Minister Aripov fired the *hokim* of Denov district, Sukhandarya region for failing to organize the harvest. “Ўтган ҳафтада пахта туфайли истеъфого чиқарилган Денов тумани ҳокими бугун лавозимдан расман озод этилди [Last week the *hokim* of Denov district fired due to cotton, was officially removed from office],” *Kun.uz*, October 20, 2017, <http://kun.uz/news/2017/10/20/utgan-aftada-pahta-tufajli-istefoga-cikarilgan-denov-tumani-okimi-bugun-lavozimdan-rasman-ozod-etildi> (accessed March 1, 2018).

⁵⁸ Temporary Procedure for the activity of brigades for the organized harvest of the 2017 cotton crop without loss. Annex 8 to the protocol of the meeting of the *hokimiat* of August 2017, para. 21. para 9.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, para. 14.

ment officials who supervise picking, threaten the heads of institutions to provide workers to the harvest creating a toxic environment of intimidation around every aspect of the cotton harvest. Institution heads, who fear dismissal, in turn force their staff to pick cotton under threat of penalty.



CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

HOKIMS

INSTITUTIONS
MAHALLAS BUSINESSSES SCHOOLS HOSPITALS

PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEES

- LOW WAGES AND POOR WORKING CONDITIONS
- NOT ENOUGH VOLUNTARY LABOR
- VOLUNTARY LABOR DURING HARVEST

BEGINNING OF SEASON	QUOTA 80KG/DAY
400 SOUM/KG	32,000 SOUM/DAY (\$4)
END OF SEASON	QUOTA 10KG/DAY
700 SOUM/KG	7,000 SOUM/DAY (\$0.87)

ANDIJAN MOST DENSELY POPULATED REGION

- Abuse, intimidation, and threats by regional, district, and city hokims
- 11 and 12-year old children picked cotton; children ordered to bring cotton to school;
- parents ordered to pick in place of teachers children locked out of kindergartens unless their parents pick or pay
- taxi drivers, market stall owners, small businesses ordered to pick or pay; market closed and all shopkeepers sent to fields
- large enterprises ordered to send employees to fields
- public sector employees involuntarily transferred to pick in other regions
- public sector employees in fields in November breaking open unripened cotton buds
- Quotas enforced with threats, fines, beating

In 2017 these meetings and the abusive behavior of officials, a key component of the forced labor system, came under the spotlight when media outlets, including Uzbek media, and NGOs, reported on and published audio and video recordings or transcripts of several of them. These recordings clearly show regional and district officials calling the heads of agencies and organizations to account for picking and labor quotas and directing them to mobilize their employees to work in the harvest. *Hokims* imposed mobilization and picking quotas on institutions including *mahalla* councils, government agencies, including the tax authorities, utility companies, and even some law enforcement agencies, and health and education institutions. Heads of these organizations, in turn, ordered their employees or people receiving benefits, to pick cotton or pay for replacement pickers.

- **Turobjon Juraev, *hokim*, Samarkand region, cotton conference call, September 8, 2017:**

According to an official from the Narpay district who participated in the meeting, which lasted until 12:30 a.m., the *hokim* ordered the heads of organizations, *mahalla* council chairpersons, and farmers, “If you see anyone leaving the cotton field before 6 p.m., break their legs. I do not care whether they have a child or someone else in the house, they should all be in the field!...I will be telling you this over and over again by holding conference calls until you lazy people, improve your work. I will be following you everywhere!“ „You will either improve your work or we will be holding meetings like this till one or two o’clock in the morning.”

Juraev told district officials that cotton picking is mandatory under threat of penalty for all public sector employees and students: “If anyone refuses to pick cotton during the campaign, *mahalla* chairmen will handcuff them and bring them to the cotton field. Apart from those who are under 18, pregnant, or mentally disabled, it is compulsory for everyone.” Juraev acknowledged the prohibition on mobilizing health and education staff and said, “But you tell them to write down that they will be picking cotton voluntarily. Do I have to teach you this too?” He also warned several district heads that he would fire them if they failed to meet their quotas. He ordered the *hokim* of Narpay district to make the owners of petrol filling stations fund field housing for workers and to cut off their gas and electricity if they refused.⁶⁰

- **Shukhrat Djmalov, *hokim*, Samarkand city, Samarkand region**

A doctor said that at a cotton meeting Djmalov ordered the firing of three senior doctors for failing to get enough of their staff to pick cotton. She said that Djmalov screamed at them and beat his hand on the table “hard enough to break his fingers.”⁶¹

⁶⁰ Letter from district official who participated in the conference call to the Uzbek-German Forum, September 12, 2018.

⁶¹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with doctor, Samarkand district, Samarkand region, October 15, 2017. See also: „Пахтага чиқмаган 3 нафар олий тоифали шифокор ишдан ҳайдалди [Three senior doctors fired for refusing to pick cotton],“ BBC, October 17, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/uzbek/uzbekistan-41651358> (accessed October 19, 2017). For an English version see „Three doctors of the highest rank have been fired for refusing to pick cotton,“ Uzbek-German Forum, October 19, 2017, <http://harvestreport.uzbekgermanforum.org/three-doctors-of-the-highest-rank-have-been-fired-for-refusing-to-pick-cotton/> (accessed October 19, 2017).

- **Ismat Nusurov, *hokim*, Shahrisabz district, Kashkadarya region**

Ozodlik reported that law enforcement officers arbitrarily detained several farmers at a cotton meeting and held them in jail overnight as punishment on Nusurov's orders after they reported that they had fallen short of their cotton quotas.⁶²

- **Shukhratbek Abdurakhmanov, *hokim*, Andijan region:**

- o On September 22, the day of the recall of some cotton pickers, Abdurakhmanov said he would "personally imprison" anyone forcing children, students, or state employees to pick cotton, although forced labor continued in the Andijan region throughout the season.⁶³
- o On September 23, Abdurakhmanov, still under pressure to fulfill the region's quota despite the sudden and unannounced recall of some workers, made an appeal for cotton pickers on television, offering personally to find jobs for people who agreed to pick cotton for 20 days, or to arrange for farmers to pay daycare fees so parents could pick cotton.⁶⁴
- o Nurses and teachers told Ozodlik that Abdurakhmanov ordered them to return to the fields within days of the recall but to say they picked cotton voluntarily. A school director said that the authorities continued to wage "aggressive and violent policies against people," and that Abdurakhmanov threatened and insulted local officials during cotton meetings.⁶⁵
- o At a cotton meeting on October 3, Abdurakhmanov used obscenities to insult and threaten Asilbek Yusupov, *hokim* of the Ulugnor district, for failure to meet the district's harvest quota. Yusupov had a stroke following the meeting and later died.⁶⁶

- **Avazbek Ergashev, *hokim*, Kurgantepa district, Andijan region, cotton meeting**

September 18: According to Kun, a group of teachers said that Ergashev ordered each teacher to get the relatives of their pupils to pick cotton and was "exerting pressure" on teachers who failed to find at least five people. Teachers said they feared for their jobs if they could not. Ergashev acknowledge that he had asked teachers to get the parents of pupils to pick

⁶² „Ҳокимлик 100 килолик қарздорлик учун фермерларни милицияга олиб боришмоқда [Hokimiat taking farmers to jail for 100 kilo deficit],“ Pakhtagram, Ozodlik, October 19, 2017 <https://www.ozodlik.org/a/pakhtagram-shahrisabz-qarz/28804193.html> (accessed December 15, 2017).

⁶³ “В парламенте Узбекистана создадут специальную комиссию по борьбе с рабством [Uzbek parliament creates special commission for combatting slavery],” Fergana.ru, October 5, 2017, <http://www.fergananews.com/news/26965> (accessed February 8, 2017).

⁶⁴ Андижон вилоят ҳокимидан пахта тарғиботининг янги усули [A new method of cotton propagation from *Hokim* of Andijan region], Youtube, September 23, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bx4_ogGGtEw (accessed November 9, 2017).

⁶⁵ „Ҳоким Андижана отказался от своего обещания, «бюджетники» снова отправлены на сбор хлопка [Hokim of Andijan reneges on his promise and resumes sending public sector workers to pick cotton],“ Ozodlik, October 4, 2017, <https://rus.ozodlik.org/a/28772710.html> (accessed November 9, 2017).

⁶⁶ Ozodlik first reported the case and the Uzbek-German Forum separately confirmed the account. “Опозоренный на совещании по хлопку хоким скончался от инсульта [*Hokim* humiliated at cotton meeting died of stroke],” Ozodlik, October 6, 2017, <https://rus.ozodlik.org/a/28778279.html> (accessed February 8, 2018). Uzbek Official Insulted at Cotton Meeting Dies from Cerebral Hemorrhage after Suffering Humiliation, Uzbek-German Forum, October 9, 2017, <http://harvestreport.uzbekgermanforum.org/uzbek-official-insulted-at-cotton-meeting-dies-from-cerebral-haemorrhage-after-suffering-humiliation/> (accessed February 8, 2018).

cotton but said it was “not an obligation.” Kun.uz noted that parents at a school in Namangan region similarly said they had been told to pick cotton for the school or pay for pickers.⁶⁷

- **Dilmurod Rakhmatullaev, *hokim*, Andijan city, cotton meeting October 16:**

According to the director of a public organization who attended the meeting and sent a recording to Ozodlik, the heads of 50 schools, 12 colleges, 70 kindergartens, imams, heads of medical institutions and chief of police were all present. Rakhmatullaev, citing the need to fulfill the orders of the regional *hokim*, used crass and obscene language to insult and humiliate the heads of institutions for not providing enough people to pick cotton, calling people jackals, animals, whores, and enemies of Andijan. One by one he called institutions, including kindergartens, the district health department, tax department, colleges, schools, and public utilities, one by one to account. He threatened physical violence and to cut off utilities, arbitrarily enforce back tax payments, and ostracize people for failing.⁶⁸

Who is the jackal from the college of engineering? You stink too, you’re not human, you’re a monster. Monster! You are not a patriot of the city of Andijan. You’re an ass! Why did you ignore my assignment? Look me in the eye, you dirty animal. I said 50 people! How long have you been working? One and a half years? Do you wear trousers or women’s pants? Not everyone can wear pants. You animal! And then I learned about what dirty animals you are! A curse on your family, jackal! Yesterday, they spoke with you and asked ‘why he did not fulfill the quota?’⁶⁹

- **U. Tursunov, *hokim*, Akhangaran district, Tashkent region, October letter to public organizations:** the letter states that Akhangaran district, which is assigned to pick cotton in the Buka district, has a cotton harvest quota of 2,041 tonnes. The letter contains a space to fill in the specific quota for each organization to be picked by November 8: “your part of the plan consists of ___kg.” He threatens to take “very serious measures against you” if the organization does not fulfill its quota.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ “Пахта-2017: Андижонда ўқитувчиларга теримчи топиш топшириқ қилинмоқда [Cotton-2017: In Andijan, teachers are instructed to find a farmer],” Kun, September 20, 2017, <https://kun.uz/news/2017/09/20/pahta-2017-ukituvci-pahtaga-bormasa-boska-juli-topildimi> (accessed February 8, 2018).

⁶⁸ “Mayor of Andijan Intimidates and Humiliates to Meet Cotton Quota,” Uzbek-German Forum translation and transcript of audio recording, December 6, 2017, <http://harvestreport.uzbekgermanforum.org/mayor-of-andijan-intimidates-and-humiliates-to-meet-cotton-quota/> (accessed January 11, 2017). Rakhmatullaev was later fined for insult for this meeting but not for violations related to forced labor.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Letter from U. Tursunov, *hokim* of Akhangaran district, Tashkent region, to head of public organization, October 2017, Pakhtogram, Ozodlik, October 31, 2017, <https://www.ozodlik.org/a/paxtagram-ohangaron-korxonona/28826208.html> (accessed November 1, 2017).

- **Nemat Abdullayev, *hokim*, Parkent district, Tashkent region, cotton meeting November 1, 2017:** According to the head of an organization who participated in the meeting and sent a recording to Ozodlik, Abdullayev questioned every official who had not sent enough people to pick cotton and accused them of tampering with reports on the cotton harvest, threatening, humiliating, and insulting them by using deeply offensive language. The district's chief prosecutor and head of police were also present. Abdullayev unleashed a torrent of abuse on the meeting's participants, ordering them to account for failure to meet their picking and labor quotas. He also said that he was reprimanded by higher authorities and had to write a letter of explanation for the district's failure to meet its quota, which he said contributed to the firing of the *hokim* and prosecutor of Tashkent region. Abdullaev ordered officials at the meeting to send people to pick cotton, and that each picker should pick 30 kilos per day. He threatened consequences for not complying:

Are you hitting back now or what? I will disembowel you, any of you sluts. Whores, do you think you are allowed to do anything unless I say it, you sluts. Move your asses and make sure you send your people to pick cotton. Real people should pick cotton from now on! Stop tampering with reports and figures, fuck you, you sluts. I told you about this 50 times.⁷¹

Despite talk of some agricultural reforms, the state order and procurement system for cotton and wheat remains in place.⁷² Following the harvest, the government continued to permit *hokims* to exert significant control over farmers, allowing them to punish farmers for failure to meet their cotton production quotas and arbitrarily force farmers to grow cotton at the expense of more suitable or profitable crops. In February 2018, Turobzhon Juraev, *hokim* of the Samarkand region, presented minibuses to district deputy *hokims* in charge of agriculture as gifts from the president to allow the *hokims* “to control” the work of farmers better as part of a presidential decree on improving agriculture.⁷³

In Izoboskan districts in Andijan region, the *hokim* seized the land of 249 farmers who failed to meet their cotton quotas. Farmers and representatives on the local council who opposed the decision said that the president had granted the *hokims* with such power that they were beyond

⁷¹ “Uzbek Official Unleashes Torrent of Abuse at Cotton Meeting,” Uzbek-German Forum, November 21, 2017, <http://harvestreport.uzbekgermanforum.org/uzbek-official-unleashes-torrent-of-abuse-at-cotton-meeting/> (accessed February 8, 2018). Transcript contains offensive language.

⁷² “Как повысить эффективность использования сельскохозяйственных земель? [How to increase the effectiveness of agricultural land use],” Yulii Yusupov, Kommersant.uz, October 11, 2017, <http://kommersant.uz/ekspert/effektivnost-sh-zemel> (accessed April 2, 2018).

⁷³ “Быть ближе к фермерам! В Самарканде замхокимам районов выдали служебные «Дамасы» [Be closer to farmers! In Samarkand deputy *hokims* receive minibuses],” Nuz.uz, February 14, 2018, <https://nuz.uz/sobytiya/30277-byt-blizhe-k-fermeram-v-samarkande-zamhokimam-rayonov-vydali-sluzhebnye-damasy.html> (accessed February 17, 2018).

the reach of the law.⁷⁴ A farmer from Kainarbulok district in Samarkand wrote in the Facebook group “Dialogue with the People,” that her husband had invested significant time and money to develop a mulberry plantation on 17 hectares of land that had been in poor condition, with no government assistance. The district *hokim* has ordered her husband to plant cotton on seven hectares of the land, despite the fact that it is not suitable for cotton and is already planted with mulberry. As a result, he will incur major losses with no compensation.⁷⁵ A farmer from Mingbulok district in Namangan region told Ozodlik that the *hokim* ordered the destruction of 25 hectares of fruit orchards, so that they could be converted to cotton fields, saying he had the president’s authority.⁷⁶ Similarly, a farmer in Bukhara said that the *hokim* ordered the destruction of the family’s orchard, on which it relies for income, to plant cotton instead.⁷⁷ Ozodlik also reported that authorities in the Pap district in Namangan region forced more than 300 farmers to sign contracts for cotton and wheat production with the amount they are required to grow left blank, to be filled in by officials. Farmers said that officials locked them in a building and refused to release them until they signed the blank contracts. An agricultural official from Pap denied the incident.⁷⁸

Local Officials and Heads of Institutions

As seen in the government instructions referenced above and based on the quotas assigned by *hokims*, other officials, including the heads of regional and district departments of health and education, *mahalla* council employees, union officials, directors of institutions and organizations, also exert pressure on people under their control to work in the harvest or pay for replacement pickers. People consistently reported that local officials responsible for supervising their regular work also mobilized them to pick cotton and supervised them or their replacement workers in the fields, underscoring the threat to their regular jobs if they failed to work or failed to work hard enough.

Health and Education Officials

The government involved officials from city, district, and regional departments of education and health to mobilize education and health workers to pick cotton and supervise them in the

⁷⁴ “Избоскан ҳокими 249 нафар фермернинг ерини тортиб олди [Izoboskan district hokim seized the land of 249 farmers],” Saddridin Ashur, Ozodlik, January 18, 2018, <https://www.ozodlik.org/a/izboskan-hokimi-249fermerning-yerini-tortib-ol-di/28983195.html> (accessed February 17, 2018).

⁷⁵ “Dialogue with the People” Facebook group post, farmer, Kainarbulok district, Samarkand, February 6, 2018.

⁷⁶ “Ҳоким 25 гектар ердаги мевали дарахтларни кестирди [Hokim cut down 25 hectares of fruit trees],” Your Telegram, Ozodlik, February 10, 2018, <https://www.ozodlik.org/a/sizdan-telegram-bog/29032326.html> (accessed February 17, 2018).

⁷⁷ “БУХОРО – „Ҳоким гуллаб турган боғимизни пайҳон қилиб, пахтазорга айлантирмоқчи [BUKHARA: ‘Hokim wants to raze our flowering trees and turn our orchard into cotton fields’,]” Ozodlik, March 25, 2018 <https://www.ozodlik.org/a/sizdan-telegram-daraxt/29122455.html> (accessed March 28, 2018).

⁷⁸ “Наманганда фермерлардан шартнома бўш бланкасига мажбуран муҳр ва имзо қўйдириб олинди [In Namangan, farmers forced to sign and stamp blank contracts],” Sadridin Ashur, Ozodlik, February 24, 2017, <https://www.ozodlik.org/a/uzbek-fermerdan-majburan-bush-blankaga-imzo/29060556.html> (accessed February 28, 2018).

fields, despite the prohibition on involving employees from this sector in the harvest and after the stated recall of these employees on September 22. Continued involvement of regional and district departments of health and education as brigade leaders, called to account at *hokimiat* meetings can only occur with knowledge of ministries. Although the Ministry of Education issued a statement categorically opposing forced labor of teachers, officials from regional and district departments of health held school directors accountable for fulfilling labor and picking requirements and supervised teacher and school staff working in the fields.⁷⁹ District and regional health department employees supervised medical workers and replacement pickers hired by medical staff.⁸⁰ Education and health officials were required to participate in *hokimiat* cotton meetings and report to *hokims* how much cotton workers from their institutions picked.

On September 21, human rights activist Elena Urlaeva spoke with teachers and kindergarten staff in Yaipan, in the Uzbekistan district of the Fergana region, who said that they were forced to pick cotton under threat of dismissal by Nafisa Nishonova, the head of the city education department. They complained that they were forbidden to leave and that conditions were poor. Later that evening, Urlaeva attended the district cotton meeting at the *hokimiat* where Nishonova was present and demanded Urlaeva's arrest. Urlaeva was subsequently taken into custody and held at the city police department for four hours, during which police confiscated her notes, mobile phone, and camera. Nishonova was also present at the police station.⁸¹

An eight-minute video filmed on October 10, 2017, shows a district education official telling teachers in Markhamat district of the Andijan region that they must pick cotton or pay for replacement workers. She threatens anyone who complains with dismissal, and orders teachers to bring cotton if they have to buy it, pick it themselves, or exploit themselves sexually to get it.⁸²

⁷⁹ „МНО ‚категорически против любых форм принудительного труда‘ [The Ministry of People's Education is ‚Categorically Opposed to Any Form of Forced Labor‘],“ *Gazeta.uz*, August 31, 2017, Uzbek-German Forum interview with school cleaner, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 12, 2017; schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 3, 2017; schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017; school director, Dangara district, Fergana region, October 12, 2018; school director, Buvaida district, Fergana region, October 4, 2017 <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2017/08/31/mno/> (accessed December 20, 2017).

⁸⁰ Uzbek-German Forum interview with replacement worker, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 9, 2017; doctor, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017; nurse, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 1, 2017; and school cleaner, Jizzakh, Jizzakh region, November 22, 2017.

⁸¹ “У ‘БЕССТРАШНЫХ’ ПРИ ЗАДЕРЖАНИИ УНИЧТОЖЕНА ИНФОРМАЦИЯ ПО РЕЙДУ В ФЕРГАНСКОЙ ОБЛАСТИ. УЗБЕКИСТАН [Members of ‘Fearless’ had their information about raid to Fergana region destroyed during arrest],” Human Rights Alliance press release, September 22, 2017.

⁸² „‘Хохла пахтани сотиб ол, хохла фермерга тегиб ол!’“ (ВИДЕО) [Buy Cotton or Throw Yourself at the Farmer (VIDEO)],“ *Ozodlik*, October 14, 2017, <https://www.ozodlik.org/a/28794527.html> (accessed October 19, 2017). For an English transcript see: „I am here to re-programme your brain- teachers warned they must contribute to the cotton harvest,“ Uzbek-German Forum, October 17, 2017, <http://harvestreport.uzbekgermanforum.org/i-am-here-to-re-programme-your-brain-teachers-warned-they-must-contribute-to-cotton-harvest/> (accessed October 19, 2017).



October 15, 2017, workers of medical institutions of the city of Samarkand on the way to pick cotton.

Mahalla Council Officials

Mahalla council leaders, who play a key role in mobilizing residents to pick cotton, are appointed by local authorities and accountable to them. *Mahalla* councils distribute funds for child benefits, pensions, and welfare assistance and have tremendous discretion on how these funds are distributed and who receives them, giving them real financial levers to exert pressure on residents to pick cotton.

Mahalla council staff told the Uzbek-German Forum that they threatened to deprive people of child and welfare benefits payments if they refused to pick cotton.⁸³ A *mahalla* council secretary from the Andijan region showed the Uzbek-German Forum a written order, signed by the regional *hokim*, to create a “blacklist” of people who refused to work in the cotton harvest in a special notebook and provide the names to the *hokimiat*. She said that people on the blacklist would not be able to receive any government benefits or services. She went from house to house in her *mahalla* to tell people they could get off the list by picking cotton or paying money.⁸⁴ A retired teacher who now volunteers for her *mahalla* council said the regional *hokim* ordered the region’s cotton quota to be fulfilled by October 20 and all organizations had to send workers to the fields. She said that the work was mandatory, even though she had an injury that made it difficult to bend over. She said her husband, also retired, worked as a cook in the fields and her daughter, who works for a government agency, was exhausted because she had to pick cotton during the day and do her regular work at night.⁸⁵

⁸³ Uzbek-German Forum interview with *mahalla* chairperson, district withheld, Fergana region, October 6, 2017; *mahalla* council secretary, district withheld, Andijan region, November 10, 2017; and *mahalla* chairperson, district withheld, Andijan region, October 22, 2017.

⁸⁴ Uzbek-German Forum interview with *mahalla* council secretary, district withheld, Andijan region, November 10, 2017.

⁸⁵ Uzbek-German Forum interview with *mahalla* council Women’s Committee member, district withheld, Andijan region, October 7, 2017.



Dear fellow citizens!

We invite you to a massive harvest of cotton grown in the farm fields of the _____ district in order to harvest cotton in a short period of time, without losses and without leaving it to the rainy days, and also, to obtain some additional income.

YOU ARE GUARANTEED THE FOLLOWING:

During the first harvest period, you will be paid 410 soums for every kilogram of collected and submitted cotton; since the commencement of the second harvest period, you will be paid 520 soums for every kilogram of collected and submitted cotton; comfortable sleeping conditions, necessary amenities, and transportation are provided to seasonal cotton collectors.

Please, contact us!

Uzpakhtasanoatexport JSC, tel.: 0(371)120-42-30, 120-42-82

Local branch of Uzpakhtasanoatexport JSC, tel.:

District branch of Uzpakhtasanoatexport JSC, tel.: _____

In case of violation of your labour rights, please contact:

kasaba.uz

tel. 10-92

mehnat.uz

0(371) 200-06-00

The chair of a *mahalla* council in the Andijan region said that the *hokim* instructed the council to ensure 100 percent of unemployed people worked in the harvest and that they bring babies to the fields so that mothers who are picking cotton can nurse them. She said the *mahalla* was assigned to pick 320 tons and 400 kilograms.⁸⁶ A *mahalla* chairperson from another region said she did not want to force people to pick cotton but had to follow orders from above. She said that it would be better if everyone could do his or her own job instead of spending months in the fields but “we make someone from every family receiving benefits pick cotton and we also recruit ‘unemployed’ people who are really teachers, nurses, and kindergarten staff.”⁸⁷ A *mahalla* council employee said that the *mahalla* had a labor quota of 300 people per day and was under orders to recruit at least one person from every household. She said, “Do you think we enjoy forcing people to work? I feel sorry for them.”⁸⁸

The Federation of Trade Unions and Labor Union Officials

As with *mahalla* officials, the government’s instructions for the organization of cotton command units assign union officials with mobilizing cotton pickers. The Federation of Trade Unions (FTUU), the national trade union federation, sponsored radio messages calling on people to pick

⁸⁶ Uzbek-German Forum interview with *mahalla* chairperson, district withheld, Andijan region, October 22, 2017.

⁸⁷ Uzbek-German Forum interview with *mahalla* chairperson, district withheld, Fergana region, October 6, 2017.

⁸⁸ Uzbek-German Forum interview with *mahalla* council secretary, district withheld, Andijan region, November 10, 2017.

cotton and circulated flyers to recruit cotton pickers, warning them to pick cotton “before the rains come” and advertising comfortable living conditions.⁸⁹ The government also directed the FTUU to organize entertainment for cotton pickers working during the “shock month.”⁹⁰

In some cases, labor unions were responsible for mobilizing their members to pick cotton.⁹¹ Two doctors said that Fakhridin Saidov, head of the Samarkand doctor’s union, was ordered by the *hokim* to mobilize doctors to pick cotton but that some doctors, aware of the government’s stated policy not to involve medical staff, complained to Saidov.⁹² Saidov, aged 54, died of an apparent stroke in his office on September 16. One doctor said that Saidov’s wife told her that the *hokim* had threatened him to mobilize more pickers and humiliated him at a cotton meeting and alleged that the stress had contributed to his death.⁹³

Union officials did not take steps to advocate for people required to pick cotton or protect them from forced labor.⁹⁴ A union official in Karakalpakstan admitted that 35 of the union’s members had been sent to pick cotton, but offered them no assistance.⁹⁵ Another union official in Karakalpakstan said that medical staff were picking cotton as “public work” and, when asked about Uzbek and international laws prohibiting forced labor, said that they only apply to children.⁹⁶

Law Enforcement and Tax Officials

Law enforcement officials went house to house to mobilize pickers, and supervised pickers in the fields. A teacher said the police and prosecutors also went from house to house to tell people to pick cotton and emphasized that “it creates a lot of pressure to have them knocking on your door.”⁹⁷ A voluntary picker who was transferred to another region to pick cotton said pickers were supervised by police who accompanied them from their home districts, as well as police and *hokimiat* employees where they picked cotton.⁹⁸

⁸⁹ FTUU sponsored flyer recruiting cotton pickers, See p.38.

⁹⁰ Cabinet of Ministers Protocol No. 3, October 14, 2017 “On conducting cultural-educational activities during the 30-day shock month for the timely and complete harvest of the 2017 cotton crop. The protocol lists various types of cultural activities and the names of musicians, singers, and actors assigned to each, and the dates and locations of performances. The FTUU is one of the organizations assigned to carry out the protocol.

⁹¹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with employee of public organization [withheld], Buvaida district, Fergana region, December 1, 2017.

⁹² Uzbek-German Forum interview with doctor, Samarkand district, Samarkand region, October 15, 2017; and doctor, Samarkand district, Samarkand region, October 10, 2017.

⁹³ Ibid. See also “SOS!!! ПОМОГИТЕ ОСТАНОВИТЬ ПРИНУДИТЕЛЬНЫЙ ТРУД ВРАЧЕЙ И УЧИТЕЛЕЙ В САМАРКАНДСКОЙ ОБЛАСТИ [SOS!!! Help Stop the Forced Labor of Doctors and Teachers in the Samarkand Region],” Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan press release, October 16, 2017. The FTUU rebutted these allegations. See below, p.76.

⁹⁴ Uzbek-German Forum interview with cotton gin union chairperson, Ellikkala district, Karakalpakstan, September 27, 2017.

⁹⁵ Audio recording of telephone call between Uzbek-German Forum and labor union chairperson, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, October 1, 2017. The union chairperson said that the union’s members had been sent to pick cotton in Kukcha, which is in the World Bank project area.

⁹⁶ Uzbek-German Forum interview with hospital labor union chairperson, Beruni, Karakalpakstan, September 28, 2017. The Uzbek-German Forum separately corroborated with two other hospital employees that medical staff were being sent to pick cotton every day in Altynsai, which is in the World Bank project area. Uzbek-German Forum interviews with hospital employee 1 and hospital employee 2, September 28, 2017.

⁹⁷ Uzbek-German Forum interview with schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017.

⁹⁸ Uzbek-German Forum interview with voluntary picker, Andijan, Andijan region, November 18, 2017

People told the Uzbek-German Forum that the involvement of law enforcement officials in mobilizing and supervising workers, enforcing quotas, and being present at cotton meetings where *hokims* intimidated and threatened officials, contributed to a climate of fear and undermined accountability mechanisms. In a country with serious concerns about impunity and police abuse, government-orchestrated mobilization also allows for overreach by law enforcement. Residents of Jizzakh writing to Ozodlik said that forced mobilization had taken on a “military character,” because people in camouflage uniforms were patrolling the city and putting passers-by who were not occupied onto buses to send them to pick cotton.⁹⁹

Tax authorities supervised pickers sent by business owners. A business owner said the tax inspectors are responsible for pickers hired by business owners. They count to see who sent how many and report to the higher authorities if owners do not send enough pickers or if there are problems with discipline or meeting the quota.¹⁰⁰

Attempts to Undermine Monitoring

Officials took steps to mislead monitors and hide the fact that public sector workers picked cotton. Some workers said that officials instructed them to tell outsiders or monitors, especially foreigners, that they were unemployed and picking cotton of their own will to earn money or help their country. Education and health workers were especially warned not to reveal their professions.¹⁰¹ A man who picked cotton involuntarily because his brother’s school required it, said the farmer ordered that he and the teachers with whom he was picking hide from monitors.¹⁰²

A *mahalla* chairperson said education and health workers are recorded as unemployed “especially to monitors.”¹⁰³ Similarly a teacher said that for years her school has contract with a farmer as a picking brigade and although “there is a folder with all our documents and copies of our passports, we are listed as ‘unemployed’ rather than as teachers.”¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ “Хлопкорабство в Узбекистане: Последние жертвы? [Cotton Slavery in Uzbekistan: the last victims?],” Fergana News, September 26, 2017, <http://www.fergananews.com/articles/9567> (accessed March 12, 2018).

¹⁰⁰ Uzbek-German Forum interview with small business owner, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 6, 2017.

¹⁰¹ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with college teacher, Izboskan district, Andijan region, September 26, 2017; schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017; kindergarten employee, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 2, 2017; school cleaner, Jizzakh, Jizzakh region, November 22, 2017; schoolteacher, Andijan district, Andijan region, September 26, 2017; schoolteacher, Buvaidda district, Fergana region, November 14, 2017; schoolteacher, Akdarya district, Samarkand region, November 24, 2017; doctor, Samarkand district, Samarkand region, October 10, 2017; schoolteacher, Shahrisabz, Kashkadarya region, November 28, 2017; and schoolteacher, Jizzakh, Jizzakh district, October 24, 2017. Nurses and teachers told Ozodlik that the *hokim* resumed sending them to the fields after the recall but warned them to say they picked voluntarily. “Хоким Андижана отказался от своего обещания, ‘бюджетники’ снова отправлены на сбор хлопка [Hokim of Andijan reneges on his promise and resumes sending public sector workers to pick cotton],” Ozodlik, October 4, 2017, <https://rus.ozodlik.org/a/28772710.html> (accessed November 9, 2017).

¹⁰² Uzbek-German Forum interview with man who picked cotton for his brother’s school, Oltinkul district, Andijan region, October 28, 2017.

¹⁰³ Uzbek-German Forum interview with mahalla chairperson, district withheld, Fergana region, October 6, 2017. Similarly, Kun said it had received numerous letters from readers complaining about forced labor and reported that teachers, medical workers continued to be forced to pick cotton and were “counted as part of the ‘unemployed population.’” “Пахта-2017: Далалардан дараклар — мажбурий меҳнат давом этааптими ёки одамлар нега пахта термаяпти? [Cotton-2017: Forced labor in the fields, or why are people picking cotton?],” Kun.uz, October 7, 2017, [zhttps://kun.uz/news/2017/10/07/pahta-2017-dalalardan-daraklar-mazburij-menat-davom-etaaptimi-eki-odamlar-nega-pahta-termaapti](https://kun.uz/news/2017/10/07/pahta-2017-dalalardan-daraklar-mazburij-menat-davom-etaaptimi-eki-odamlar-nega-pahta-termaapti) (accessed March 1, 2018). The site published 15 letters from teachers, medical workers, business owners, and others alleging they were forced pick cotton or pay for a replacement picker.

¹⁰⁴ Uzbek-German Forum interview with schoolteacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, September 17, 2017.

Some workers and students said that their supervisors required them to sign statements that they picked cotton voluntarily and agreed to consequences if they did not come to the fields or meet quotas.¹⁰⁵ A doctor said that, given the choice, she “would never pick cotton,” but that she and her colleagues were made to sign statements saying they picked voluntarily. One day they heard a “foreign commission” was coming so their supervisors took them to a remote field where the commission would not find them. The doctor said, “If only we had met with the commission, we could have told them of our misfortune!”¹⁰⁶

Odina Abdurahimova, a teacher in the Buvaida district in the Fergana region said that on October 10, inspectors came to the field where she and other teachers were picking cotton, but an official told the inspectors that the teachers were unemployed people working for the *mahalla* and the inspectors left without speaking to them. Abdurahimova said she was angry and asked him “Do we not exist here? Why did you lie?” Abdurahimova said the next day her director called her to say that inspectors would visit the school so teachers would not pick cotton but would hold classes instead.¹⁰⁷

Yesterday, when we finished our lunch and were just about to go to the field, there were many people in the camp. A man came from the cotton field, jumped over a ditch, cheerfully looked at our director and said: “Inspectors have arrived.” This man’s name was Jumanazar. “I told the inspectors you are from a neighborhood, that you are ordinary people. They left. I did not mention you.” Our school director listened to him, smiling with pleasure. Jumanazar went on speaking as if he was telling all this in order to get a reward:

“No one asked about you and no one noticed you.”

I was angry about what he had said: “What do you mean? Do we not exist here? Why did you lie?”

“You are being paid, and that’s enough!”, he said and quickly left.

Odina Abdurahimova, a teacher of information science at school 1 in Buvayda District of Fergana Region.

Facebook post , October 11, 2017

¹⁰⁵ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with college teacher, Izboskan district, Andijan region, September 26, 2017; *mahalla* resident, Gulistan, Syrdarya, November 10, 2017; nurse, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 1, 2017; inmate, Zafarabad district, Jizzakh region, November 23, 2017; Uzbek-German Forum interview with schoolteacher, Andijan district, Andijan region, September 26, 2017; university student, Samarkand, Samarkand region, November 25, 2017; schoolteacher, Akdarya district, Samarkand region, November 24, 2017; and schoolteacher, Shahrizabz, Kashkadarya region, November 28, 2017.

¹⁰⁶ Uzbek-German Forum interview with doctor, Samarkand district, Samarkand region, October 10, 2017.

¹⁰⁷ Odina Abdurahimova, teacher of information science, School No. 1, Buvaida district, Fergana region, Facebook post, October 11, 2017; English translation available at “A Teacher’s Sad Story,” Uzbek-German Forum, October 13, 2017, <http://harvestreport.uzbek-germanforum.org/a-teachers-sad-story/> (accessed February 27, 2018).

Forced Labor and Extortion of Public Sector Employees, People Receiving Benefits, and Business Owners

Involuntary

The vast majority of public sector employees, students, and business owners interviewed by the Uzbek-German Forum expressed the strong desire to stay at their regular jobs instead of picking cotton, citing low pay, difficult work, poor living conditions, not wanting to be away from home for days or weeks, negative impact on their jobs, and the need to keep up with their regular jobs while also working in the fields.¹⁰⁸ A parent receiving child benefits also said she did not want to pick cotton because she did not want to be away from her young children and had other family responsibilities.¹⁰⁹ In a rare exception, a cotton gin employee who had recently suffered a workplace accident said that even though his director required him to pick cotton and he would have faced consequences for refusing, he viewed working in the fields as a welcome opportunity to regain his strength and have a reprieve from his demanding regular job.¹¹⁰

An unemployed woman who picked cotton voluntarily said that she had to spend some of her earnings to hire a replacement picker for her husband, a public sector employee mobilized involuntarily. She said he did not want to pick and also had to keep up with his regular job.¹¹¹

A kindergarten teacher who was required to pick cotton by her director said that in total, four members of her family picked cotton, two required by their employers and two by the *mahalla*, but none of them worked voluntarily, because the work was difficult, they wanted to stay in their own jobs, and they could not earn enough to make it worthwhile. She also said the *mahalla* also withheld money from her in-laws' pensions for the harvest.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with schoolteacher, Andijan district, Andijan region, October 12, 2017; college teacher, Izboskan district, Andijan region, September 26, 2017; doctor, Samarkand district, Samarkand region, October 15, 2017; engineer at state factory, Andijan, Andijan region, October 19, 2017; state employment office, district withheld, Andijan region, October 14, 2017; nurse, Markhamat district, Andijan region, October 14, 2017; man who picked cotton for his brother's school, Oltinkul district, Andijan region, October 28, 2017; school cleaner, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 12, 2017; schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 3, 2017; schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017; doctor, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017; kindergarten employee, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 2, 2017; nurse, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 1, 2017; small business owner, Jizzakh, Jizzakh region, November 24, 2017; school cleaner, Jizzakh, Jizzakh region, November 22, 2017; factory worker, Asaka district, Andijan region, November 19, 2017; schoolteacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, October 1, 2017; schoolteacher, Markhamat district, Andijan region, November 22, 2017; employee of public organization, Buvaidda district, Fergana region, December 1, 2017; nurse, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, November 10, 2017; schoolteacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, November 10, 2017; schoolteacher, Buvaidda district, Fergana region, November 14, 2017; schoolteacher, Akdarya district, Samarkand region, November 24, 2017; doctor, Samarkand district, Samarkand region, October 10, 2017; schoolteacher, Shahrisabz, Kashkadarya region, November 28, 2017; tax service employee, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, November 20, 2017; shop owner, Kasbi district, Kashkadarya region, November 29, 2017; cafe owner, Dustlik district, Jizzakh region, December 2, 2017; GM-Uzbekistan factory employee, Andijan, Andijan region, October 21, 2017; schoolteacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, September 17, 2017; schoolteacher, Buvaidda district, Fergana region, September 9, 2017; schoolteacher, Buvaidda district, Fergana region, September 19, 2017; owner of private medical clinic, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, September 29, 2017; shop owner, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, September 29, 2017; parent required to pick for school, Oltinkul district, Andijan, September 25, 2017; and schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya, September 28, 2017.

¹⁰⁹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with *mahalla* resident, Gulistan, Syrdarya, November 10, 2017.

¹¹⁰ Uzbek-German Forum with cotton gin employee, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, November 6, 2017.

¹¹¹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with unemployed voluntary picker, Khuzhabad district, Andijan region, September 24, 2017.

¹¹² Uzbek-German Forum interview with kindergarten employee, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 2, 2017.

Perhaps the clearest indication that participation in the cotton harvest was involuntary for most people mobilized by their employers or officials who supervise them was the nearly universal requirement that they hire or pay for replacement pickers to pick cotton in their names if they did not want to pick cotton themselves.¹¹³ Some employees said their supervisors directed them to hire replacement workers instead of going to the fields.¹¹⁴ A tax inspector said “Unless it is ordered from above, [who] is going to pay a million *soum* for a picker out of his own pocket?”¹¹⁵ A college teacher said that the college required her to hire a replacement picker and the director of her son’s kindergarten told her she had to pick cotton for the kindergarten or contribute money for a replacement worker and that she had to borrow money to cover these expenses.¹¹⁶

School, college directors, and kindergarten directors required teachers and school staff to pick cotton involuntarily or pay for a replacement worker, even following the announcement of the recall of education workers.¹¹⁷ Some education employees emphasized that the orders came from district or regional educational officials or the *hokim* and that their directors would be punished if the teachers and other staff did not pick cotton.¹¹⁸ School directors also said they

¹¹³ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with schoolteacher, Andijan district, Andijan region, October 12, 2017; college teacher, Izboskan district, Andijan region, September 26, 2017; small business owner, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 6, 2017; school cleaner, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 12, 2017; small business owner Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017; small business owner, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, October 31, 2017; schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 3, 2017; doctor, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017; doctor, Samarkand district, Samarkand region, October 15, 2017; state employment office, district withheld, Andijan region, October 14, 2017; nurse, Markhamat district, Andijan region, October 14, 2017; man who picked cotton for his brother’s school, Oltinkul district, Andijan region, October 28, 2017; schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017; kindergarten employee, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 2, 2017; nurse, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 1, 2017; small business owner, Jizzakh, Jizzakh region, November 24, 2017; school cleaner, Jizzakh, Jizzakh region, November 22, 2017; Uzbek-German Forum interview with schoolteacher, Andijan district, Andijan region, September 26, 2017; schoolteacher, Markhamat district, Andijan region, November 22, 2017; nurse, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, November 10, 2017; schoolteacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, November 10, 2017; schoolteacher, Akdarya district, Samarkand region, November 24, 2017; schoolteacher, Shahrisabz, Kashkadarya region, November 28, 2017; tax service employee, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, November 20, 2017; shop owner, Kasbi district, Kashkadarya region, November 29, 2017; cafe owner, Dustlik district, Jizzakh region, December 2, 2017; parent required to pick for school, Oltinkul district, Andijan, September 25, 2017; kindergarten teacher, Buvaidda district, Fergana region, October 3, 2017; owner of private medical clinic, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, September 29, 2017; and shop owner, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, September 29, 2017.

¹¹⁴ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with college teacher, Izboskan district, Andijan region, September 26, 2017; employee of state employment office, district withheld, Andijan region, October 14, 2017; and bank employee, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 7, 2017.

¹¹⁵ Uzbek-German Forum interview with tax service employee, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, November 20, 2017.

¹¹⁶ Uzbek-German Forum interview with college teacher, Izboskan district, Andijan region, September 26, 2017.

¹¹⁷ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya, September 28, 2017; schoolteacher, Buvaidda district, Fergana region, September 19, 2017; schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 3, 2017; schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017; kindergarten employee, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 2, 2017; schoolteacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, October 1, 2017; schoolteacher, Markhamat district, Andijan region, November 22, 2017; schoolteacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, November 10, 2017; schoolteacher, Buvaidda district, Fergana region, November 14, 2017; schoolteacher, Akdarya district, Samarkand region, November 24, 2017; schoolteacher, Shahrisabz, Kashkadarya region, November 28, 2017; schoolteacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, September 17, 2017; kindergarten teacher, Buvaidda district, Fergana region, October 3, 2017; schoolteacher, Jizzakh, Jizzakh district, October 24, 2017; and schoolteacher, Buvaidda district, Fergana region, September 19, 2017; “Преподавателей Андижанского мединститута принуждают нанимать вместо себя сборщиков хлопка [Teachers of Andijan Medical Institute Forced to Hire Replacement Cotton Pickers],” *Ozodlik*, October 20, 2017, <https://rus.ozodlik.org/a/28805463.html> (accessed March 29, 2018). A college teacher told *Ozodlik* that school and college teachers were extorted for money and forced to pick cotton under threat that otherwise a commission would find fault with their work and would confiscate their annual salary. “Уқитувчиларни қўрқитиб, пахтага мажбурлашмоқда [They Threaten Teachers and Force Them into the Fields],” *Pakhtagram*, *Ozodlik*, October 16, 2017, <https://www.ozodlik.org/a/pakhtagram-angren-uqituvchilar/28798145.html> (accessed March 29, 2018).

¹¹⁸ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with school cleaner, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 12, 2017; schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017; schoolteacher, Andijan district, Andijan region, October 12, 2017; and schoolteacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, September 17, 2017.

forced their employees because they had to follow the orders of the *hokimiat* and education department or they would lose their jobs.¹¹⁹ One said that if it were up to him, he would not send even one employee to pick cotton but if he refused, he would lose his job, because “all sticks are broken over [directors’] heads.”¹²⁰

A teacher said, “I wouldn’t come [to the cotton fields] if they didn’t make me. They say we are no longer required. On the contrary, they hang up posters saying it is prohibited to force anyone to work. But cotton picking isn’t voluntary. If it were, no teachers would pick cotton.”¹²¹ The teacher explained that the district department of education and *hokimiat* make the school director pay money if she cannot meet her labor quota and the director collects that money from teachers.¹²²

Health care employees had to pick cotton or pay for replacement workers involuntarily, because their supervisors required them to.¹²³ Medical workers emphasized that they did not want to leave their jobs to pick cotton. “I would rather help my patients than pick cotton.”¹²⁴ A doctor who owns a private clinic says he was called to a meeting at the *hokimiat* and ordered directly by the *hokim* to send his employees to the fields or hire replacement workers. He said he paid for eight replacement pickers because otherwise he would not have been able to maintain quality services for his patients and could not refuse the *hokim*.¹²⁵ A doctor said that “no person in his right mind” picks cotton voluntarily because the conditions are so miserable. “People pick out of fear and because there is no alternative.”¹²⁶ A parent said he could not find a doctor to treat his daughter because they were all picking cotton and asked “when will forced labor finally end?”¹²⁷

Owners and employees of private businesses, including individual entrepreneurs, told the Uzbek-German Forum that tax authorities required businesses to send employees or replacement pickers to pick cotton or pay money directly to the authorities ostensibly to hire replacement pickers. They also said that the number of pickers they had to send or hire, or the amount of money they had to pay, was based on the size of their business and number of employees.¹²⁸ A shop owner said the head of the tax inspection gave him the choice to close his shop or pay mo-

¹¹⁹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with school director, Dangara district, Fergana region, October 12, 2018.

¹²⁰ Uzbek-German Forum interview with school director, Buvaida district, Fergana region, October 4, 2017

¹²¹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with schoolteacher, Buvaida district, Fergana region, September 9, 2017

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Uzbek-German Forum interview with nurse, Markhamat district, Andijan region, October 14, 2017; nurse, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 1, 2017; nurse, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, November 10, 2017; medical worker, Jizzakh, Jizzakh region, December 5, 2017; Uzbek-German Forum interview with doctor, Samarkand district, Samarkand region, October 10, 2017; replacement worker, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 9, 2017; and replacement picker, Talimarzhon town, Kashkadarya region, November 30, 2017.

¹²⁴ Uzbek-German Forum interview with doctor, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017.

¹²⁵ Uzbek-German Forum interview with owner of private medical clinic, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, September 29, 2017.

¹²⁶ Uzbek-German Forum interview with doctor, Shahrisabz, Kashkadarya region, November 28, 2017.

¹²⁷ “Пахта туфайли касал қизимга врач топа олмадим [Due to Cotton I could Not Find a Doctor for My Ill Daughter],” Ozodlik, October 17, <https://www.ozodlik.org/a/paxtagram-urgut-qvp/28800176.html> (accessed March 29, 2018).

¹²⁸ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with small business owner, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 6, 2017; small business owner Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017; small business owner, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, October 31, 2017; cafe owner, Dustlik district, Jizzakh region, December 2, 2017; and owner of private clinic, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, September 29, 2017.

ney directly to a tax inspector, ostensibly to hire replacement pickers. A tax inspector came to his shop to collect 30,000 *soum* (approximately \$3.75) every day from September 15 to October 30 but the shop owner said he received no documentation because “we all know it’s illegal.”¹²⁹ Business owners and employees also said that the cotton harvest caused financial hardship for them because of mandatory cotton expenses and lost business or productivity.¹³⁰ A small business owner who had to pay more than 3 million *soum* to hire four cotton pickers to work for 40 days, said, “This is not *khashar*. It is not voluntary and lasts for months. I can’t develop my business without profits but all my profits went to the harvest. I pay taxes and obey the law so the government should leave me alone but instead it hurts my business.”¹³¹

Employees at some large state-owned or joint enterprises also said they had to work in the cotton fields involuntarily and under threat of dismissal or disciplinary measures.¹³² An engineer at a state factory said that the factory had to send 100 employees to Ulugnor district in the Andijan region to pick cotton on overnight shifts and that the employees were neither given a choice about whether to go nor information about how long they would stay. He said his boss told the workers they could go home “when it’s over.”¹³³ An employee of a state enterprise wrote to Ozodlik to complain that he and others were still in the fields, far from home and had to gather dried cotton stalks because there was no cotton left and they did not receive proper meals, asking “Do people know about this?... Please, we are suffering.”¹³⁴

An Uzbek media outlet reported that the head of a major enterprise had to send 55 employees to pick cotton as well as spend time and money improving the workers’ temporary housing. According to the enterprise head, the employees told him they would rather collect money for replacement workers than pick cotton and live in such poor conditions. He told them that the authorities demanded that he report on the number of employees he sent and the amount of cotton they picked.¹³⁵ An oil and gas company issued a written directive, which was published

¹²⁹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with shop owner, Kasbi district, Kashkadarya region, November 29, 2017.

¹³⁰ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with small business owner Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017; small business owner, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, October 31, 2017; small business owner, Jizzakh, Jizzakh region, November 24, 2017; shop owner, Kasbi district, Kashkadarya region, November 29, 2017; cafe owner, Dustlik district, Jizzakh region, December 2, 2017; and owner of private clinic, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, September 29, 2017.

¹³¹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with small business owner, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 6, 2017.

¹³² Uzbek-German Forum interviews with factory worker, Asaka district, Andijan region, November 19, 2017; engineer at state factory, Andijan, Andijan region, October 19, 2017; and GM-Uzbekistan factory employee, Andijan, Andijan region, October 21, 2017. See also “Ишда ойликни тўлиқ тўламай, яна пахтага чиқармоқда [They don’t receive their monthly salary but are sent to pick cotton again],” Pakhtagram, Ozodlik, October 19, 2017, <https://www.ozodlik.org/a/paxtagram-jizzax/28804140.html> (accessed December 15).

¹³³ Uzbek-German Forum interview with engineer at state factory, Andijan, Andijan region, October 19, 2017.

¹³⁴ „Пахта йўқ, одамлар ўтин термоқда [There is no cotton left, people are gathering branches],“ Pakhtagram, Ozodlik, November 15, 2017, <https://www.ozodlik.org/a/paxtagram-navoiyazavod/28855571.html> (accessed November 16, 2017).

¹³⁵ “Момик пахта ҳақида тиконли уч ҳикоя [Three Barbed Stories About Soft Cotton],” Kun.uz, November 7, 2017, <http://kun.uz/news/2017/11/07/momik-pahta-akida-tikonli-uc-ikoa> (accessed February 7, 2018).



on Kun, ordering 2000 of its employees to pick cotton.¹³⁶ Readers posted comments to the article lamenting that their companies also forced employees to pick cotton.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Addendum 3 to Order No. 295 of the Management of the Stock Company “Uzbekneftgaz,” The number of people who will be sent to pick cotton from the total number of employees working in the stock company and businesses in the Uzbekneftgaz system, September 19, 2017, available at: “Пахта-2017: Далалардан дараклар — мажбурий меҳнат давом этаяптими ёки одамлар нега пахта термаяпти? [Cotton-2017: News from the Fields—Is Forced Labor Continuing or Why Aren’t People Picking Cotton?],” Kun.uz, October 7, 2017, <https://kun.uz/news/2017/10/07/pahta-2017-dalalardan-daraklar-mazburij-menat-davom-etaaptimi-eki-odamlar-nega-pahta-termaapti> (accessed February 16, 2018).

¹³⁷ Ibid.

**Annex 3 to the Decree No.295 of
the Uzbekneftegaz JSC Office
issued on September 19, 2017**

Number of workers employed in joint stock companies and enterprises of the Uzbekneftegaz JSC system to be mobilized for cotton collection in the Akkurgan district of Tashkent region.

	Joint stock companies and enterprises	Number of cotton collectors
1	Uzneftegazdobycha	650
2	Uzbuguneftegaz	350
3	Uznefteprodukt	500
4	Uztransgaz	400
5	Uzbekgeofizika	100
	Total:	2000

**Annex 4 to the Decree No.295
of the Uzbekneftegaz JSC Office
issued on September 19, 2017**

List of vehicles sent to the Akkurgan district of Tashkent region by the Uzbekneftegaz JSC for cotton collection in 2017

	Bus	Car	Truck	Ambulance	Water tanker
Uzneftegazdobycha JSC	20	2			1
Uzbuguneftegaz JSC	10	2	2		1
Uztransgaz JSC	8	2		1	1
Uzbekgeofizika JSC	3	1		1	
Uznefteprodukt JSC	10	1			
Total:	51	8	2	2	3

Penalty and Threat of Penalty for Refusal to Pick or Pay

People who refused or attempted to refuse to pick cotton or pay for a replacement worker faced penalties, including dismissal from employment, disciplinary measures, salary deductions, loss of child or welfare benefits, or problems for their business. In some cases, people said the penalties threatened were explicit.¹³⁸

In other cases, people emphasized that they could not refuse because they knew they would face real negative consequences as punishment for refusal. In its report on the 2017 harvest, the ILO classifies as voluntary all pickers who did not experience or fear a menace of penalty and notes that “social pressure to pick cotton is still widespread across the country. Social pressure refers to situations where people want to maintain positive relationships within their families or communities, based on past experience that communities or certain categories of people are being mobilized to pick cotton.”¹³⁹ This formulation ignores the reality in Uzbekistan where, in a context of high poverty and unemployment, people are unwilling to risk their jobs, officials have established a climate of fear, accountability mechanisms do not function, and public sector employees are regularly exploited to perform unpaid “public” work. This work, which includes cleaning streets and apartments, paying for and planting flowers, painting fences, construction, city beautification, planting and weeding cotton, cultivating silk cocoons, and other agricultural work, is widely seen as a condition of their employment and refusal is not an option. People have consistently emphasized that this work is required of them and that even in the absence of specific threats, they believe that if they refuse to do this work their boss will find a reason to fire them. It strains credulity to believe that people would willingly pay for a replacement picker, a major financial hardship for many, unless they believed they would suffer consequences otherwise. The ILO’s formulation also ignores the fact that, in both regulation and practice, officials responsible for mobilizing people to pick cotton and supervising their work in the fields are officials with direct control over their jobs or livelihoods.

Not a single person interviewed by the Uzbek-German Forum in 2017 or in any previous year who picked cotton involuntarily referred to family or “community” pressure, only pressure from employers or local officials, including tax and *mahalla* officials, who have direct influence over

¹³⁸ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with schoolteacher, Andijan district, Andijan region, October 12, 2017; college teacher, Izboskan district, Andijan region, September 26, 2017; *hokimiat* employee, district withheld, Andijan region, September 25, 2017; *mahalla* resident, Gulistan, Syrdarya, November 10, 2017; school cleaner, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 12, 2017; university student, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 6, 2017; small business owner Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017; small business owner, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, October 31, 2017; schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 3, 2017; schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017; kindergarten employee, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 2, 2017; *mahalla* council secretary, district withheld, Andijan region, November 10, 2017; factory worker, Asaka district, Andijan region, November 19, 2017; schoolteacher, Markhamat district, Andijan region, November 22, 2017; nurse, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, November 10, 2017; doctor, Shahrisabz, Kashkadarya region, November 28, 2017; schoolteacher, Akdarya district, Samarkand region, November 24, 2017; *mahalla* chairperson, district withheld, Fergana region, October 6, 2017; kindergarten director, Parkent district, Tashkent region, November 19, 2017; GM-Uzbekistan factory employee, Andijan, Andijan region, October 21, 2017; and schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya, September 28, 2017.

¹³⁹ ILO TPM 2017, p. 17.

their financial well-being. When asked why they picked cotton or paid for replacement pickers, people interviewed by the Uzbek-German Forum consistently emphasized the real threat of punishment or penalty for refusal:

- “I like my job. Cotton is something we have to endure for two months every year.”¹⁴⁰
- “No one refused. No one can refuse. [Participation in the cotton harvest] is mandatory for everyone from government institutions to regular organizations. In this case it is pointless to complain.”¹⁴¹
- “Tax inspectors will find a reason to close me down [if I refuse to pay for workers].”¹⁴²
- “We were told we had to go, that there is no alternative. The director has to send us, he is afraid of losing his job. If we complain, the director and district education officials will find a reason to fire us.”¹⁴³
- “They fire people for refusing to pick cotton, they just don’t write that in the documentation. There are a thousand reasons you can make up to fire a teacher.... Who are they, these monitors? They come, get wine and dine, and leave. The bosses will cover any problems with bribes. And I am in the middle, left in this school, in this *mahalla*, alone with my supervisors.”¹⁴⁴

People also said they faced penalties for failure to work hard enough or meet picking quotas, including being humiliated, insulted, or excoriated at the field headquarters, being reported to their employers to face disciplinary measures, made to perform extra work, or being beaten.¹⁴⁵ A kindergarten teacher said that officials in the fields record how much cotton each organization picks and reports to the organization’s director if employees do not meet the quota and then the director “takes all his anger out on the employees.”¹⁴⁶ Some people told the Uzbek-German Forum that they or their colleagues bought cotton at inflated prices from those who exceeded the quotas to make up their own shortfalls and avoid penalties.¹⁴⁷ An engineer at a state factory said

¹⁴⁰ Uzbek-German Forum interview with nurse, Markhamat district, Andijan region, October 14, 2017.

¹⁴¹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with bank employee, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 7, 2017.

¹⁴² Uzbek-German Forum interview with small business owner, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 6, 2017.

¹⁴³ Uzbek-German Forum interview with schoolteacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, October 1, 2017.

¹⁴⁴ Uzbek-German Forum interview with schoolteacher, Shahrisabz, Kashkadarya region, November 28, 2017.

¹⁴⁵ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with engineer at state factory, Andijan, Andijan region, October 19, 2017; replacement worker, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 9, 2017; school cleaner, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 12, 2017; university student, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 6, 2017; small business owner Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017; small business owner, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, October 31, 2017; schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 3, 2017; schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017; kindergarten employee, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 2, 2017; nurse, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 1, 2017; inmate, Zafarabad district, Jizzakh region, November 23, 2017; voluntary transfer picker, Andijan, Andijan region, November 18, 2017; factory worker, Asaka district, Andijan region, November 19, 2017; schoolteacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, November 10, 2017; university student, Samarkand, Samarkand region, November 25, 2017; doctor, Shahrisabz, Kashkadarya region, November 28, 2017; schoolteacher, Buvida district, Fergana region, November 14, 2017; schoolteacher, Akdarya district, Samarkand region, November 24, 2017; school director, Dangara district, Fergana region, October 12, 2018; schoolteacher, Shahrisabz, Kashkadarya region, November 28, 2017; replacement picker, Tashkent, December 4, 2017; and GM-Uzbekistan factory employee, Andijan, Andijan region, October 21, 2017.

¹⁴⁶ Uzbek-German Forum interview with kindergarten employee, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 2, 2017.

¹⁴⁷ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with engineer at state factory, Andijan, Andijan region, October 19, 2017;

that police supervising the pickers enforced the quotas strictly and beat people with truncheons for failure to meet the quota. Some people resorted to buying cotton at inflated prices from others who had exceeded the quota to avoid being beaten.¹⁴⁸ One teacher said the education officials supervising her repeatedly reported her to her director when she failed to pick enough cotton, causing her to fear for her job. She said she had to buy cotton to make up shortfalls and also resorted to pouring water and debris into the cotton she picked to make it heavier.¹⁴⁹

People who hired replacement workers because they were required to by a supervisor or official said they faced problems if the replacement worker they hired failed to work hard enough. Business owners said that tax authorities held them personally responsible for any problems with their replacement pickers, including discipline, absences, and failure to meet quotas.¹⁵⁰

Teachers and school staff said their directors explicitly threatened them with punishment or consequences for refusing to pick cotton, including reduction in teaching hours resulting in reduction in wages, dismissal, or disciplinary action.¹⁵¹ Others said measures would be taken against people who refused, including that their directors or education officials would find a reason to fire them.¹⁵²

Healthcare workers also said they were threatened with being fired or faced other penalties if they refused.¹⁵³ A nurse said “the only way to be free from cotton is to quit your job. [If you refuse] they will find a reason to discipline you or fire you.”¹⁵⁴ Another nurse said that anyone

¹⁴⁸ Ibid and Uzbek-German interviews with *hokimiat* employee, district withheld, Andijan region, September 25, 2017; schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017; inmate, Zafarabad district, Jizzakh region, November 23, 2017; factory worker, Asaka district, Andijan region, November 19, 2017; schoolteacher, Markhamat district, Andijan region, November 22, 2017; university student, Samarkand, Samarkand region, November 25, 2017; doctor, Shahrisabz, Kashkadarya region, November 28, 2017; schoolteacher, Akdarya district, Samarkand region, November 24, 2017; and GM-Uzbekistan factory employee, Andijan, Andijan region, October 21, 2017.

¹⁴⁹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017.

¹⁵⁰ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with small business owner, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 6, 2017; small business owner Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017; small business owner, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, October 31, 2017; and small business owner, Jizzakh, Jizzakh region, November 24, 2017.

¹⁵¹ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 3, 2017; schoolteacher, Buvaida district, Fergana region, September 9, 2017; kindergarten employee, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 2, 2017; schoolteacher, Markhamat district, Andijan region, November 22, 2017; school cleaner, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 12, 2017; and schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya, September 28, 2017.

¹⁵² Uzbek-German Forum interviews with school cleaner, Jizzakh, Jizzakh region, November 22, 2017; schoolteacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, October 1, 2017; schoolteacher, Andijan district, Andijan region, October 12, 2017; schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017; schoolteacher, Andijan district, Andijan region, September 26, 2017; schoolteacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, November 10, 2017; schoolteacher, Buvaida district, Fergana region, November 14, 2017; schoolteacher, Akdarya district, Samarkand region, November 24, 2017; schoolteacher, Shahrisabz, Kashkadarya region, November 28, 2017; kindergarten teacher, Buvaida district, Fergana region, October 3, 2017; and schoolteacher, Buvaida district, Fergana region, September 19, 2017.

¹⁵³ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with nurse, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, November 10, 2017; doctor, Shahrisabz, Kashkadarya region, November 28, 2017; nurse, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 1, 2017; doctor, Samarkand district, Samarkand region, October 10, 2017; medical worker, Jizzakh, Jizzakh region, December 5, 2017; schoolteacher, Buvaida district, Fergana region, November 14, 2017; schoolteacher, Akdarya district, Samarkand region, November 24, 2017; doctor, Samarkand district, Samarkand region, October 15, 2017; doctor, Samarkand district, Samarkand region, October 15, 2017; nurse, Markhamat district, Andijan region, October 14, 2017; doctor, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017; and medical worker, Jizzakh, Jizzakh region, December 5, 2017.

¹⁵⁴ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with nurse, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 1, 2017.

who did not meet the quota had to sign a statement promising not to violate “disciplinary rules” again and agreeing that measures would be taken against you for future violations.¹⁵⁵ A doctor said anyone who did not meet the quota was taken back to the fields to pick cotton until after dark.¹⁵⁶

Mahalla councils recruited people to pick cotton by threatening to withhold child and other benefits payments.¹⁵⁷ The chair of one mahalla council said “If anyone defies me, I’ll wipe their noses on the ground.”¹⁵⁸ A woman who did not want to be away from her young children to pick cotton described increasing pressure by local officials to get her to work. She said first teachers were sent to recruit her, then she was made to sign a letter of voluntary participation, then prosecutors came to the house to tell her to pick cotton. After the chair of the mahalla council called her in and threatened to take away her child benefits unless she picked cotton, she worked in the fields from September 23 until the end of October.¹⁵⁹

Business owners said they faced penalties if they refused, including spurious inspections and fines or temporary or permanent closure of their businesses.¹⁶⁰ Some also said that refusal would lead to a bad relationship with the tax authorities or *hokimiat* which could result in problems for their business. A shop in Namangan was closed as punishment for not sending its employees to the fields. A sign posted on the shop said, “Shop closed for not sending staff to pick cotton. Cannot reopen without permission of the chairman of the market.”¹⁶¹ Police locked a major wholesale market in Andijan and sent the sellers to pick cotton.¹⁶² In a social media post an entrepreneur said the authorities threatened his shop if he refused to close it to go and pick cotton and questioned on what legal basis they could do this.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁵ Uzbek-German Forum interview with nurse, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 1, 2017.

¹⁵⁶ Uzbek-German Forum interview with doctor, Shahrisabz, Kashkadarya region, November 28, 2017.

¹⁵⁷ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with mahalla chairperson, district withheld, Fergana region, October 6, 2017 and mahalla council secretary, district withheld, Andijan region, November 10, 2017.

¹⁵⁸ Uzbek-German Forum interview with *mahalla* chairperson, district withheld, Andijan region, October 22, 2017.

¹⁵⁹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with *mahalla* resident, Gulistan, Syrdarya, November 10, 2017.

¹⁶⁰ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with small business owner, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 6, 2017; small business owner, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, October 31, 2017; small business owner Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017; small business owner, Jizzakh, Jizzakh region, November 24, 2017; shop owner, Kasbi district, Kashkadarya region, November 29, 2017; cafe owner, Dustlik district, Jizzakh region, December 2, 2017; and owner of private clinic, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, September 29, 2017.

¹⁶¹ „Кун фотоси: Пахтага чиқмагани учун бозордаги дўкон муҳрланди [Photo of the Day: Shop in a market has been shut for not picking cotton],“ kun.uz, October 24, 2017 <http://kun.uz/news/2017/10/24/kun-fotosi-pahtaga-cikmagani-ucun-bozordagi-dukon-murlandi> (accessed October 25, 2017).

¹⁶² „В Андижане закрылся крупнейший оптовый рынок из-за отправки продавцов на хлопок [The largest wholesale market in Andijan closes because sellers are sent to cotton harvest],“ Fergana News, October 11, 2017, <https://www.fergananews.com/news/27003> (accessed October 20, 2017).

¹⁶³ Individual entrepreneur, Yashnabad district, Tashkent city, Facebook post, October 3, 2017.



Shop № 177 located on the territory of the “Sardoba bozori (Sardoba market)” Limited Liability Association has been sealed on 23 October 2017 because its staff has not taken part in the cotton-picking campaign. (Signed by) The chairman of Sardoba market U.I. Abdugafarov.

Employees of large enterprises also said they faced penalties if they refused. An employee at a factory said the director threatened to fire anyone who refused to pick cotton. His colleague, who was recovering from surgery, asked for an exemption but the director refused, telling him to resign if he wanted to rest. When the employee offered to send a replacement instead, the director said “I’ll fire you and hire him to do your job then.”¹⁶⁴

Extortion, Child Labor, and Penalties to Parents and Children in Andijan Region

In the Andijan region, some kindergartens, schools and colleges, under pressure to deliver quotas but prohibited from mobilizing pupils and staff, resorted to extorting pupils, staff, and parents directly for money and, in some cases, cotton, and penalizing children or their parents for not complying. A teacher said that her school was under an order from the *hokimiat* to collect cotton or money from school pupils. She said that the school physically punished and humiliated children who did not bring in cotton or money by making them stand in front of the school with their arms raised for long periods of time and called them “enemies of the people.” She also said that she was required to send in money or cotton to her children’s school and kinder-

¹⁶⁴ Uzbek-German Forum interview with factory worker, Asaka district, Andijan region, November 19, 2017



On November 3, 2017, human rights activist Elena Urlayeva visited cotton fields in the Balikchi district (Andijan region) and saw children at the age of 11-12 picking cotton.

garten.¹⁶⁵ Kun published a letter similarly alleging that one school in Andijan required parents to pay 40,000 soum or pick cotton for the school and that the children of parents who refused were excluded from classes or shamed in front of classmates.¹⁶⁶

People reported that schools also required children to bring cotton to school. A woman said her nephew in the 3rd grade picked cotton because his school told him he must bring several kilos, and parents of children in older grades also said that their children were told to pick cotton by their teachers.¹⁶⁷ On November 3, in the Balikchi district of Andijan, Urlaeva documented 11 and 12-year-old schoolchildren picking cotton under the supervision of their teacher. Each child was required to contribute 2-3 kilograms of cotton to the school each day. Urlaeva also observed schoolchildren picking cotton in the Ulugnor district of Andijan and saw a teacher leading a class of young schoolchildren to the cotton fields.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ Uzbek-German Forum interview with schoolteacher, Markhamat district, Andijan region, November 22, 2017.

¹⁶⁶ “Пахта-2017: Далалардан дараклар — мажбурий меҳнат давом этаяптими ёки одамлар нега пахта термаяпти? [Cotton-2017: Forced labor in the fields, or why are people picking cotton?],” Kun.uz, October 7, 2017, <https://kun.uz/news/2017/10/07/pahta-2017-dalalardan-daraklar-mazburij-menat-davom-etaaptimi-eki-odamlar-nega-pahta-termaapti> (accessed March 1, 2018).

¹⁶⁷ “В Андижане ученикам начальных классов поручили собирать хлопок [In Andijan young pupils told to pick cotton],” Ozodlik, October 30, 2017, <https://rus.ozodlik.org/a/28823568.html> (accessed November 9, 2017); “3 синф жияним далада пахта йўқлигидан уйдаги ғўзапоя орасини титиб юрибди [Because there is no cotton left, my 3rd grade nephew is searching for cotton among the branches at home],” Pakhtagram, Ozodlik, November 13, 2017, <https://www.ozodlik.org/a/pakhtagram-andijon-uquvchi/28851116.html> (accessed November 13, 2017).

¹⁶⁸ “В АНДИЖАНСКОЙ ОБЛАСТИ ЦВЕТЁТ ХЛОПЧАТНИК, А ХОКИМ ЗАСТАВЛЯЕТ УЧЕНИКОВ ШКОЛ СОБИРАТЬ ХЛОПОК. ТАКЖЕ ДЕТИ ИДУТ ОДНИ К ПОЛЯМ ОПАСНЫМИ ПУТЯМИ.[Cotton is blooming in Andijan region and hokim is forcing schoolchildren to pick cotton. Children are using dangerous routes to get to the fields],” Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan press release, November 3, 2017.



Kashkadarya region, October 8, 2017

Some parents and relatives said that school directors told them they had to pick cotton or contribute money to hire pickers so the school could fulfill its quota.¹⁶⁹ One schoolteacher said the *hokim* told the school's director that he had to get 30-40 parents to pick cotton every day or the teachers would have to pick. She said she had to exert pressure on the families of her pupils to pick cotton for the school.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with man who picked cotton for his brother's school, Oltinkul district, Andijan region, October 28, 2017; schoolteacher, Andijan district, Andijan region, September 26, 2017; parent required to pick for school, Oltinkul district, Andijan, September 25, 2017.

¹⁷⁰ Uzbek-German Forum interview with schoolteacher, Andijan district, Andijan region, October 12, 2017.

One woman said she picked cotton because the kindergarten director said the kindergarten would not accept her daughter otherwise. The woman was willing to pick cotton to secure her daughter's place, but should not have been required to perform this service and said if she had the money, she would have rather paid than picked.¹⁷¹ Several kindergartens threatened parents that their children could not come unless the parents picked cotton.¹⁷²

A parent of a kindergarten child said that the child's teacher kindergarten teacher told parents that she was under orders from the *hokimiat* to require parents to pick cotton and she would not accept children whose parents did not pick cotton for the kindergarten or contribute money.¹⁷³ On November 2, the director locked the gate to the kindergarten and refused to allow children whose parents had not picked or paid to enter.¹⁷⁴ A passerby saw a little girl who had been dropped off at the kindergarten crying outside the locked gate and argued with the director to let the child in.¹⁷⁵ A grandmother prevented from dropping off her grandson, said,

My son leaves for work early in the morning, my daughter-in-law has an infant, and I can barely walk. How can I help pick cotton? We pay for kindergarten. They have already collected money from us twice, what else do they want from us?...How can a five-year old be held responsible for helping the government? *Khashar* is supposed to be voluntary, not forced!"¹⁷⁶

In September, students at a medical college in the Buz district of the Andijan region wrote to Ozodlik that the college required them to collect 20,000 *soum* per day to pay for replacement pickers for the college under threat. "The department head scolds us and threatens that 'if you don't pay for people to pick cotton, you won't get your diploma.'"¹⁷⁷ In November, the students wrote again because the college suspended classes to send them to the fields to collect cotton stalks to get any remaining fiber, since there was no cotton left to pick.¹⁷⁸

September 22, 2017

¹⁷¹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with parent who picked to secure kindergarten placement, Andijan, Andijan region, September 25, 2017

¹⁷² Uzbek-German Forum interview with college teacher, Izboskan district, Andijan region, September 26, 2017.

¹⁷³ Uzbek-German Forum interview with parent 1, Andijan, Andijan region, November 2, 2017.

¹⁷⁴ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with kindergarten guard, parent 1, parent 2, grandparent, November 2, 2017.

¹⁷⁵ Uzbek-German Forum interview with parent 2, November 2, 2017.

¹⁷⁶ Uzbek-German Forum interview with grandparent, November 2, 2017.

¹⁷⁷ "Мы говорим что 'Уроки не проводятся', а завуч обзывает нас 'козлами' и выгоняет [We say that lessons are not taking place and the department head calls us goats and kicks us out]," Pakhtagram, Ozodlik, September 22, 2017, <https://www.ozodlik.org/a/sizdan-telegram-uzish-zavuch/28751400.html> (accessed February 9, 2018).

¹⁷⁸ "Ўқиш ўрнига мол-қўй билан пахта йўқ жойда пахта теряпмиз [Instead of studying we are with the sheep and cows searching for cotton where there is none]," Pakhtagram, Ozodlik, November 8, 2017, <https://www.ozodlik.org/a/paxtagram-buz-mol-va-quy/28842205.html> (accessed November 13, 2017)

When we complain that we have no classes, the deputy principal calls us “jackasses” and kicks us out

“We are senior students at the Buz district medical college. We will finish our studies this year, yet we have gained no knowledge. On the third course, we had no classes whatsoever. Instead of giving classes, teachers spent time chatting with each other. When we complain that they are not performing their professional duties, they verbally abuse us. There are also teachers at this college who fight with students.

The cotton harvest season has already begun. We collect 20 thousand soms for day-laborers every day. Our college management always collects money from students. If a group does not collect a certain amount of money, they reprimand our curator for it. The deputy principal verbally abuses us and threatens that if we do not participate in the cotton collection, we will not get our diploma. What does our education have to do with the cotton collection?

The college library does not provide us with any books. When we complain that we have no classes, the deputy principal calls us ‘jackasses’, and kicks us out. We even have to pay to obtain confirmation of enrollment. Anyway, we have to put up with it for a while longer until our graduation.”

Letter to radio Ozodlik was published at: <https://www.ozodlik.org/a/sizdan-telegram-uqish-zavuch/28751400.html> (in Uzbek)

November 8, 2017

Instead of studying, we go to collect non-existing cotton with the cows and sheep

“When will this cotton collection be over? Instead of studying we go to collect non-existing cotton along with cows and sheep.

Farmers do not provide us with any lunch. No one weighs the cotton. I am a female college student. Instead of classes, we were forced to go to the fields. What kind of medical professionals will we become? We feel ashamed in front of our in-laws since they pay for our college education. Studying starts with a mess and ends the same way.

From the students of the Buz district medical college in Andijan region who strive for their education.”

Letter to radio Ozodlik was published at: <https://www.ozodlik.org/a/paxtagram-buz-mol-vaquy/28842205.html> (in Uzbek)



From the beginning of September to November 15, Radio Ozodlik published on its website 130 messages from its readers who complained about compulsion to pick cotton. These publications remained unnoticed by the Federation of Trade Unions of Uzbekistan and the ILO, which monitored child and forced labor during the cotton harvest in 2017

Forced and Child Labor Linked to the World Bank Project Area in South Karakalpakstan

Some findings from Karakalpakstan are integrated throughout this report. However, this section disaggregates evidence on forced and child labor specifically from the Turtkul, Beruni, and Ellikkala districts where the World Bank's South Karakalpakstan Water Resources Management Improvement Project is being implemented. This is because the defined project area makes it feasible to document labor abuses directly within the project area and because the government committed to comply with laws on forced and child labor within this area.¹⁷⁹ The Uzbek-German Forum visited at least 10 public and private sector institutions and several cotton fields in each district and conducted more than 40 brief interviews and 10 in-depth interviews with employees to document whether employees were forcibly mobilized to pick cotton or required to pay for a replacement worker and which fields they worked in.

Public Sector Employees, People Receiving Benefits, and Businesses Forced to Pick Cotton or Pay for Replacement Pickers

As elsewhere in the country, public sector employees, including education and medical workers in Karakalpakstan told the Uzbek-German Forum that they picked cotton or paid for a replace-

¹⁷⁹ Interviews from Nukus are included where the interviewees or replacement pickers hired by them worked in the World Bank project area.

ment worker involuntarily, because their supervisors or officials required it of them and they feared penalties, especially losing their jobs. Those who did not want to pick cotton had to pay for a replacement worker.¹⁸⁰

People faced punishment not only for refusing to pick cotton, but for failing to meet picking quotas or work hard enough. Sardorbek Salaev, aged 22, voluntarily accompanied his mother and sister, both nurses from the Central Hospital of Turtkul who had been mobilized involuntarily, to pick cotton in Qumbosgan.¹⁸¹ Salaev said that the hospital required all pickers to meet the quota of 80 kilograms per day and threatened punishment against anyone who fell short. Salaev said that when he did not meet quota the head doctor forced him to go after picking to deliver the cotton to the gin and wait for it to get weighed and accepted. He did not receive any food until returning to the barracks at 4 a.m., and only then ate whatever scraps were left. He slept for just an hour or two before returning to the fields to pick. Salaev said that after this happened three days in a row, he collapsed in the field. As he lay unconscious, a tractor drove over his leg, causing serious injury. Salaev, who was only able to earn 60,000 *soum* (approximately \$7.50) in 10 days of work, has since undergone four operations on his leg. His leg has not healed and Salaev remains incapacitated, in severe pain and unable to walk or work.¹⁸²

Some education and medical workers in Karakalpakstan were released from cotton picking after the prime minister's September 22 recall announcement.¹⁸³ However many others had only a brief reprieve from picking before being sent back to the fields.¹⁸⁴ Some were required to pay

¹⁸⁰ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with doctor, Ellikkala district, Karakalpakstan, November 2, 2017; employee of department of land reclamation and irrigation, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, November 20, 2017; nurse, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, November 16, 2017; schoolteacher, Nukus, November 8, 2017; public health employee, Turtkul district, November 4, 2017; relative of teacher, Turtkul district, November 3, 2017; public utility employee, Turtkul district, November 3, 2017; three cotton gin employees, Turtkul district, November 5, 2017; hospital official, Turtkul district, September 29, 2017; hospital employee, Turtkul district, September 29, 2017; doctor Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, October 10, 2017; public health employee, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, November 16, 2017; schoolteacher, Nukus, Karakalpakstan, September 25, 2017; doctor, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, October 10, 2017; schoolteacher, Beruni district, Karakalpakstan, September 26, 2017; schoolteacher, Ellikkala district, Karakalpakstan, September 26, 2017; three schoolteachers, Ellikkala district, Karakalpakstan, September 27, 2017; nurse, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, October 4, 2017; eight medical workers, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, October 5, 2017; relative of medical worker, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, September 29, 2017; schoolteacher, Nukus, Karakalpakstan, November 8, 2017; relative of teacher, Nukus, Karakalpakstan, November 8, 2017; school department head, Nukus, Karakalpakstan, November 8, 2017; schoolteacher, Beruni district, Karakalpakstan, September 28, 2017; public health worker, Ellikkala district, Karakalpakstan, October 24, 2017; and public health worker, Ellikkala district, Karakalpakstan, November 16, 2017.

¹⁸¹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with Sardorbek Salaev, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, January 6, 2018. Salaev went to pick on September 11, 2017. Salaev's mother and sister picked cotton involuntarily. Their supervisor told them to resign if they did not want to pick because he said he could easily hire others to replace them. Uzbek-German Forum interview with Gulhan Avezova, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, January 6, 2018.

¹⁸² Uzbek-German Forum interview with Sardorbek Salaev, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, January 6, 2018. The accident occurred on September 21, 2017.

¹⁸³ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with school department head, Beruni district, Karakalpakstan, September 28, 2017; and nurse, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, September 23, 2017.

¹⁸⁴ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with doctor Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, October 10, 2017; public health employee, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, November 16, 2017; schoolteacher, Nukus, Karakalpakstan, September 25, 2017; schoolteacher, Beruni district, Karakalpakstan, September 26, 2017; schoolteacher, Ellikkala district, Karakalpakstan, September 26, 2017; three schoolteachers, Ellikkala district, Karakalpakstan, September 27, 2017; schoolteacher, Ellikkala district, Karakalpakstan, September 27, 2017; nurse, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, October 4, 2017; eight medical workers, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, October 5, 2017; landlady renting rooms to 14 medical workers, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, October 5, 2017; and relative of medical worker, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, September 29, 2017.

for replacement workers instead.¹⁸⁵ Students from Nukus State University were also sent back to the fields. A student said that he and all second-year students had resumed cotton picking in Qumbosgan on October 6 even though there was little cotton left, and had to pay for their own food and housing.¹⁸⁶ A third-year student said he and his classmates were sent for overnight shifts in Karauzyask on November 1.¹⁸⁷

The 2017 cotton season in Karakalpakstan was particularly difficult because the harvest was poor and cotton scarce. Officials, unable to meet their quotas, continued sending workers to the fields until late November, although little cotton was left in the fields after mid-October. As in other regions in the country, officials announced a “shock month” of intensive work from October 15 until November 15, later extended until November 20, when people faced additional pressure to work in the fields or pay for cotton. A message announcing the shock month played frequently on the radio. The announcement, sponsored by the Women’s Committee, Nuroniy Fund, *Mahalla* Fund, Youth Initiative, and Trade Unions Council, called on people to fulfill their “duty to the motherland,” and pick cotton “to the last gram.”¹⁸⁸

Many public sector workers and businesses were forced to stay in the fields or pay for replacement workers into November, even though little cotton was available to pick and conditions were difficult.¹⁸⁹ A public health employee emphasized, “there are no voluntary pickers. There is no cotton.”¹⁹⁰ A farmer said that he brought bread to 70 employees of an agricultural institute working near his fields who had been picking cotton for 45 days and sometimes received no food. He said the workers were exhausted “physically and psychologically.”¹⁹¹ An employee of the institute confirmed that 1000 workers sent by the institute only returned from the fields on November 18, after working for 50 days and receiving little food.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁵ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with schoolteacher, Nukus, November 8, 2017; telephone interview with relative of teacher, Nukus, Karakalpakstan, November 8, 2017; school department head, Nukus, Karakalpakstan, November 8, 2017; and schoolteacher, Beruni district, Karakalpakstan, September 28, 2017.

¹⁸⁶ Uzbek-German Forum interview with Nukus university student, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, November 17, 2017. Qumbosgan is in the World Bank project area.

¹⁸⁷ Uzbek-German Forum interview with university student, Nukus, Karakalpakstan, November 8, 2017.

¹⁸⁸ Audio recording of shock month radio announcement, October 19, 2017.

¹⁸⁹ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with doctor, Ellikkala district, Karakalpakstan, November 2, 2017; schoolteacher, Nukus, November 8, 2017; public health employee, Turtkul district, November 4, 2017; public utility employee, Turtkul district, November 4, 2017; relative of teacher, Turtkul district, November 3, 2017; public utility employee, Turtkul district, November 3, 2017; three cotton gin employees, Turtkul district, November 5, 2017; relative of teacher, Nukus, Karakalpakstan, November 8, 2017; school department head, Nukus, Karakalpakstan, November 8, 2017; Nukus university student, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, November 17, 2017; market stall owner, Turtkul district, November 5, 2017; private clinic employee, Turtkul district, November 4, 2017; public health worker, Ellikkala district, Karakalpakstan, November 16, 2017; and pharmacy owner, Turtkul district, November 5, 2017.

¹⁹⁰ Uzbek-German Forum follow-up interview with public health employee, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, November 16, 2017.

¹⁹¹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with farmer, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, November 17, 2017. The workers picked in Navruz, Turtkul district, which is in the World Bank project area.

¹⁹² Uzbek-German Forum interview with employee of department of land reclamation and irrigation, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, November 20, 2017.



Pharmacy in Karakalpakstan. According to the pharmacist, he paid a total of 2 million soum (\$ 246) for replacement workers to pick cotton.

In addition, some 6,000 public sector employees and other workers were sent from the Fergana and Andijan regions to Karakalpakstan to pick cotton in mid-October.¹⁹³ The transfer occurred even as hundreds of workers from agricultural organizations and cotton gins were sent from Karakalpakstan to Jizzakh to work in the fields there.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ See below, p.67.

¹⁹⁴ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with cotton gin employee 1, Ellikkala district, Karakalpakstan, September 27, 2017; cotton gin employee 2, Ellikkala district, Karakalpakstan, September 27, 2017; cotton gin employee, Beruni district, Karakalpakstan, October 6, 2017; and cotton gin employee, Turtkul district, September 29, 2017.

Several people said that *mahalla* officials accompanied by police officers and others, went from door to door to mobilize people to pick cotton and threatened penalties, including cutting off their electricity and withholding their benefits payments if they refused.¹⁹⁵ A husband and wife said that in early September *mahalla* officials, a police officer, and an imam visited all 200 houses in the *mahalla* and told residents to pick cotton or their electricity would be cut off. The imam told them that anyone who refused to pick cotton would be shunned from the community and not permitted to attend weddings or funerals.¹⁹⁶ The wife said she wanted to pick cotton as a replacement worker for someone else to earn extra money, but the *mahalla* representative threatened to cut off the family's electricity so she and her husband picked for the *mahalla* instead. They said an electrician from the utility provider cut the electric cables to the neighboring building and told residents it was because they "didn't help the *mahalla* with the harvest."¹⁹⁷ When the Uzbek-German Forum's monitor contacted the *mahalla* chairperson to ask about the situation, the chairperson said the monitor was "going against state policy," demanded to know who had complained, and called the police to investigate the monitor.¹⁹⁸

Tax inspectors extorted money from businesses to pay for cotton pickers. Business owners told the Uzbek-German Forum that tax officials told them they had to send their employees to pick cotton or pay for replacement pickers under threat that their businesses would be closed if they refused.¹⁹⁹ The Uzbek-German Forum observed tax inspectors going shop to shop in a market telling shopkeepers that they could pay 15,000 *soum* (approximately \$1.90) for a replacement worker or "get on the bus" to the fields themselves. A pharmacy owner said that officials collect 100,000 *soum* (approximately \$12.50) per week. "Three or four people come at once to collect the money: a tax inspector, police officer, and a representative of the market. They ask in such a way that it is impossible to refuse. Refusal means you are against the government."²⁰⁰ Several people getting on a bus full of workers leaving from the central market in Turtkul to go to the cotton fields said that they and the others were replacement pickers and were paid 15,000-20,000 *soum* per day (approximately \$1.90-2.50) by shopkeepers and stall owners at the market.²⁰¹ A cotton picker in a field with 25-30 others said they were mostly replacement pickers hired by bank employees.²⁰²

¹⁹⁵ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with husband and wife mobilized by *mahalla*, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, October 3, 2017; *mahalla* resident and her 12-year old daughter, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, October 1, 2017; and *mahalla* resident 2, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, October 1, 2017.

¹⁹⁶ Uzbek-German Forum interview with husband and wife mobilized by *mahalla*, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, October 3, 2017; *mahalla* resident 2, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, October 1, 2017; and *mahalla* resident, Ellikkala district, Karakalpakstan, October 3, 2017.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ Uzbek-German Forum interview with *mahalla* council chairperson, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, October 3, 2017

¹⁹⁹ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with shop owner 1, shop owner 2, shop owner 3, and shop owner 4, Nukus, Karakalpakstan, September 23, 2017; market stall owner, Turtkul district, November 5, 2017; pharmacy owner, Turtkul district, November 5, 2017; private clinic employee, Turtkul district, November 4, 2017; with market employee, Ellikkala district, Karakalpakstan, September 26, 2017; and shopkeeper 1 and shopkeeper 2, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, September 30, 2017.

²⁰⁰ Uzbek-German Forum interview with pharmacy owner, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, September 30, 2017.

²⁰¹ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with replacement picker 1, replacement picker 2, and replacement picker 3, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, September 30, 2017.

²⁰² Uzbek-German Forum interviews with replacement picker, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, October 1, 2017.



Turtkul district market, November 5, 2017

Instances of Child Labor

In addition, some cases of child labor occurred, including children picking cotton for the *mahalla*. A woman picking cotton with her 12-year old daughter in Qumbosgan said they were picking because a *mahalla* official threatened to stop her welfare payments if she refused.²⁰³ A woman who said the *mahalla* required every house to send someone to the cotton fields said that some schoolchildren picked cotton for the *mahalla* after classes.²⁰⁴

²⁰³ Uzbek-German Forum interview with mahalla resident and her 12-year old daughter, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, October 1, 2017.

²⁰⁴ Uzbek-German Forum interview with mahalla resident 2, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, October 1, 2017.

A nurse said that she paid a replacement picker 100,000 *soum* (approximately \$12.50) to pick cotton for 10 days because the head of her department threatened to fire her if she refused. However, after five days the replacement picker returned and returned half the fee because there was not enough cotton to pick. The nurse sent her son, who was 17 years old, to pick cotton in for 20 days in Paakhtabad in her place instead.²⁰⁵

Risks of Forced Labor and Extortion Left Unaddressed by ILO and National Monitoring

A significant number of cotton pickers are, in fact, voluntary and pick cotton to earn money. However, the number of voluntary workers drops off significantly as the cotton season progresses and less cotton is available to pick and conditions worsen. In mid-October the government announced a “shock month” of intensive work and undertook extraordinary measures, such as the mass transfer of cotton pickers from regions in the Fergana valley to other areas to pick cotton. Some universities and colleges also sent students back to the fields toward the end of the season as regions came under pressure to meet quotas. Despite the clear link between the amount of cotton available to pick and the amount of voluntary labor, neither the ILO’s monitoring nor national monitoring attempts to disaggregate how the amount of involuntary labor used changes during the season or attempts to identify a link between the change in cotton availability and forced labor.

In 2017 the government increased wages paid to pickers from the 280 *soum* (approximately \$.04) paid per kilogram in 2016 and increased wages as the season progressed. During the first pass, pickers received 450 *soum* per kilo (approximately \$.05), which increased to 500 *soum* (approximately \$.06) from October 1 and 700 *soum* (approximately \$.09) from October 17 and, in some places 800 (approximately \$.10) at the end of the harvest.²⁰⁶ Although the ILO refers to this as representing a 61-150 percent wage increase over the 2016 harvest, this fails to account for exchange rates or inflation.²⁰⁷ Given exchange rates, the real value of the wage increase was actually only 25-125 percent, but its consumer value was still less given increased costs for food and other necessities. The Central bank reported a 15.9 percent increase in food costs from 2016-2017, and independent sources reported higher increases.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ Uzbek-German Forum interview with nurse, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, November 16, 2017.

²⁰⁶ Cabinet of Ministers Decree No. 829, October 16, 2017 confirms the increases. See “РУЧНУЮ СБОРКУ ХЛОПКА ОПЛАТЯТ ПО 700 СУМОВ ЗА 1 КГ [Manual Cotton Picking Will Be Paid 700 *Soum* for 1 Kg],” *Norma.uz*, October 19, 2017, https://www.norma.uz/novoe_v_zakonodatelstve/ruchnyu_sborku_hlopka_oplatyat_po_700_sumov_za_1_kg (accessed March 5, 2018).

²⁰⁷ ILO TPM 2017, p. 20. In 2016 the real exchange rate was approximately 6000 *soum*/\$1. The government introduced currency convertibility on September 5 and the exchange rate rose to 8100 *soum*/\$1 and increased later in the season. See: “Uzbekistan Returns to Currency Convertibility, Delivers Blow to Black Market, *Eurasianet*, September 5, 2017, <https://eurasianet.org/s/uzbekistan-returns-to-currency-convertibility-delivers-blow-to-black-market> (accessed March 26, 2018). A rate of 8000 *soum*/\$1 is used throughout this report.

²⁰⁸ Обзор денежно-кредитной политики в IV квартале 2017 года [Overview of monetary-credit policy in the fourth quarter of 2017], Central Bank of the Republic of Uzbekistan, February 2, 2018.

Risk of Forced Labor and Extortion Increased during Season

While any wage increase has the obvious benefit of putting more money in the pockets of Uzbek workers, the actual impact of the wage increase on the recruitment of voluntary labor is unclear. By mid-October little cotton was available to pick in many regions although regional and district officials, still under pressure from the central government, continued to require institutions to mobilize workers or pay for picking. For example, a *mahalla* council secretary said that people could make a lot of money early in the harvest but by November cotton picking is no longer worth the effort because people had to gather branches to hunt for any cotton fiber clinging to them. She said despite that, the *hokim* required the *mahalla* to send 15-20 people each day to the fields.²⁰⁹

Many workers had to pay costs for food, transportation, housing, and hygiene, costs that remained fixed regardless of how much they earned picking.²¹⁰ Some pickers also bought cotton at inflated prices to make up for shortfalls and avoid penalties.²¹¹ In some cases these costs even exceeded what people could earn from picking, particularly as the season progressed, or pickers only broke even.²¹² For example, a college student from Kokand in the Fergana region said the college's director ordered students to pick cotton in the Bagdad district starting on November 3. The student, who said she could only pick 3-5 kilos per day, did not even bother to pick up her earnings, which only amounted to 2,700-3,700 *soum* per day (approximately \$.33-.46) while she had to pay 12,000 *soum* per day (approximately \$1.50) for transportation to the

²⁰⁹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with mahalla council secretary, district withheld, Andijan region, November 10, 2017.

²¹⁰ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with college teacher, Izboskan district, Andijan region, September 26, 2017; state employment office, district withheld, Andijan region, October 14, 2017; man who picked cotton for his brother's school, Oltinkul district, Andijan region, October 28, 2017; school cleaner, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 12, 2017; schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 3, 2017; schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017; doctor, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017; kindergarten employee, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 2, 2017; nurse, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 1, 2017; inmate, Zafarabad district, Jizzakh region, November 23, 2017; Uzbek-German Forum interview with schoolteacher, Andijan district, Andijan region, September 26, 2017; factory worker, Asaka district, Andijan region, November 19, 2017; schoolteacher, Markhamat district, Andijan region, November 22, 2017; employee of public organization, Buvaida district, Fergana region, December 1, 2017; schoolteacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, November 10, 2017; university student, Samarkand, Samarkand region, November 25, 2017; schoolteacher, Buvaida district, Fergana region, November 14, 2017; schoolteacher, Akdarya district, Samarkand region, November 24, 2017; continuing education college student, Kokand, Fergana region, November 24, 2017; doctor, Samarkand district, Samarkand region, October 10, 2017; schoolteacher, Shahrisabz, Kashkadarya region, November 28, 2017; GM-Uzbekistan factory employee, Andijan, Andijan region, October 21, 2017; kindergarten teacher, Buvaida district, Fergana region, October 3, 2017; schoolteacher, Buvaida district, Fergana region, September 9, 2017; and schoolteacher, Buvaida district, Fergana region, September 19, 2017.

²¹¹ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with state factory employee, Andijan, Andijan region, October 19, 2017; schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017; inmate, Zafarabad district, Jizzakh region, November 23, 2017; factory worker, Asaka district, Andijan region, November 19, 2017; schoolteacher, Markhamat district, Andijan region, November 22, 2017; university student, Samarkand, Samarkand region, November 25, 2017; schoolteacher, Akdarya district, Samarkand region, November 24, 2017; and GM-Uzbekistan factory employee, Andijan, Andijan region, October 21, 2017.

²¹² Uzbek-German Forum interviews with college teacher, Izboskan district, Andijan region, September 26, 2017; state employment office, district withheld, Andijan region, October 14, 2017; nurse, Markhamat district, Andijan region, October 14, 2017; man who picked cotton for his brother's school, Oltinkul district, Andijan region, October 28, 2017; school cleaner, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 12, 2017; schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 3, 2017; schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017; doctor, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017; kindergarten employee, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 2, 2017; nurse, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 1, 2017; inmate, Zafarabad district, Jizzakh region, November 23, 2017; factory worker, Asaka district, Andijan region, November 19, 2017; schoolteacher, Markhamat district, Andijan region, November 22, 2017; employee of public organization, Buvaida district, Fergana region, December 1, 2017; university student, Samarkand, Samarkand region, November 25, 2017; schoolteacher, Buvaida district, Fergana region, November 14, 2017; and schoolteacher, Buvaida district, Fergana region, September 19, 2017.

cotton fields and bring her own food.²¹³ The student also said that although she picked cotton involuntarily, because she feared consequences for refusing, she would not mind picking cotton if the pay were better.²¹⁴

By late in the season, some people said that it was even difficult to find replacement workers willing to pick cotton and the daily rates replacement workers received from the people who hired them far exceeded what they were able to earn for the cotton they picked.²¹⁵ A school cleaner, who said she picked cotton involuntarily, because the school director threatened to withhold her wages if she refused, worked an overnight shift over 10 days and then daily shifts until the end of the season for a total of 40-50 days. She said she spent everything she earned picking on costs including for food, transportation, bathing, and laundry. Her husband, who is unemployed, picked cotton as a replacement worker for about a month, earning 800,000 *soum* (approximately \$100) as the fee for the person he replaced and just 600,000 *soum* (approximately \$75) for the cotton he picked.²¹⁶

An employee of a state agency whose workers were ordered to pay for pickers and work in the fields said:

For a month no one would agree to go for 500,000 *soum* (approximately \$62.50). The price was at a million (approximately \$125). Where can we find this money? Our average salary is only 600,000 (approximately \$75) and we haven't been paid for two months! We had to send 20 people for a month overnight, so 14 of our employees went and we hired 6 replacements, whom we paid 4.8 million *soum* (approximately \$600) from our organization's account. That money will be deducted from our salaries. We were paid 400 per kilo but after food and other expenses, there was nothing left.... Now they pay 500 *soum* per kilo but we don't care because they don't pay it anyway. For daily shifts we received nothing—any money we earned went to food and transport costs.²¹⁷

Many people, especially public sector employees and students, complained about being forced to remain in the fields late in the season despite the fact that there was virtually no cotton left. They described collecting bare cotton stalks to pluck off any remaining bits of fiber or breaking

²¹³ Uzbek-German Forum interview with continuing education college student, Kokand, Fergana region, November 24, 2017.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with doctor, Samarkand district, Samarkand region, October 15, 2017; state employment office, district withheld, Andijan region, October 14, 2017; man who picked cotton for his brother's school, Oltinkul district, Andijan region, October 28, 2017; schoolteacher, Markhamat district, Andijan region, November 22, 2017; and tax service employee, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, November 20, 2017.

²¹⁶ Uzbek-German Forum interview with school cleaner, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 12, 2017.

²¹⁷ Uzbek-German Forum interview with employee of state employment office, district withheld, Andijan region, October 14, 2017.

unopened cotton buds with rocks to pull out the cotton.²¹⁸ A woman, who picked cotton with her sister-in-law voluntarily to earn money in September, said they left the fields for a few weeks to care for a relative but when they returned on October 20, they worked for only three days before giving up because they had earned only 7,000 *soum* each (approximately \$.87).²¹⁹ She said that despite the lack of cotton, the harvest lasted until November 20 and public sector workers still in the fields resorted to going house to house to beg residents for any cotton left on stalks that had been gathered for firewood and ripping open mattresses for cotton.²²⁰

Some University and College Students Re-Mobilized

Although the recall of university students from the harvest appears to have been broadly effective, at least five universities sent students back to the fields late in the season as districts struggled to meet their quotas. Students said they were forced to work involuntarily, under threat of expulsion or academic consequences.²²¹ The re-mobilization of some university students, despite the prime minister's order to recall them, underscores the pressure on regional and local hokims to meet demands imposed by the central government. Ozodlik reported that Samarkand State University sent students to the fields in late October and a student who attempted to refuse due to poor health was threatened with expulsion. The student jumped from the bus on his way to the fields, breaking his arm.²²² Some colleges also required students to pick cotton. A student from Namangan region posted on social media that the college instructed students to bring in 40 kilograms of cotton.²²³

Voluntary Pickers Hired by People Mobilized Involuntarily Unaccounted For

A number of voluntary pickers are replacement workers hired by involuntary pickers. They receive a guaranteed daily rate from the person who hires them in addition to whatever they earn for the cotton they pick. In 2017 this usually ranged from 10,000-30,000 *soum* (approx-

²¹⁸ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with man who picked cotton for his brother's school, Oltinkul district, Andijan region, October 28, 2017; schoolteacher, Markhamat district, Andijan region, November 22, 2017; continuing education college student, Kokand, Fergana region, November 24, 2017; and schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 3, 2017. See also for example: "В ФЕРГАНСКОЙ ДОЛИНЕ УЗБЕКИСТАНА ПРОДОЛЖАЕТСЯ ПРИНУДИТЕЛЬНЫЙ ТРУД НА СБОРЕ ХЛОПКА," Forced labor in the cotton harvest is continuing in the Fergana Valley of Uzbekistan," Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan press release, November 3, 2017. "Ўқиш ўрнига мол-қўй билан пахта йўқ жойда пахта теряпмиз [Instead of studying we are with the sheep and cows searching for cotton where there is none]," Pakhtagram, Ozodlik, November 8, 2017, <https://www.ozodlik.org/a/paxtagram-buz-mol-va-quy/28842205.html> (accessed November 13, 2017); "Пахта йўқ, одамлар ўтин термоқда [There is no cotton left, people are gathering branches]," Pakhtagram, Ozodlik, November 15, 2017, <https://www.ozodlik.org/a/paxtagram-na-voiyzavod/28855571.html> (accessed November 16, 2017); "Шаҳарликлар ўқишда, туманликлар далада [Urban students studying, rural students in field]," Pakhtagram, Ozodlik, November 13, 2017, <https://www.ozodlik.org/a/paxtagram-xorazm-talaba/28851112.html> (accessed November 13, 2017); and "Voices from the Fields: When Will the Cotton Harvest End?," Uzbek-German Forum, November 17, 2017, <http://harvestreport.uzbekgermanforum.org/voices-from-the-fields-when-will-the-cotton-harvest-end/> (accessed December 18, 2017).

²¹⁹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with unemployed voluntary picker, Khuzhabad district, Andijan region, September 24, 2017.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with university student, Karshi, Syrdarya, October 30, 2017; "Шаҳарликлар ўқишда, туманликлар далада [People from the city are in the fields, people from the district are in the fields]," Pakhtagram, Ozodlik, November 13, 2017, <https://www.ozodlik.org/a/paxtagram-xorazm-talaba/28851112.html> (accessed February 9, 2018).

²²² "В Самарканде студент выпрыгнул из автобуса во время отправки на принудительный сбор хлопка [In Samarkand student jumps from bus on the way to forced labor in the cotton harvest]," Ozodlik, October 25, 2017, <https://rus.ozodlik.org/a/28813675.html> (accessed October 25, 2017).

²²³ Facebook post, medical college student, Chortok, Namangan region, November 1, 2017.

mately \$1.25-\$3.75) per day, depending on the region and time. Most replacement pickers also received money to cover food and transportation costs by the person who hired them.

People who picked cotton voluntarily emphasized that they preferred to pick as replacement workers to earn more money.²²⁴ Several people mobilized involuntarily said they might be willing to pick cotton if the pay were better.²²⁵ One man said the unemployment office suggested he pick cotton but he did not because “I am not a good cotton picker. How much can I really earn? Maybe 20,000 *soum* (approximately \$2.50) a day, but 15,000 (approximately \$1.87) will go to expenses.” He said he would prefer to go to Russia to look for work.²²⁶

Neither the ILO nor national monitoring programs capture the number of voluntary pickers hired by those mobilized involuntarily, suggesting that available data do not provide a complete picture of the forced labor and extortion problem. While voluntary replacement pickers were also vulnerable to poor working conditions, penalties for failure to meet the quota, excessive working hours, and undue restrictions, the amounts paid to them may point to actual market wages for cotton picking. The concept of a guaranteed daily rate may point to solutions for the problem of attracting voluntary pickers late in the harvest season when cotton is sparse.

Concerns about Coercion, Conditions for Mass Transfer of Pickers

The 2017 harvest saw the unprecedented mass transfer of tens of thousands of workers to pick cotton from the Fergana, Namangan, and Andijan regions to other regions in Uzbekistan, primarily Karakalpakstan, and the Jizzakh, Syrdarya, and Tashkent regions. The transfers took place in mid-October for one-month shifts. Although some workers agreed to the transfer voluntarily, there are serious concerns that some transferred workers were coerced, given false information about working conditions and length of deployment, did not receive promised incentives, and that living conditions for deployed workers were extremely poor.

Involuntary or Coercive Mobilization

Local authorities pressured institutions to send workers. A *mahalla* employee from the Boysun district of the Surkhandarya region, who was required to mobilize local residents to deploy to other regions, also said that the *hokim* forced *mahalla* councils and other public institutions to recruit workers for transfer and punished those who failed. The *mahalla* employee said that the *hokim* beat two *mahalla* council chairpersons at the train station, berating them for not provi-

²²⁴ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with replacement worker, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 9, 2017; replacement picker, Talimarzhon town, Kashkadarya region, November 30, 2017; replacement picker, Tashkent, December 4, 2017; and unemployed voluntary picker, Khuzhabad district, Andijan region, September 24, 2017.

²²⁵ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with schoolteacher, Andijan district, Andijan region, September 26, 2017; school cleaner, Jizzakh, Jizzakh region, November 22, 2017; and continuing education college student, Kokand, Fergana region, November 24, 2017.

²²⁶ Uzbek-German Forum interview with former shop employee, Bulokboshi district, Andijan, September 27, 2017.

ding enough workers, and locked several directors of institutions in a police car. One cotton picker who was deployed to Karakalpakstan said that the *hokim* mobilized employees of all public organizations on the president's order. He told Ozodlik:

Thousands of labor slaves were pushed into train cars at the railway station in Margilan by police force. We were glad that we got a place in a compartment car, but there were 12 of us crammed into a compartment designed for two passengers. I wanted to protest, but a police officer from the Fergana Department of Internal Affairs was standing over me with a truncheon in his hands. We rode in silence.²²⁷

Some transferred cotton pickers said they were required to go or hire a replacement by an employer under threat of dismissal or other penalties.²²⁸ In addition, transferred picker included medical and education workers, despite the prohibition, meaning some of these workers were absent from their jobs for a month.²²⁹ Institutions extorted money from teachers and staff for the cash payments to transferred workers.²³⁰

Abusive Conditions and Treatment, Incentives not Paid

Most transferred workers received a cash payment, usually 500,000 soum (approximately \$62) upon departure and some were promised other incentives, such as warm clothing, boots, relief from tax obligations, and an additional payment upon return. Transferred workers said they did not receive everything they were promised. In addition, living conditions were extremely poor, crowded, and cold and workers had to purchase supplemental food and other supplies. One said authorities told his group not to bring bedding or warm clothing but when they arrived they found none was provided and had to purchase it. Some workers were told they would be away for only two weeks but found, after their arrival to the fields, that they would only be released after a month. Some ran away due to the poor conditions, lack of pay, and not wanting to be away for so long.

²²⁷ “Спасите узбеков от беды под названием хлопок!!! [Save Uzbeks from the misfortune called cotton!!!],” Ozodlik, October 12, 2017, <https://rus.ozodlik.org/a/28790275.html> (accessed November 1, 2017).

²²⁸ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with nurse, Markhamat district, Andijan region, October 14, 2017; schoolteacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, November 10, 2017; schoolteacher, Buvaida district, Fergana region, November 14, 2017; and law enforcement officer from Fergana region who supervised transfer pickers in Karakalpakstan, November 29, 2017. Kun reported that 11 cotton gin employees in Uzun district, Sukhandarya region were fired for refusing to be transferred to Jizzakh to pick cotton. They were reinstated and paid back wages after complaining to the labor union. “Пахтага чиқмагани учун ишдан ҳайдалган ходимлар ишга тикланди [Employees fired for not picking cotton reinstated],” Kun.uz, November 20, 2017, <https://kun.uz/news/2017/11/20/pahtaga-cikmagani-ucun-isdan-ajdalgan-hodimlar-isga-tiklandi> (accessed January 19, 2018).

²²⁹ An investigation by Kun revealed that the 32,000 “unemployed” people transferred from the Andijan and Fergana regions to the Tashkent region included college teachers and staff as well as medical workers. “Андижон - Тошкент рейслари бекор қилиниб, поездлар пахта теримига сафарбар этилди [Andijan-Tashkent routes abolished and trains sent to pick cotton],” Kun, October 15, 2017, <https://kun.uz/news/2017/10/15/andizon-toskent-reyslari-bekor-qilindi> (accessed March 8, 2017); See also “Тошкент вилоятидаги пахта далаларида шифокорлар ва андижонлик ўқитувчилар теримга жалб этилган [Doctors and Teachers from Andijan Picking Cotton in Tashkent Region],” Kun.uz, November 6, 2011, <http://kun.uz/17502711> (accessed January 10, 2018).

²³⁰ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with schoolteacher, Markhamat district, Andijan region, November 22, 2017; schoolteacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, November 10, 2017; and schoolteacher, Buvaida district, Fergana region, November 14, 2017.

A retired *mahalla* activist from Andijan said she regretted agreeing to work in the Tashkent region for a month because she did not receive the promised payments or benefits and endured abusive living and working conditions. She said that she did not receive promised warm clothes, a second payment of 500,000 *soum*, and received no money for the cotton she picked, even though the quota was 80 kilograms per day, enforced by police and *hokimiat* officials. People who did not pick the quota were brought back to the fields and made to pick until nighttime, were not given food or water, and those who protested were beaten. She said that 300 pickers lived in an unheated building with broken windows and were given insufficient food.²³¹ An entrepreneur said she brought food and medicine to some workers transferred to her uncle's farm because she felt sorry about their terrible living conditions. She said they were not paid for the cotton they picked and that they were supervised by police whom she saw preventing pickers from leaving the fields for lunch.²³²

Two teachers who were transferred involuntarily to Syrdarya under threat of dismissal received 500,000 *soum* and money for the cotton they picked but the work was grueling, there was little cotton available, and they had to pay for expenses including a mattress, food, and housing. They said they only earned about 200,000 *soum* (approximately \$25) each.²³³ One said that living and working conditions were so abysmal he “couldn’t take it anymore” and ran away after three weeks.²³⁴

A law enforcement officer from Kokand said he was sent involuntarily to supervise a deployment of 1000 pickers sent to Karakalpakstan, and his duties including penalizing people who did not pick enough. He said he instructed them to tell “anyone who asks,” that they are unemployed, voluntary workers who came to earn money, and that conditions are good. He said that in reality workers received no bedding and little food, and conditions were so poor that people, especially women who did not want to be away from their families, began to run away without even bothering to collect their final payments. He also said he began to have concerns about security among pickers, especially for women, so he did not try to stop them when they ran away. By the end of the 42 days, only approximately 200 pickers remained and they had to pay part of their own transportation costs home.²³⁵

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Uzbek-German Forum interview with entrepreneur Akkurgan district, Tashkent region, November 12, 2017.

²³³ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with schoolteacher, Buvaidda district, Fergana region, November 14, 2017; and schoolteacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, November 10, 2017. On October 14, a local newspaper reported that more than 10,000 residents of the Fergana region were transferred to the Syrdarya region to pick cotton, where they picked on average 33-37 kilograms per day. Even at 500 *soum* per kilogram, these workers could only earn 16,500-18,800 *soum* (approximately \$2-2.30) before deductions and costs. “About the pickers from Fergana who have come to help in Syrdarya,” *Syrdarya Khakikati* [Truth], October 14, 2017.

²³⁴ Uzbek-German Forum interview with schoolteacher, Buvaidda district, Fergana region, November 14, 2017.

²³⁵ Uzbek-German Forum interview with law enforcement officer from Fergana region who supervised transfer pickers in Karakalpakstan, November 29, 2017.

Indicators of Forced Labor Present Even for Voluntary Pickers

Despite other changes in 2017, no significant steps were implemented to protect cotton pickers from hazardous and degrading working and living conditions or other labor rights violations. The ILO has developed 11 indicators of forced labor, “representing the most common signs or ‘clues’ that point to the possible existence of forced labor.”²³⁶ The Uzbek-German Forum found evidence of the presence of several of these indicators in 2017, even where workers picked cotton voluntarily.

Intimidation and threats: The Uzbek-German Forum found that many cotton pickers, including voluntary pickers, are threatened with punishments for failure to meet picking quotas or for not working hard enough. Workers described being made to work excessive hours, given additional work at night, being deprived of sleep, subjected to beatings, and public humiliation as punishments. Supervision by law enforcement officers as well as officials with control over their employment, such as department or agency heads, compounds the level of intimidation and many pickers experience.

Abusive living and working conditions: Many pickers, including voluntary pickers, described deplorable living conditions, including crowded housing in buildings not meant for habitation, lack of potable water, insufficient hygiene and sanitary facilities, and inadequate food. Pickers also described excessive working hours and not being able to come and go freely from the fields. Students picking in Bukhara and public sector employees in Gulistan said crop dusters sprayed fields with chemicals while they were picking cotton.²³⁷

Abuse of vulnerability: Most cotton pickers did not have a contract or did not know its terms, leaving them vulnerable to excessive working hours, quotas, penalties, poor working conditions, and withholding of wages for food, transportation, and other costs. Voluntary pickers who worked as replacement workers for those mobilized involuntarily usually have no contract and are subject to arbitrary or punitive terms, such as that they will not be paid if they fail to meet the quota.²³⁸ Two replacement pickers said supervisors treated them especially harshly because they were receiving payment from the people who hired them.²³⁹

²³⁶ ILO Indicators of Forced Labour, Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour, International Labour Office, 2012, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_203832.pdf (accessed January 31, 2018), “Introducing the Indicators.”

²³⁷ “Хлопкорабство в Узбекистане: Последние жертвы? [Cotton Slavery in Uzbekistan: the Last Victims?],” Fergana News, September 26, 2017, <http://www.fergananews.com/articles/9567> (accessed March 12, 2018).

²³⁸ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with bank employee, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 7, 2017; small business owner, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 6, 2017; replacement worker, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 9, 2017; small business owner Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017; replacement picker, Talimarzhon town, Kashkadarya region, November 30, 2017; and replacement picker, Tashkent, December 4, 2017.

²³⁹ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with replacement picker, Tashkent, December 4, 2017; and replacement worker, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 9, 2017.



People living in poverty were especially vulnerable to poor working and living conditions. Some women had to bring their young children to overnight picking deployments and took turns looking after them even though housing was often cold and unsuitable for small children.²⁴⁰ A woman in Kashkadarya who works as a servant for a farmer in exchange for food and housing in a field tent said that the district health department gave the farmer money to hire replacement workers for doctors from Shahrissabz. The farmer told her she could work as a replacement picker for the doctors and receive the 600,000 *soum* (approximately \$75) replacement fee if she could find 19 more pickers also willing to work as replacements. The woman said that even though she picked cotton as a replacement worker and recruited the others, the farmer refused to pay her the 600,000 *soum*. She had no recourse to protest because she did not want to risk losing her housing.²⁴¹

Inmates required to pick cotton as a condition of their sentence were vulnerable to abusive conditions. A 58-year old inmate forced to pick cotton, who had previously suffered two heart attacks and was forbidden from strenuous labor, died in the cotton fields.²⁴² Another inmate said the quota was 100 kilograms per day for the entire season, even when cotton became scarce.

²⁴⁰ “БЕССТРАШНЫЕ’ ОБНАРУЖИЛИ МАЛЕНЬКИХ ДЕТЕЙ, БОЛЬНЫХ ЖЕНЩИН, ГОЛОДНЫХ РАБОЧИХ, УЧИТЕЛЕЙ В КАЗАРМАХ ХЛОПКОРОБОВ В НИЖНЕЧИРЧИКСКОМ РАЙОНЕ. УЗБЕКИСТАН [‘Fearless’ Discovered Young Children, Sick Women, Hungry Workers, Teachers, in Cotton Pickers’ Barracks in Nizhnechirchik District],” Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan press release, October 6, 2017.

²⁴¹ Uzbek-German Forum interview with replacement picker, Talimarzhon town, Kashkadarya region, November 30, 2017.

²⁴² “Тело фермера, пропавшего на хлопковом поле, обнаружено спустя 5 дней в канаве [The body of a farmer who went missing in the cotton fields was found five days later in a ditch],” Ozodlik, October 18, 2017 <https://rus.ozodlik.org/a/28801292.html> (accessed March 12, 2018).

Inmates worked from 5 a.m. until dark and those who failed to meet the quota were deprived of sleep and given extra work such as cleaning and chopping wood. The inmate said he and others bought cotton to make up shortfalls because they “had no way of complaining” and were too afraid to try.²⁴³

Deception: Some pickers agreed to pick cotton based on misrepresentations about conditions and payment, especially in cases of pickers deployed to other regions.²⁴⁴

Freedom of movement: People told the Uzbek-German Forum that they were not released from cotton picking for illness, home visits, or family obligations. One man, whose birthday fell during his cotton picking shift, was not allowed home and told his friends not to visit him because he feared they would be beaten or conscripted to pick.²⁴⁵ Several people reported that even apparently voluntary pickers had to request permission from police or supervisors to leave the fields, even for breaks.²⁴⁶

Excessive overtime: Many cotton pickers said they worked long hours with no days off, sometimes far exceeding what is allowed under Uzbekistan’s employment laws.

Ineffectiveness of Feedback Mechanisms

As part of its response to a 2013 complaint regarding forced labor to the Inspection Panel, the World Bank’s independent accountability mechanism, the Bank proposed measures to mitigate the risk of forced and child labor being linked to existing and proposed projects, including through the creation of a grievance redress mechanism.²⁴⁷ Instead, at the government’s insistence, the mechanisms created were feedback, rather than redress mechanisms, that sit within the Ministry of Labor and the FTUU.²⁴⁸ Despite low usage rates in their first two years, in 2017 Uzbek officials publicly encouraged people forced to work or extorted for replacement workers to use the Feedback Mechanism as their main means to seek redress. In addition, ILO and World Bank representatives encouraged use of the Feedback Mechanism as the key means by which people could protect their right not to be forced to work. In 2016 President Mirziyoyev launched an online portal known as the “virtual reception center” through which citizens could submit

²⁴³ Uzbek-German Forum interview with inmate, Zafarabad district, Jizzakh region, November 23, 2017.

²⁴⁴ See above, p.67.

²⁴⁵ Uzbek-German Forum interview with engineer at state factory, Andijan, Andijan region, October 19, 2017

²⁴⁶ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with entrepreneur Akkurgan district, Tashkent region, November 12, 2017; replacement worker, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 9, 2017; and voluntary transfer picker, Andijan, Andijan region, November 18, 2017. See “Пахтадан қочсанг, мелиса ушлаб уради [If you run away from the fields, the police will beat you up],” Pakhtagram, Ozodlik, November 7, 2017, <https://www.ozodlik.org/a/pakhtagram-iib-jizzax/28819488.html> (accessed March 26, 2018).

²⁴⁷ “Inspection Panel Submission: Complaint Against Rural Enterprise Support Project-Phase II,” Cotton Campaign, September 5, 2013, http://uzbekgermanforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/RESP-II_complaintEnglish.pdf, (accessed March 26, 2018). For a description of the complaint and the World Bank’s mitigation measures, see “We Can’t Refuse to Pick Cotton,” pp. 31 and 92.

²⁴⁸ World Bank, “Progress Report on RESP II and Additional Financing,” p. 8.

complaints about the functioning of government agencies. The portal generally forwards the complaints to the agency in question to investigate or take measures.²⁴⁹ Although statistics are not publicly available, at least some submissions regarding forced labor in the cotton harvest received by the presidential portal were forwarded to the Feedback Mechanisms.

Usage of the Feedback Mechanisms to make complaints related to the cotton harvest remained extremely low, increasing only slightly in 2017 as compared to the first two years of operation. In 2017 the FTUU registered 121 submissions related to labor rights during the cotton harvest, or fewer than two per day (of which just 36 were found related to forced labor indicators), as compared to 85 cases in 2016 and 68 in 2015.²⁵⁰ The Ministry of Labor’s feedback mechanism registered 152 submissions related to the cotton harvest, of which only one related to forced labor, although it is unclear how many of these were deemed grievances or subject to further action (as compared to 2 cases deemed grievances in 2015 and 30 cases subject to further action in 2016).²⁵¹ Taken together, these submissions comprise less than one tenth of one percent of the 336,000 forced laborers that the ILO estimates participated in the 2017 harvest.²⁵² In any case, these mechanisms have a low track record of receiving and resolving cases related to forced labor or the cotton harvest generally and low public awareness (only about 25 percent of the population is aware of the mechanisms²⁵³), especially given “significant investment” in the mechanisms.²⁵⁴

By contrast, Radio Ozodlik, the Uzbek language service of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty also received hundreds of messages via the messaging service Telegram, from Uzbek citizens complaining of forced labor, extortion, poor working conditions, abuse by local officials, or other abuses related to the cotton harvest, which it regularly published under the rubric *Pakhtagram* [Cottongram].²⁵⁵ Although this service did not provide redress, it was an important means to promote transparency around the cotton harvest by giving users a chance to make complaints public while retaining anonymity. Even someone who said he was a police officer in Tashkent wrote to complain that police were forced to pick cotton, meet unrealistic quotas, forced to pay bribes, and subjected to poor working conditions.²⁵⁶

²⁴⁹ Virtual Reception Center of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Miromonovich Mirziyoyev, <https://pm.gov.uz/uz>.

²⁵⁰ ILO TPM 2017, p. 23. For information on usage of feedback mechanisms in 2015 and 2016, see “We Can’t Refuse to Pick Cotton, See p.98”

²⁵¹ ILO TPM 2017, p. 24.

²⁵² ILO TPM 2017, p. 27.

²⁵³ ILO TPM 2017, p. 24.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 21.

²⁵⁵ Ozodlik said it received 3-4 messages per day, and sometimes more, from early September through late November, for a total of 250-350. Uzbek-German Forum correspondence with Ozodlik, February 13, 2018.

²⁵⁶ „ИИБ ходимлари: „Пахтадаги овқатни еб бўлмайди, қалампир еб, иштаҳа очамиз“ [Police Officers: The Food Is Inedible, We Eat Hot Peppers to Get an Appetite], “Pakhtagram, Ozodlik, November 2, 2017, <https://www.ozodlik.org/a/pakhtagram-andijon-ujituvch/28831225.html>.

The effectiveness of the mechanisms continued to be hampered by low public confidence in their independence, efficacy, lack of awareness, and fear of reprisals. Further, threatening and abusive behavior by local officials, coaching of respondents to say they are unemployed and voluntary, and the pervasive involvement of public sector employees in other unpaid “public” work, undermined other messages that cotton work should be voluntary and that people can refuse without consequences.

Deputy Prime Minister Tanzila Narbayeva announced that health and education employees should stand up against extortion of money for refusal to pick cotton or to pay for replacement pickers and to report this extortion, ignoring the fact that many people fear losing their jobs or other penalties for refusing or complaining.²⁵⁷ Social media users in Uzbekistan reacted with disbelief and scorn to Narbayeva’s announcement:

- So funny I’m crying. What are you on about? Today I got to work and they told me, ‘cotton or money!’ If I refuse I am fired! It’s the cotton [season] now - go to the cities and districts and check where the teachers and doctors are! You don’t need to make statements from on high, you just need to lift your head and look and then personally order the *hokims* and directors [not to extort money].
- What, they don’t see anything or hear anything or they think we are idiots? If only they sat quietly and didn’t say anything to anger people. They are lying to themselves.
- Damn, this nonsense kills me. Tell the regional *hokims* not to force the directors, that’s all. It’s just hot air. ‘Stand up [to extortion],’ etc. is delusion.
- The Cabinet of Ministers and this deputy probably don’t live in Uzbekistan. When will they wake up already?
- I work in a kindergarten and they have already collected money from us [to pay for replacement pickers] and are making us pick on daily shifts.²⁵⁸

Low Public Confidence in Government, FTUU Not Independent

Many people said they did not believe the Feedback Mechanism could help them or questioned the utility of complaining to government-controlled mechanisms when it is the government that requires them to work.²⁵⁹ A taxi driver from Andijan told the Uzbek-German Forum that local officials ordered taxi drivers to pick cotton in the Tashkent region for 10-day shifts and extor-

²⁵⁷ “Заместитель Премьер-министра: учителя и врачи должны противостоять незаконному вымогательству денег за отказ от сбора хлопка [Deputy Prime Minister: teachers and doctors should oppose illegal extortion of money for refusing to harvest cotton].” Nuz.uz, October 9, 2017, <https://nuz.uz/obschestvo/26753-zamestitel-premer-ministra-uchitelya-i-vrachi-dolzhny-protivostoyat-nezakonnomu-vymogatelstvu-deneg-za-otkaz-ot-sbora-hlopka.html> (accessed October 13, 2017).

²⁵⁸ Facebook comments on article about Narbayeva’s statement, October 10, 2017.

²⁵⁹ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with bank employee, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 7, 2017; school cleaner, Jizzakh, Jizzakh region, November 22, 2017; schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 3, 2017; doctor, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017; employee of public organization, Buvaidda district, Fergana region, December 1, 2017; nurse, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, November 10, 2017; schoolteacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, November 10, 2017; schoolteacher, Shahrisabz, Kashkadarya region, November 28, 2017; schoolteacher, Buvaidda district, Fergana region, September 19, 2017; nurse, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 1, 2017; schoolteacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, October 1, 2017; schoolteacher, Markhamat district, Andijan region, November 22, 2017; and schoolteacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, September 17, 2017.

ted money for the harvest. In response to a suggestion by the Uzbek-German Forum that the driver complain to the Feedback Mechanism the driver responded, “[the hotline] is a 100% lie, it cannot work. You are too far removed from the country to know what kind of conditions we have to survive in.”²⁶⁰ Several people emphasized that instructions from their supervisors or government officials to lie to monitors about their professions or that they were picking cotton voluntarily also undermined their faith in the Feedback Mechanism.²⁶¹ Several people responsible for mobilizing or supervising pickers said they instructed people to lie about their professions or say they are unemployed.²⁶²

The FTUU and local unions’ role in mobilizing people to work, including sponsoring messages calling on citizens to fulfill their national duty to pick cotton during the late season “shock month,” was also at odds with its ability to be perceived as a tool to protect workers from exploitation.²⁶³ Some people said that they do not trust that the FTUU mechanism can help them given that unions are not independent from the government.²⁶⁴ A labor union representative told the Uzbek-German Forum that he could not do anything to help protect people from forced labor in the cotton harvest.²⁶⁵ One teacher said that the labor union representative was also forced to pick cotton so “how can I ask for help from someone who can’t even help himself?”²⁶⁶ Another said “we started hearing about forced labor in 2016 and now we understand that cotton picking, weeding, street cleaning is all forced labor but we can’t complain, there is no use. The union representative just carries out the director’s orders.”²⁶⁷

In a press release on October 16, 2017, the Human Rights Alliance described an October 15 visit by Urlaeva and Malohat Eshonkulova, an activist and journalist, to Samarkand, during which they interviewed medical staff and teachers at a mobilization site in Samarkand; interviewed and photographed Murod Madiev, a deputy school director in the hospital who confirmed that schools were forced to send teachers to pick cotton; interviewed the widow of Fakhriddin Saidov, head of the doctor’s union, who died in September; and traveled to Pastdargam where they

²⁶⁰ Uzbek-German Forum correspondence with taxi driver, Andijan, Andijan region, October 16, 2017.

²⁶¹ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with school cleaner, Jizzakh, Jizzakh region, November 22, 2017; university student, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 6, 2017; schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017; kindergarten employee, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 2, 2017; doctor, Shahrisabz, Kashkadarya region, November 28, 2017; schoolteacher, Buvida district, Fergana region, November 14, 2017; schoolteacher, Akdarya district, Samarkand region, November 24, 2017; schoolteacher, Andijan district, Andijan region, September 26, 2017; and schoolteacher, Shahrisabz, Kashkadarya region, November 28, 2017.

²⁶² Uzbek-German Forum interviews with mahalla chairperson, district withheld, Fergana region, October 6, 2017; law enforcement officer from Fergana region who supervised transfer pickers in Karakalpakstan, November 29, 2017; and school director, Dangara district, Fergana region, October 12, 2018.

²⁶³ Shock month announcements played extensively on the radio and were printed in many local newspapers and sponsored by a list of organizations including the FTUU, for example, “Appeal to residents of the region regarding the cotton harvest shock month from October 15-November 15,” *Syrdarya Khakikati* [Truth], October 18, 2017.

²⁶⁴ Uzbek-German Forum interview with schoolteacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, October 1, 2017.

²⁶⁵ Uzbek-German Forum interview with labor union representative, Jizzakh, Jizzakh region, October 26, 2017.

²⁶⁶ Uzbek-German Forum interview with schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017.

²⁶⁷ Uzbek-German Forum interview with schoolteacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, September 17, 2017.

interviewed teachers and medical staff forced to pick cotton.²⁶⁸ The same day police detained Urlaeva and Eshonkulova and confiscated their research materials.²⁶⁹ The press release contained a factual error about the name of the *hokim* involved, which was corrected in subsequent Uzbek and English versions. The Association of Trade Unions of the Samarkand Region sent a rebuttal to Kun, which the FTUU posted on its website.²⁷⁰ The rebuttal claims that the hospital had no record of treating Murod Madiev. It also asserts that Saidov's widow did not give information to Urlaeva and Eshonkulova and alleges they falsified a photograph she allowed them to take of a portrait of Saidov with his children. Neither the Samarkand Trade Union nor the FTUU appeared to take any actual steps to investigate the substance of the claims that teachers and medical workers were forced to pick cotton, but instead used the opportunity to attempt to discredit the activists.

Reprisals and Threats of Reprisals for Complaining to Feedback Mechanisms

Some said that they feared repercussions for complaining or that their supervisors directly threatened them if they complained to the feedback mechanism.²⁷¹ A teacher said the director told teachers he would fire anyone who used the hotline to complain.²⁷² A factory employee said,

A guy who works with us and worked for a year or two in *Kamolot* [youth organization] tried to get us to write a complaint. He said all we had to do was sign it and he would send it, but people were afraid. Somehow it got back to our director and two days later he was fired. They said he was late for work three times even though he comes on the staff bus with everyone else. They forged the sign-in book to make it look like he was late... there is no justice here.

A schoolteacher complained to her director because he required her to pick cotton on the weekends even though she had paid a replacement worker to pick for her. The director told her that she could complain to the mechanism but threatened that if she did, he would fire her.²⁷³

²⁶⁸ ПОМОГИТЕ ОСТАНОВИТЬ ПРИНУДИТЕЛЬНЫЙ ТРУД ВРАЧЕЙ И УЧИТЕЛЕЙ ВСАМАРКАНДСКОЙ ОБЛАСТИ – ХОКИМ ШУХРАТ ДЖАМАЛОВ ГЛАВНЫЙ ПРЕСТУПНИК МАССОВОЙ ЭКСПЛУАТАЦИИ, ОТ ЕГО ДЕЙСТВИЙ УМЕР ВРАЧ ФАХРИДДИН САИДОВ. [Help stop the forced labor of doctors and teachers in Samarkand region—Hokim Shukhrat Dzhamalov [sic] is the Main Perpetrator of Mass Exploitation, His Actions Caused the Death of Doctor Fakhridin Saidov],” Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan press release, October 16, 2017.

²⁶⁹ See below, p.86.

²⁷⁰ “Пахта–2017: Сохта маълумот асосида ва бир оила мусибати ортидан шов-шув ясовчилар ким? [Cotton-2017: Who is behind the false information and after a family tragedy?],” Kun.uz, reposted on FTUU website, <https://kasaba.uz/pahta-2017-sohta-malumot-asosida-va-bir-oila-musibati-ortidan-shov-shuv-yasovchilar-kim/>.

²⁷¹ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with small business owner, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 6, 2017; schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 4, 2017; kindergarten employee, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 2, 2017; schoolteacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, October 1, 2017; nurse, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 1, 2017; university student, Samarkand, Samarkand region, November 25, 2017; doctor, Shahrisabz, Kashkadarya region, November 28, 2017; schoolteacher, Shahrisabz, Kashkadarya region, November 28, 2017; and school cleaner, Gulistan, Syrdarya region, November 12, 2017.

²⁷² Uzbek-German Forum interview with schoolteacher, Gulistan, Syrdarya, September 28, 2017.

²⁷³ Uzbek-German Forum interview with schoolteacher, Markhamat district, Andijan region, November 22, 2017.

Poor Record of Effectiveness

The ILO's 2017 report does not indicate how many of the cases submitted to the feedback mechanisms that were registered as related to forced labor or forced labor indicators received redress or what kinds of remedies it provided. In a positive example, Kun reported that employees of a cotton gin in Sukhandarya region were given back their jobs and received compensation after complaining to the labor union that they were fired for refusing to pick cotton in Jizzakh.²⁷⁴ In other cases, however, the feedback mechanisms appeared to conduct only superficial investigations that did not delve into the circumstances of the complaint or provide effective redress to the complainants. For example a woman who complained to the presidential portal that students in Tashkent being forced to pick cotton received a pro forma response from the FTUU that forced labor is not allowed by law, students may not be expelled for refusal to pick cotton, and she may call the hotline if her rights are violated.²⁷⁵

Uzbek-German Forum Complaint to FTUU Feedback Mechanism in Karakalpakstan

Although the Uzbek-German Forum generally declined to send information to the Feedback Mechanism due to concerns about security for complainants and effectiveness, in one case an Uzbek-German Forum monitor made a complaint at the request of a doctor who was afraid to complain. On October 10, a doctor affiliated with the Central Hospital of Turtkul district in Karakalpakstan told the Uzbek-German Forum “We are being sent to the harvest again, for overnight shifts of 25 days. They are killing our clinic. They also warned us not to tell anyone. Everything is being done secretly.”²⁷⁶ The doctor said that members of the medical staff had already gathered to depart to the fields on orders from the head doctor but that they were too afraid of the consequences to refuse or to call the Feedback Mechanism.²⁷⁷ The Uzbek-German Forum called the head doctor of the hospital who denied that the people gathered outside the hospital waiting to depart to the fields were hospital staff.²⁷⁸ The Uzbek-German Forum visited the hospital and spoke to several people gathered outside who said that they were doctors and nurses from the hospital ordered to pick cotton involuntarily.²⁷⁹ The Uzbek-German Forum called the FTUU hotline and reported that ten employees of the clinic were being forced to go to Pakhtobod to pick cotton for 25 days. Later the same day, the Uzbek-German Forum received a call from M. Davletov, a lawyer from the Karakalpakstan republic branch of the FTUU. A transcript of the conversation follows.

²⁷⁴ “Пахтага чиқмагани учун ишдан ҳайдалган ходимлар ишга тикланди [Employees fired for refusing to pick cotton allowed back], Kun.uz, November 20, 2018, <http://kun.uz/news/2017/11/20/pahtaga-cikmagani-ucun-isdan-ajdalgan-hodimlar-isga-tiklandi> (accessed February 12, 2018).

²⁷⁵ Letter no. 11/1779 -2017 from B. Makhmadaliev, deputy chairman, FTUU, to Sh. Salomova, September 18, 2017.

²⁷⁶ Audio recording of telephone call 1 from doctor to the Uzbek-German Forum, Turtkul, district Karakalpakstan, October 10, 2017.

²⁷⁷ Audio recording of telephone call 2 from doctor to the Uzbek-German Forum, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, October 10, 2017.

²⁷⁸ Audio recording of telephone call from the Uzbek-German Forum to head doctor, Central Hospital of Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, October 10, 2017.

²⁷⁹ Uzbek-German Forum interviews with clinic staff member 1 and clinic staff member 2, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, October 10, 2017.

Davletov: You called the hotline. Who complained to you?

UGF: Employees of the Central Hospital of Turtkul district.

Davletov: Tell me their names.

UGF: They asked not to reveal their names.

Davletov: We have checked. No one is forcing them to go pick cotton.

UGF: Listen, I saw staff of the central hospital gathering [to depart] with my own eyes. I explained to them that there is an order from the prime minister prohibiting sending medical staff to the fields. They are afraid to complain, afraid even to call you. They are standing outside the central hospital of Turtkul. Send someone over there now.

Davletov: State your address so we can send you an answer.

UGF: [address]

Davletov: Where do you work?

UGF: I am a human rights defender.

Davletov: Human rights defender?!²⁸⁰

After this exchange, the Uzbek-German Forum spoke with the doctor to explain that the FTUU did not confirm the complaint and to encourage him again to call the FTUU himself. The doctor said, “How could they not accept it? There are buses right now outside the hospital!”²⁸¹ A follow-up letter from the FTUU stated that having studied the complaint and visited the site, it did not receive any complaints from medical workers or the population about forced labor or other rights violations and that the applicants can appeal to the courts if they are dissatisfied.²⁸² Several days later, a nurse from the same clinic told the Uzbek-German Forum that officials continued to send medical staff to the cotton fields involuntarily.²⁸³

Threats Against Parkent Kindergarten Director and Failure of Feedback Mechanism

The experience of Zulhumor Yorova, director of a kindergarten in Parkent district in the Tashkent region, clearly illustrates the real pressure experienced by lack of protections for heads of institutions who resist official demands for the harvest and the failure of accountability mechanisms, including the FTUU legal clinic, to protect people who refuse forced labor and extortion.

In August, Yorova approached Urlaeva and Eshonkulova because the kindergarten had no plumbing, a poor heating system, and lacked basic supplies. She said she had sought assistance from various government officials to no avail. Yorova also said that in August she had submitted names and passport copies of 13 employees to Parkent district *hokim*, Nemat Abdullayev, in

²⁸⁰ Transcript of audio recording of telephone call from Davletov, lawyer from the Karakalpakstan republic branch of the FTUU to the Uzbek-German Forum, October 10, 2017.

²⁸¹ Audio recording of telephone call from the Uzbek-German Forum to doctor, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, October 10, 2017.

²⁸² Letter No. MD-06/1284 from M. Davletov, FTUU lawyer, October 11, 2017.

²⁸³ Uzbek-German Forum interview with nurse, Turtkul district, Karakalpakstan, October 14, 2017.



Human Rights Activist Malohat Eshonkulova and Zulhumor Yorova, director of kindergarten

response to his demand that she provide employees to pick cotton. Yorova said that in 2016, following orders, she had mobilized her employees and supervised them in the fields but that she did not want to do it again. The kindergarten's employees told Urlaeva that they did not want to pick cotton or wish to be away from home, but were afraid they would lose their jobs if they refused.²⁸⁴ After the government announced the exclusion of health and education workers from cotton picking, Abdullayev ordered heads of health and education organizations to submit 500,000-700,000 (approximately \$62.50-87.50) *soum* from each of their employees to the district departments of health and education to hire replacement pickers instead.²⁸⁵ Yorova said she did not comply and spoke out in opposition.

Yorova said that Abdullayev and the regional department of education head pressured her to resign and threatened her in retaliation for her complaints about the kindergarten's condition and her attempts to resist Abdullayev's demands.²⁸⁶

Instead of providing assistance, Yorova said that FTUU officials also pressured her. On September 6, after Urlaeva issued a statement about Yorova's case, the chairman and a lawyer from the district FTUU office visited Yorova and accused her of providing false information to Urlaeva. She

²⁸⁴ "Рейд в поселок Заркент и фото сотрудников народного образования, которых принудили на сбор хлопка осенью 2017 года [Raid on the village of Zarkent and photo of education employees who are forced to go to the cotton harvest in fall 2017], Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan press release, August 31, 2017.

²⁸⁵ Uzbek-German Forum interview with Zulhumor Yorova, director of Kindergarten No. 17, Zarkent, Parkent district, Tashkent region, November 19, 2017.

²⁸⁶ "SOS!!! Хоким НEMAT Абдуллаев тайно сформировал отряды хлопкоробов из сотрудников народного образования [SOS!! Hokim Nemat Abdullayev secretly formed brigades of cotton pickers from education employees]," Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan press release, September 1, 2017; ПАРКЕНТ ТУМАНИДАГИ БЮДЖЕТ ТАШКИЛОТЛАР ПАХТА ЙИГИМ-ТЕРИМИГА ШАЙ [Public sector organizations in Parkent are ready for the cotton harvest], Himoyauz, September 9, 2017, <http://www.himoyauz.com/паркент-туманидаги-бюджет-ташкилотлар/> (accessed February 14, 2018). On September 4, Urlaeva attended a meeting between hokim Abdullayev and heads of local organizations and heard him demand lists of cotton pickers from public sector organizations, including health and education.

said they told her to write a statement denying that she had appealed to Urlaeva for assistance, that the *hokim* had demanded a list of employees' names, and was forcing employees to pick cotton. Urlaeva then filed a complaint with the FTUU legal clinic hotline about the pressure on Yorova including from other FTUU officials. The FTUU hotline, part of the feedback mechanism established as part of the government's agreement with the World Bank, told Urlaeva that it would investigate but no steps appeared to have been taken at the time of writing and neither Urlaeva nor Yorova have received a letter or reply from the FTUU legal clinic.²⁸⁷

Yorova said that following her complaints Abdullayev and education authorities continued to pressure her to resign and excluded her from all meetings. She found out from her employees that district education officials collected 500,000 *soum* (approximately \$62) from each of her 23 employees to pay for replacement pickers.²⁸⁸ Following the government's partial recall of education workers on September 22, her employees attempted to get their money back but district education officials refused to return it, saying that the recall did not apply to them and that they had already spent the money to hire replacements.²⁸⁹

Throughout the harvest season, Abdullayev continued to require health and education institutions to provide money and workers to pick cotton. At a cotton meeting on November 1, Abdullayev demanded heads of public sector institutions to account for labor and cotton quotas and harshly criticized them using profanity and insults for falling short.²⁹⁰ At the meeting, Abdullayev told the heads of institutions that pickers had to pick 30 kilograms per day, even though there was little cotton left in the fields. He ordered the department of education to pick eight tons, which would amount to sending more than 265 pickers to the fields.²⁹¹

In November, Yorova said that Abdullayev continued to put pressure on her to resign and had instructed a health inspection official to find a health violation that would provide a basis for firing Yorova but the official refused and resigned her own position instead.²⁹² She said

The [new head of the district education department] called me in and said 'Ma'am, if the *hokim* wants the prosecutor can come up with [a reason to fire you]. Do you really want that? Wouldn't it be better if you calmly resigned on your own?' After the [my complaints] about cotton, I am given no directives, not from the district or city departments of education nor from the *hokimiat*.

²⁸⁷ SOS!! Профсоюз Паркентского района обвиняют Зульхумор Ёрову за сообщение правозащитнице Урлаевой о принуждению к сбору хлопка [SOS! Parkent district labor union accuses Zulhumor Yorova for reporting forced labor in the cotton harvest to human rights defender Urlaeva, Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan press release, September 6, 2017. Email from Elena Urlaeva to the Uzbek-German Forum February 15, 2018.

²⁸⁸ Uzbek-German Forum interview with Yorova, Parkent district, Tashkent region, November 19, 2017.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ "Uzbek Official Unleashes Torrent of Abuse at Cotton Meeting," Uzbek-German Forum, November 21, 2017, <http://harvestreport.uzbekgermanforum.org/uzbek-official-unleashes-torrent-of-abuse-at-cotton-meeting/> (accessed February 8, 2018).

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Uzbek-German Forum interview with Yorova, Parkent district, Tashkent region, November 19, 2017.

I am not invited to meetings. They don't talk to me. Every day I sit with my heart in my throat wondering what else they will come up with against me. I don't know how this will end but if it continues like this, with officials from higher up going after me, I will have no choice but to leave my job.²⁹³

Yorova filed a complaint with the police in Tashkent about the regional education department pressuring her to resign, and Urlaeva submitted a complaint to the presidential portal about Abdullayev's threats to fire Yorova and education employees being forced to work in the harvest. These complaints were all forwarded to the Parkent district prosecutor who told Urlaeva in a letter that none of the complaints were found to have merit. The same Parkent district prosecutor was present at the district cotton meetings during which Abdullayev used insults and threats to order public sector institutions to pick cotton and had a role in overseeing and enforcing quotas. Despite attempting to refuse forced labor and seeking assistance from law enforcement officials, the FTUU legal clinic and the presidential portal, Yorova received no help. None of these institutions even launched an investigation. The very officials tasked with upholding the law participated in violating it. At the time of writing, Yorova continued to work but said that she feared future reprisals. She said Abdullayev would oversee the kindergarten's re-accreditation process in spring 2018 and she was concerned that he could use it as an opportunity to find a reason to punish her.²⁹⁴

Government Accountability Measures Inadequate

In 2017 the government undertook to hold some officials to account for violations that occurred during the cotton harvest. According to one official, as of late September, the State Labor Inspectorate had identified 14 violations related to the cotton harvest, five indicating facts of child labor and nine of forced labor. In response, the Inspectorate issued fines to three school directors, two college directors, two farmers, and the director of a medical clinic for forcing pupils or employees to pick cotton.²⁹⁵

Although the government's September 22 recall of students and some health and education employees from the fields amounted to a tacit acknowledgement that these people were sent to pick cotton in violation of law or policy, the Uzbek-German Forum was not aware of any action taken by the government to investigate how hundreds of thousands of students and public sector employees were sent to pick cotton in violation of the Cabinet of Ministers' decree or to hold any officials to account. Indeed, enforcement actions appeared to be sporadic and arbitrary, holding a few low level officials to account while failing to move up the chain of command or

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Uzbek-German Forum interview with Yorova, Parkent district, Tashkent region, February 16, 2018.

²⁹⁵ Address to the Committee on International Trade of the European Parliament, Ambassador Dilyor Khakimov, September 25, 2017.

examine policies that contributed to violations. Bringing officials to justice for abuse is a key step to dismantling the forced labor system, but to be effective must be directed toward officials responsible for directing and implementing abusive policies. The accountability measures taken in 2017 fell far short. Below are examples of three labor inspectorate investigations and a court ruling.

Labor Inspectorate Investigations

The Ministry of Labor provided the Uzbek-German Forum with the results of three investigations initiated by the labor inspectorate into two allegations of forced labor posted on Ozodlik’s Pakhtagram and one reported by Urlaeva, all in the Andijan region and all issued the same day.

- A labor inspector in Balikchi district, Andijan region imposed a fine of five minimum salaries (748,875 *soum*, approximately \$94) on the director of school No. 1 for requiring children to bring at least 2 kg of cotton to school every day.²⁹⁶ The inspector found a violation of forcing children to work under Article 51, part 2 of the Administrative Code.²⁹⁷ In the protocol the investigator stated that the information was posted on Ozodlik and he spoke to fifth graders in the fields who confirmed that the director required them to bring cotton to school. The investigator did not speak to the director because she was not present. Neither did the inspector investigate why the director told children to bring cotton to school and if she was acting under orders from another authority.
- A labor inspector for the Andijan region investigated a complaint made in a letter by a teacher and published on Ozodlik. The teacher stated that he and other teachers from a school in Andijan city were sent to pick cotton in Izboskan district, did not receive wages for the cotton they picked, and were not provided transportation.²⁹⁸ The inspector found that “some teachers and technical staff voluntarily picked cotton on weekends but did not sign a statement about this,” and fined the school’s director one minimum salary (149,775 *soum*, approximately \$19) for forcing someone to work under Article 51 of the Administrative Code.²⁹⁹ The inspector’s finding of an Article 51 violation is not consistent with his finding that teachers picked cotton voluntarily. The investigation appears not to address the teacher’s concerns that he was “sent” to pick cotton and did not receive wages or transportation. The investigation also fails to explain why the school director was involved in a teacher’s

²⁹⁶ Центр Поддержки занятости Баликчи района (Андижанская область) Государственный правовой инспектор труда Приказ № 08-666 об определении штрафа за нарушение трудового законодательства [Center for Employment Support Balikchi district (Andijan region) Order No. 09-666 on issuing a fine for violations of labor law], November 6, 2017. A copy of the order is on file with the Uzbek-German Forum.

²⁹⁷ Article 51, Administrative Responsibility Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan, (No. 2015-XII of 1994) part 2 as amended by Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan, December 21, 2009, No. 3RU-236—C3 RU, 2009, No. 52, art. 551.

²⁹⁸ Главное управление занятости Андижанской области Государственная правовая инспекция труда, Приказ № 685 О нарушении законодательства труда и занятости [Main Employment Department of Andijan District, State Labor Rights Inspectorate, Order No. 685 On violations of labor and employment law], November 6, 2017. A copy of the order is on file with the Uzbek-German Forum.

²⁹⁹ Article 51, Administrative Responsibility Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan, (No. 2015-XII of 1994).

voluntary weekend employment and the role of the school in organizing cotton work or providing payment or transportation.

- A labor inspector for the Andijan region initiated an investigation on the basis of information circulated by Urlaeva in an emailed press release on November 3 that a school director in Ulugnor forced children to pick cotton.³⁰⁰ The inspector found that the school director had violated “ILO Conventions No. 138, the labor code of Uzbekistan, and order 207 of the Cabinet of Ministers of September 12, 2008 on the prohibition of child labor” for forcing children in grades 3-5 to pick cotton. The investigation does not explain the basis for this finding, why the school director would need cotton, whether she acted on orders from another official, or what the director did with the cotton. The investigation protocol contains a statement by the school director in which she denies forcing children to pick cotton. The labor inspectorate did not appear to investigate instances of forced labor of employees of the market, the state pension fund, and a car factory in the Andijan region reported by Urlaeva the same day.³⁰¹

The investigations appear to lack rigor and credibility. They do not address why schools were involved in cotton harvesting at all or whether the schools acted under orders from other officials. It is also unclear why the labor inspectorate limited its investigations to these allegations when Ozodlik, Urlaeva, the Uzbek-German Forum, and local media outlets, among other sources, published dozens of credible allegations of forced labor and extortion throughout the harvest. These investigations and penalties scapegoat school directors instead of the officials responsible for ordering schools to participate in the harvest and who threaten to punish school directors if they do not. As such, they are unlikely to act as deterrents and underscore the government’s unwillingness to address root causes of forced labor and hold to account those responsible.

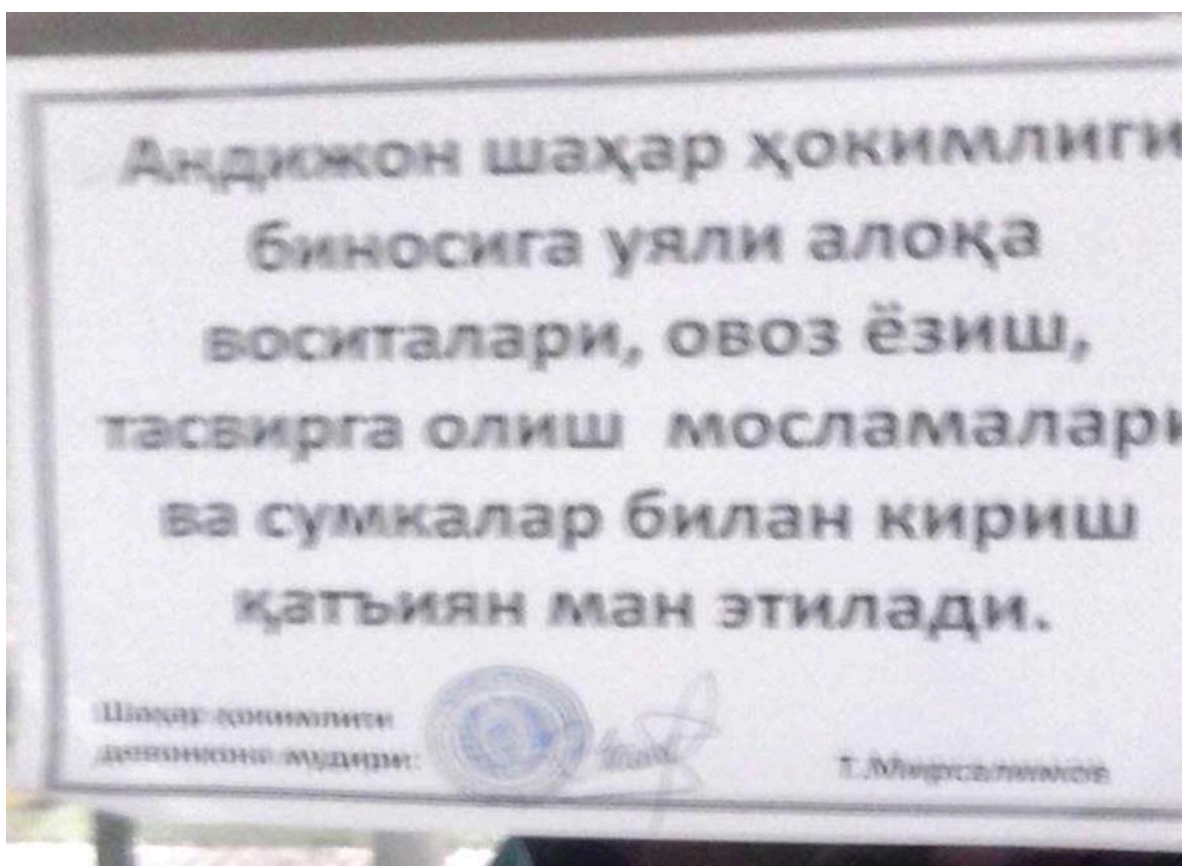
Hokim of Andijan City Fined

At a cotton meeting on October 16, Dilmurod Rakhmatullaev, the *hokim* of Andijan city, used abusive language to insult and threaten the heads of institutions for failing to fulfill labor mobilization or cotton picking quotas.³⁰² According to someone present who sent a recording to Ozodlik, the heads of 50 schools, 12 colleges, 70 kindergartens, many medical institutions, as well as imams and representatives of law enforcement agencies were all present. During the meeting Rakhmatullaev called the heads of institutions one by one to account and used profanity to insult and berate them, threatened violence, and threatened to cut off utilities, arbitrarily enforce penalties for back taxes, and ostracize people from their communities for failing to provide

³⁰⁰ “В АНДИЖАНСКОЙ ОБЛАСТИ ЦВЕТЁТ ХЛОПЧАТНИК, А ХОКИМ ЗАСТАВЛЯЕТ УЧЕНИКОВ ШКОЛ СОБИРАТЬ ХЛОПОК. ТАКЖЕ ДЕТИ ИДУТ ОДНИ К ПОЛЯМ ОПАСНЫМИ ПУТЯМИ [Cotton is Blooming in Andijan Region but the *Hokim* is Forcing Schoolchildren to Pick Cotton. Children Are Also Going Alone to the Fields on Dangerous Paths,]” Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan press release, November 3, 2017.

³⁰¹ В ФЕРГАНСКОЙ ДОЛИНЕ УЗБЕКИСТАНА ПРОДОЛЖАЕТСЯ ПРИНУДИТЕЛЬНЫЙ ТРУД НА СБОРЕ ХЛОПКА [Forced Labor Continuing in the Cotton Harvest in the Fergana Valley,]” Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan press release, November 3, 2017.

³⁰² „Mayor of Andijan Intimidates and Humiliates to Meet Cotton Quota,“ Uzbek-German Forum translation and transcript of audio recording, December 6, 2017, <http://harvestreport.uzbekgermanforum.org/mayor-of-andijan-intimidates-and-humiliates-to-meet-cotton-quota/> (accessed January 11, 2017).



Announcement was posted at the entrance doors to the Andijan administration stating that it was strictly forbidden to enter the building with bags or mobile devices or to make audio recordings or take photographs.

enough cotton pickers or meet picking quotas. During his tirade he says that he is under orders from the *hokim* of the Andijan region.³⁰³ On December 6, the day after Radio Ozodlik aired a report on the meeting, the Prosecutor General announced an investigation into Rakhmatullaev for insult³⁰⁴ for which a court then found him liable and imposed a fine of 30 minimum salaries.³⁰⁵

Notably, the prosecutor did not investigate Rakhmatullaev for forced labor or violating the Cabinet of Ministers' decree or other government instructions prohibiting the involvement of health and education employees in the cotton harvest or whether Rakhmatullaev acted under orders from a higher authority. The day after Radio Ozodlik's report, the Uzbek-German Forum saw a sign posted on the door of the Andijan city *hokimiat* stating that all electronic devices were now banned from the building.³⁰⁶

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Prosecutor General of the Republic of Uzbekistan, О ДЕЙСТВИЯХ ХОКИМА ГОРОДА АНДИЖАНА [On the Actions of the Hokim of the City of Andijan], December 6, 2017, <http://www.prokuratura.uz/ru/pages/news/ction4oki5ndijan/> (accessed January 30, 2017). See also „Еще один хоким из Андижана обозвал руководителей учебных заведений «тварями и сукиными детьми» [Another Hokim Calls Heads of Educational Institutions ‚Beasts‘ and ‚Sons of Bitches‘],“ Ozodlik, December 13, 2017, <https://rus.ozodlik.org/a/28913426.html> (accessed January 10, 2017).

³⁰⁵ „НА ХОКИМА НАЛОЖЕН ШТРАФ [Mayor is Fined],“ Prosecutor General of the Republic of Uzbekistan, December 26, 2017, <http://www.prokuratura.uz/ru/pages/news/aki66arimar88rtilla/> (accessed January 11, 2018).

³⁰⁶ „Mayor of Andijan Intimidates and Humiliates to Meet Cotton Quota,“ Uzbek-German Forum translation and transcript of audio recording, December 6, 2017, <http://harvestreport.uzbekgermanforum.org/mayor-of-andijan-intimidates-and-humiliates-to-meet-cotton-quota/> (accessed January 11, 2017).

To date, the prosecutor has not announced investigations into any other officials for insult or violations related to forced labor stemming from the cotton harvest despite the publication of numerous accounts of similar meetings around the country throughout the harvest season.

The Role of Human Rights Defenders, Monitors, and Journalists

Reprisals against Human Rights Defenders and Journalists Monitoring Forced Labor

Although some activists, monitors, and journalists reporting on forced labor continued to experience some interference in their work from local law enforcement officials, in 2017 this interference dropped significantly as compared to previous years. Monitors for the Uzbek-German Forum continued not to reveal their work for security reasons as some had faced harassment and threats in previous years.³⁰⁷ Police and other authorities in several regions arbitrarily detained or interfered with the work of Elena Urlaeva, head of the Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan and Malohat Eshonkulova, an independent journalist and human rights activist, the only two activists who conducted forced labor monitoring work openly.³⁰⁸ The continued harassment of activists underscores the need to promote greater transparency and accountability for officials at all levels around labor practices in cotton production.

As noted above, on September 12, police in Yaipan, in the Uzbekistan district of the Fergana region, detained Urlaeva from an evening cotton meeting and took her to the police station where they confiscated her notebook, three mobile phones, camera, and recording device. When Eshonkulova came to the station to demand Urlaeva's release, she was also detained. They were released at 2:30 a.m. Earlier that day, Urlaeva and Eshonkulova had interviewed teachers who said that they were forced to pick cotton under threat of dismissal by the head of the city department of education, Nafisa Nishonova. Urlaeva reported that Nishonova was present at the *hokimiat* cotton meeting that night and called for Urlaeva's arrest, and later came to the police station.³⁰⁹

On October 4, police in Buka, in the Tashkent region detained Urlaeva together with Bettina Zengling, a reporter for the German magazine Stern, and photographer Timur Karpov, and held them for several hours when they were interviewing public sector workers from Angren sent to the cotton fields.³¹⁰ Police in Buka detained Urlaeva again on October 6 when she documented

³⁰⁷ See "We Can't Refuse to Pick Cotton," p. 80.

³⁰⁸ In 2017 Urlaeva did not formally conduct monitoring for the Uzbek-German Forum but did share information. Eshonkulova did conduct monitoring for the Uzbek-German Forum as well as with Urlaeva as the "Fearless Group" of the Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan.

³⁰⁹ "У «БЕССТРАШНЫХ» ПРИ ЗАДЕРЖАНИИ УНИЧТОЖЕНА ИНФОРМАЦИЯ ПО РЕЙДУ В ФЕРГАНСКОЙ ОБЛАСТИ. УЗБЕКИСТАН [‘Fearless’ group’s information had information on raid to Fergana region destroyed during arrest]," Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan press release, September 22, 2017.

³¹⁰ "Сотрудники милиции отпустили, задержанную под Ташкентом журналистку немецкого издания «Штерн» (с обновлением) [Police released journalist from German magazine Stern detained outside of Tashkent (updated)]," Ozodlik, October 4, 2017, <https://rus.ozodlik.org/a/28772991.html> (accessed February 14, 2018).



Doctor Sayora Suratova

Dr. Sayora Suratova, an endocrinologist who works at the Medical Association of the Samarkand region, said that coercion to collect cotton is occurring with particular cruelty and that three doctors had been dismissed on the orders of the hokim.

living conditions and delivered food and clothing assistance to inmates picking cotton. They grabbed her and took her to the police station, but an officer released her after 25 minutes, telling her that her arrest was a mistake.³¹¹

On October 15, police in Pastdargam district, in the Samarkand region, detained Urlaeva and Eshonkulova from a bus as they traveled to Juma after interviewing medical and education staff picking cotton. Police took them to the police station where they interrogated them, confiscated their notebooks, mobile phones, and camera flash card, and held them for six hours, only releasing them after midnight. Urlaeva received emergency medical attention for high blood pressure during the detention.³¹²

³¹¹ «В БУКИНСКОМ РАЙОНЕ ЗАДЕРЖАНА ПРАВОЗАЩИТНИЦА ЕЛЕНА УРЛАЕВА – ЗАДЕРЖАНИЕ ДЛИЛОСЬ 25 МИНУТ [Human Rights Defender Elena Urlaeva detained in Buka district, detention lasted 25 minutes],» Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan press release, October 6, 2017.

³¹² “Human Rights Activists Detained in Samarkand,” Uzbek-German Forum, October 19, 2017, <http://harvestreport.uzbekgermanforum.org/human-rights-activists-detained-in-samarkand/> (accessed October 19, 2017).

Increased Government and ILO Engagement with Civil Society Activists and Ongoing Barriers to Engagement

The ILO office in Tashkent met regularly with small group of human rights activists during the harvest. It also convened several consultations between the activists and deputy minister of labor ,Erkin Mukhitdinov, in late 2017 and early 2018. According to participants, the meetings were open and constructive and allowed the activists to present their observations as well as concrete cases of violations.³¹³ Mukhitdinov also met with the Uzbek-German Forum in Geneva in December. These unprecedented meetings represent an important and positive overture from a government that has in the past treated activists with hostility.

However, although activists have regularly met with the ILO since the ILO began its monitoring role in Uzbekistan, the ILO has not reflected their findings or input in ILO reporting nor accounted for significant differences between the ILO's findings and the findings of independent civil society monitors. Nor have ILO reports included cases of persecution against monitors and how this affects efforts to raise awareness of and combat forced labor or included security for independent civil society monitors in its recommendations to the government.

Further, the government has not yet taken steps to remedy larger problems in the climate for civil society, which include stifling legal restrictions as well as persecution from authorities for perceived government criticism, problems that threaten to undermine the value of the emerging engagement.³¹⁴ The government requires all nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to register with the Ministry of Justice, although in practice registration is all but impossible for independent groups. Only two independent human rights organizations had ever received registration, and none since 2003. For example, Najot, a human rights organization in Khorezm region, whose chairman, Khaitbay Yakubov, has participated in regular consultations with the ILO, has made multiple unsuccessful applications for registration over the last 19 years.³¹⁵ Registration procedures are opaque and burdensome and the Ministry of Justice can return registration documents for "mistakes" an unlimited number of times.³¹⁶ NGOs must receive permission for all activities, including meetings, in advance.³¹⁷ Activities by unregistered NGOs are prohibited and

³¹³ ILO TPM 2017, p. 25.

³¹⁴ This vulnerability was especially underscored by the recent arrests of bloggers and journalists perceived to be government critics. Journalist Bobomurod Abdullayev went missing on September 27 and later found to have been held incommunicado by the SNB. He has made credible allegations of torture. At the time of writing he remained on trial on charges of anti-constitutional activity, punishable by up to 20 years' imprisonment. See: "Rights Group Calls For Uzbek Journalist's Release," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, October 2, 2017, <https://www.rferl.org/a/uzbekistan-journalist-abdullaev-release-demanded/28769588.html> (accessed October 4, 2017); Uzbekistan: Investigate Torture of Journalist: 12 Human Rights Groups Call for Journalist's, Other's Immediate Release," Human Rights Watch press release, February 14, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/02/14/uzbekistan-investigate-torture-journalist> (accessed February 15, 2018).

³¹⁵ Email from Khaitbay Yakubov to the Uzbek-German Forum March 27, 2018.

³¹⁶ Uzbek Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law, "Uzbekistan's Implementation of the CAT," at 19, September 2013, available at http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CAT/Shared%20Documents/UZB/INT_CAT_NGO_UZB_15489_E.pdf (accessed August 22, 2017).

³¹⁷ U.S. Embassy in Uzbekistan, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016, Uzbekistan," Section 2, subsection B, "Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association," available at <https://uz.usembassy.gov/2016-country-reports-human-rights-practices-uzbekistan/> (accessed August 22, 2017).

punishable by fines, detention up to six months or imprisonment up to five years.³¹⁸ In December 2014 the Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan, the organization led by Urlaeva, requested registration assistance from the Ministry of Justice. The Ministry did not provide the assistance but instead warned that all activity by unregistered NGOs and their representatives would be heavily fined.³¹⁹ These restrictions and the lack of registration mean that civil society activists who monitor forced labor remain legally vulnerable for their work.

Some activists present at the government meetings or who had previously engaged in cotton monitoring or labor rights work continue to face serious restrictions on their rights imposed by the government in retaliation for their legitimate human rights activity, in some cases rendering them unable to continue monitoring.

Urlaeva has been repeatedly arbitrarily arrested, beaten, and subjected to degrading treatment by the authorities over the last 17 years of her human rights work.³²⁰ Since 2001, she has been involuntarily committed to psychiatric detention and subjected to forced treatment on at least five occasions and held for weeks or months, most recently in 2016.³²¹ During these periods she has been forcibly treated with drugs, some of which have serious negative side effects and have been used to punish her. Despite independent psychiatric evaluations in 2003 and in 2017 that found she does not suffer from schizophrenia, doctors imposed a diagnosis of schizophrenia and, in 2006, a court declared her mentally incompetent, stripping her of all legal rights and ordering mandatory outpatient treatment.³²² The authorities have denied her an exit visa to travel outside the country, including for medical reasons. In response to her most recent request, an

³¹⁸ See Freedom House, "Freedom of Association Under Threat: The New Authoritarians' Offensive Against Civil Society – Uzbekistan," available at <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-association-under-threat-new-authoritarians-offensive-against-civil-society-2> (accessed August 22, 2017); and The International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL), "Civic Freedom Monitor: Uzbekistan," last updated May 26, 2017, available at <http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/uzbekistan.html> (accessed August 22, 2017). 2. The Human Rights Committee has expressed concern about unreasonable registration requirements for public associations, termination of registration of international organizations, and other obstacles to the work of human rights nongovernmental organizations," and has called on Uzbekistan to bring its regulations and practice into full compliance with the Covenant. Human Rights Committee Concluding Observations on the Fourth Periodic Report of Uzbekistan, CCPR/C/UZB/CO/4, August 17, 2015, para. 25.

³¹⁹ Letter No. 5-517/3 from Sh. Mamatov, first deputy department head, Tashkent directorate of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Uzbekistan to Elena Urlaeva, December 9, 2014. A copy of the letter is on file with the Uzbek-German Forum.

³²⁰ See for example: "Uzbekistan: Brutal Police Attack On Activist," Human Rights Watch press release, June 4, 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/06/04/uzbekistan-brutal-police-attack-activist> (accessed October 4, 2017); See Uzbek-German Forum and Human Rights Watch, "We Can't Refuse to Pick Cotton" - Forced and Child Labor Linked to World Bank Group Investments in Uzbekistan, 27 June 2017, http://uzbekgermanforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/REPORT_Uzbekistan_2017-27-06.pdf (accessed September 29, 2017), p. 83; and "Uzbekistan: Activists Beaten, Detained," Human Rights Watch press release, September 24, 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/09/24/uzbekistan-activists-beaten-detained> (accessed October 4, 2017).

³²¹ Human Rights Watch news release, "Uzbekistan: Dissident in Psychiatric Detention," April 11, 2001, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2001/04/11/uzbekistan-dissident-psychiatric-detention> (accessed February 15, 2018); Human Rights Watch, Human Rights Watch World Report 2002 - Uzbekistan, 17 January 2002, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3c46e92d28.html>; "Persecution of Human Rights Defenders in Uzbekistan," Human Rights Watch, May 1, 2003, http://pantheon.hrw.org/legacy/background-der/eca/uzbeko50103-bck.htm#_ftn16; "Europe and Central Asia: Summary of Amnesty International's Concerns in the Region, July – December 2005," Amnesty International, AI Index: EUR 01/007/2006, p. 82. "Uzbekistan: Psychiatric Punishment Used to Quash Dissent," Human Rights Watch press release, October 19, 2005, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2005/10/19/uzbekistan-psychiatric-punishment-used-quash-dissent>; "Правозащитница Елена Урлаева рассказала о причинах ее задержания и помещения в психбольницу [Rights Defender Elena Urlaeva Recounted the Reasons for Her Detention and Psychiatric Commitment]," Fergana.ru, March 3, 2017, <http://www.fergananews.com/news/26097>.

³²² Decision in Abstentia, Mirabad interdistrict civil court, Tashkent, Case No. 1-1109/06, August 24, 2006. A copy of the decision is on file with the Uzbek-German Forum.

Interior Ministry officer told her that they do not have to provide a reason for denying her a visa because she is mentally incompetent.³²³

Eshonkulova has also faced reprisals for her human rights work, including a fine of 10 million soum (approximately \$1250) for holding solo pickets to protest corruption.³²⁴ Court bailiffs have come six times to the apartment of Eshonkulova's daughter and son-in-law in Tashkent where Eshonkulova has been living, to confiscate personal property to pay the fine. Three bailiffs conducted a search of the apartment on November 17, 2017 and searched the apartment from 7:30 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. One of the bailiffs told Eshonkulova's daughter that they would leave if she turned over her mother's notebook and mobile phone, which contained information from her monitoring of forced labor. In total, bailiffs repossessed four laptop computers, five cameras, several flash drives, and a modem, in addition to Eshonkulova's daughter's personal property, such as televisions, furniture, and a heater.³²⁵ Eshonkulova cannot obtain an exit visa, which is required to travel abroad, because she cannot obtain a legal residency registration, which she believes is in retaliation for her human rights work. Authorities have also repeatedly denied an exit visa to Eshonkulova's daughter, who has applied five times in the past four years, apparently in retaliation for her advocacy on behalf of Eshonkulova.³²⁶

Uktam Pardaev, a human rights defender from Jizzakh who had monitored forced labor including for the Uzbek-German Forum, remained under the terms of a suspended sentence throughout the 2017 harvest. The conditions, imposed in January 2016 after his conviction in a flawed trial on politically-motivated charges, were removed by a court in April 2018 for good behavior. Pardaev risked prison if found to have violated the conditions of his release, which he believes the authorities could have arbitrarily used against him for speaking out about human rights violations.³²⁷

Journalist and human rights defender Dmitry Tikhonov documented labor and human rights abuses connected to cotton production for several years, including as a monitor for the Uzbek-German Forum. He regularly provided information to the ILO and World Bank. In December 2015 Tikhonov was forced to flee Uzbekistan after his home office was set on fire. He still faces spurious charges that he believes are in retaliation for his human rights work.³²⁸

³²³ Uzbek-German Forum interview with Elena Urlaeva, Tbilisi, Georgia, June 10, 2017.

³²⁴ Correspondence between Malohat Eshonkulova and the Uzbek-German Forum, March 26, 2018.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ "Uzbekistan: Rights Defender's Work Impeded," Human Rights Watch press release, February 9, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/02/09/uzbekistan-rights-defenders-work-impeded> (accessed October 9, 2017); "We Can't Refuse to Pick Cotton," p. 81.

³²⁸ "Uzbekistan: Activists Beaten, Detained," Human Rights Watch press release, September 24, 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/09/24/uzbekistan-activists-beaten-detained> (accessed October 4, 2017); "Uzbekistan: Human Rights Defender's House Burned Down as Government Silences Him with Charges," Cotton Campaign press release, October 29, 2015, <http://www.cotton-campaign.org/home-of-human-rights-defender-burned-down-as-government-silences-him-with-charges.html> (accessed October 4, 2017); "We Can't Refuse to Pick Cotton," p. 80.

Labor and human rights activist Fakhridin Tillayev was sentenced to eight years in prison on spurious charges after a trial marred by serious due process violations. Before his arrest, Tillayev and fellow activist Nuriddin Jumaniyazov had attempted to establish an independent labor union. Tillayev has made credible allegations of torture in custody. Jumaniyazov, sentenced to six years together with Tillayev, died in prison of complications related to diabetes on December 31, 2016, information only made public in June 2017.³²⁹

The Uzbek government has resisted remedying harassment or legal penalties against activists in retaliation for their legitimate human rights work. In response to a letter from the Cotton Campaign expressing concern that monitors and activists faced politically-motivated retaliation and requesting the government take steps to provide remedies, the Uzbek Ambassador to the U.S. called some of the allegations “absurd” and stated that the activists committed “specific offenses and were brought to justice in compliance with all procedural requirements.”³³⁰

³²⁹ “Cotton Campaign outraged at death of Uzbek labor rights activist,” Cotton Campaign, June 22, 2017, <http://www.cottoncampaign.org/jumaniyazovrsquos-death.html> (accessed February 14, 2017).

³³⁰ Cotton Campaign letter to Uzbek Ambassador Javlon Vakhabov, December 7, 2017; Vakhabov response to the Cotton Campaign, February 1, 2018.



Transcript of cotton meeting held by Nematulla Abdullaev, *hokim* of the Parkent district of Tashkent region

(November 1, 2017) **The transcript is based on an audio recording of the meeting provided by the head of an organization who was present and provided the recording to Ozodlik (the Uzbek service of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty)**

Warning: contains offensive language

Abdullaev: Are you hitting back now or what? I will disembowel you, any of you sluts. Whores, do you think you are allowed to do anything unless I say it, you sluts. Move your asses and make sure you send your people to pick cotton. Real people should pick cotton from now on! Stop tampering with reports and figures, fuck you, you sluts. I told you about this 50 times. You make promises like assholes. You go to the fields for five minutes and then tamper with reports, you whores.

It was mentioned at yesterday's session. Here it is. It says that Parkent District also contributed to the dismissal of the governor and the chief prosecutor of the Tashkent Region from their posts, whores. It says they could not provide people to pick cotton, fuck you.

Have you read this or not? Those who were present at that meeting, read it out for them. Where is Zokir, the whore. A deputy, whore, and where is Dadamatov from a neighbourhood, the whore, who speaks about logistics like a dick.

It will be the same this year too. I'm telling you again, you whores. You all stay here. No one is leaving. Is it 17 minutes past ten pm? It is half past ten now. I will talk to you now. I do not care whether it is 9 or 10 o'clock at night, I will talk to you personally myself, so make sure your asses are clean, fuck you. You can shove your current reports up your asses.

You will bring your reports here, no matter whether it is ten or eleven o'clock at night. From now on, I will be receiving your reports myself. Sluts, this report says that 74 tons of cotton was transferred to Bakhtiyor, you sluts. In fact it is 41 tons. Is that right? Who are you deceiving, you sluts? Go and ask Bakhtiyor! Here, you wrote to the president that there was no one from the prosecutor's office, you whore. This is you, slut, you have no control, you whore. Why have you come here if you have not picked the daily required amount of cotton, you prick, you slut?

Why has he not come, you whore? Fuck you, you whore! You have also contributed to this, you whore, to the dismissal of the governor of the region, you whore, to the dismissal of the chief prosecutor. You make empty promises, you whore. You are the head of a big enterprise, and why do you report that you have sent this number of people to pick cotton, you prick? Work if you can, if you can't, fuck you, you whore.

The meeting lasted 45 minutes. The full transcript of the meeting can be found here: <http://harvestreport.uzbekgermanforum.org/uzbek-official-unleashes-torrent-of-abuse-at-cotton-meeting/>

The process of organizing groups to collect cotton to prevent detriment to or loss of harvest in 2017

1. The period of collecting cotton in the main areas of the regions and in the Republic of Karakalpakstan will be commenced as soon as 75-80% of cotton bolls of the yield plan open up.

2. A process of collecting cotton is based on organizing groups of people. The right to participate in the cotton collection is primarily given to farm workers and their family members who are at least 18 years old, as well as the so-called “unorganized population” living in this area, including employees of organizations, students of higher education institutions recommended by chairs of mahallas and public associations. It is strictly prohibited to involve school pupils.

3. The number of groups of cotton pickers is determined by the area planted for cotton. If one cotton picker collects 50 kg of cotton in one day, he or she collects 1 ton of cotton in 20 days.

If an average yield of the field is 3000 kg per hectare of land, then for a total of 3 tonnes of cotton collected by one cotton collector from this area, **three cotton collectors should be assigned for 1 hectare.**

A head of the group is assigned for the group of the so-called “unorganized population” comprised of 20-30 collectors made up of mahalla activists. In the groups of the so-called “organized population” (enterprises, organizations, etc.), there is one head of the group for every 50 collectors.

Heads of groups are responsible for starting cotton collection on time, for fulfilling daily collection quotas, for a timely return from the fields, for ensuring that collectors do not leave the group until the end of the harvest, and for their safety.

4. The group leaders are appointed based on the recommendation of the heads of district sectors. Experienced, competent, active, honest and responsible employees (chairs of citizen meetings, heads of organizations, school and college principals, etc.) are appointed as group leaders. Aside from a group leader, every group has a person appointed for weighing and counting the cotton collected.

Every group has its own area for cotton collection, consisting of 50-55 hectares of the area planted for cotton, or 3-4 farms.

5. The groups’ leaders learn the cotton condition in the fields or on the farms assigned to them, and, in collaboration with farm managers, and with the approval of the Farmers Council, develop and approve a daily schedule of cotton to be collected.

In addition, a daily quota is determined for every farmer. According to the schedule, prior to the commencement of cotton collection, a farm manager, a head of the cotton factory, and a group leader are required to provide access to hot water, tea, drinking water, and other resources, as well as the scales, trolleys, and other necessities.

6. A head of the group shall ensure a timely, i.e. same day transport of trolleys loaded with collected raw cotton to collection points. He shall also inform district headquarters of the amount of transported cotton and of the field from which the harvest will be carried out the next

day. Additionally, he must calculate a daily payment for cotton collectors and provide payment for cotton collected every five days (or every day, if necessary).

A district hokim, together with the heads of cotton factories and farms, will develop a reward system for leading collectors.

7. There must be a 10-day gap between the first and the second harvests, and at least five days between the rest of them. In this case, an overall harvest will not exceed 30-35 days. Most importantly, it is necessary to take into account that crops shall be planted on main areas between the rows of cotton. In the areas under their supervision, heads of groups are accountable for cotton collection up until the very last boll.

8. For a robust organization of cotton collection and the coordination of groups' work, an information calculating center on cotton collection will be organized. It will appoint heads of groups and allocate certain land parcels under their supervision.

Along with the heads of farms, the center will supply a group with necessary equipment: aprons, scales, trolleys, kazans [large cooking pots – ed.], and fireplaces.

Every collector shall be given two aprons, one trolley per 40-50 collectors, casing and scales, one tractor, a water delivering vehicle, and other equipment during the first harvest, there must be continuous communication with heads of groups via mobile phone.

9. A district information calculating center must make a written report about the collected cotton, as well as the amount of cotton submitted to collection points by heads of groups by 10 pm, and send a fax (using a special form) to a regional information calculating center by 11 pm.

10. There will be two persons appointed for weighing and counting the collected cotton. Together with a farm representative, he will weigh the collected cotton and calculate the amount of cotton collected daily. These persons, along with a farm representative, are personally responsible for transporting and submitting trolleys loaded with cotton to collection points all on the same day, and for paying collectors every five days.

11. District information calculating centers coordinate all group activities.

They take all necessary measures for a cohesive and organized cotton season.

Before the beginning of the season:

- Regardless of the type of ownership, the center must collect and check the condition of the equipment used in the process of cotton collection;
- Provide tractors and trailers with maintenance, necessary spare parts, tires, and other equipment;
- Guarantee continuous payment to cotton collectors every five days together with regional banks;
- Create conditions for welfare and recreation, transport, health care, and other conditions for cotton collectors;
- Develop and deliver official various papers, journals, reports and information forms, related to the collection and submission of cotton;
- A head of the district cotton headquarters, i.e. a district hokim, is responsible for groups of collectors and timely and correct gathering of operative and statistical data on cotton.

12. Cotton-processing factories will receive and unload vehicles loaded with raw cotton brought from farms as soon as possible.

13. District statistics departments must control the registration of submitted cotton according to submission forms PK-17, and strictly preclude additions.

14. During the cotton harvest seasons, the information calculating center on cotton collection must report farms that do not accurately fulfill their contractual obligations and take necessary measures.

"APPROVED"
District hokim

_____ 2017
" " " 2017
" " " 2017

INFORMATION on the organization of cotton pickers' units, designated farms, area of cotton collection, yield, number of pickers and heads of units for timely completion of cotton harvesting in 2017 in the X district.

№	Group number	Attached to the Unit						Head of the Unit			Name of neighborhood	Total, tonnes	Deputy Head of the Unit					
		Farm name	Area of cotton	Yield centner-ha	Total yield,tonne	Unit, tonnes	Number of collectors	Name of the Head	Position	Telephone			Name of the Deputy	Position	Telephone			
District hokim's (governor's) sector																		
1	101	Farm №1					83	Head1	Chair of neighborhood (mahalla)				Deputy Head1	Secretary of mahalla				
2	102	Farm №2					89	Head2	Chair of mahalla				Deputy Head2	Principal of school xx				
3	103	Farm №3					74	Head3	Chair of mahalla				Deputy Head3	Teacher of school xx				
4	104	Farm №4					100	Head4	Chair of mahalla				Deputy Head4	Secretary of mahalla				
5	105	Farm №5					100	Head5	Chair of mahalla				Deputy Head5	Deputy Principal of				
6	106	Farm №6					110	Head6	Principal of school xx				Deputy Head6	mahalla activist				
7	107	Farm №7								130,0	Head7	Principal of school xx				Deputy Head7	Teacher of school xx	
8	108	Farm №8					130,0	Head8	Principal of school xx				Deputy Head8	Teacher of school xx				
9	109	Farm №9								80	Head9	Secretary of mahalla				Deputy Head9	Secretary of kishlak citizens' council	
10	110	Farm №10					90	Head10	Principal of school xx				Deputy Head10	Principal of school xx				
11	111	Farm №11					90	Head11	Chair of mahalla				Deputy Head11					
12	112	Farm №12					90	Head12	insurance company employee				Deputy Head12	mahalla activist				
13	113	Farm №13					130,0	Head13	Principal of school xx				Deputy Head13	school guard				
14	114	Farm №14								90	Head14	Chair of mahalla				Deputy Head14	Principal of school xx	
15	115	Farm №15					85	Head15	Chair of mahalla				Deputy Head15	Deputy Principal of school xx				
16	116	Farm №16					84	Head16	Secretary of mahalla				Deputy Head16	Secretary of mahalla				
17	117	Farm №17					90	Head17	Chair of mahalla				Deputy Head17	Secretary of mahalla				
18	118	Farm №18					101	Head18	Chair of mahalla				Deputy Head18	Principal of school xx				
19	119	Farm №19					153,0	Head19	Head of the market				Deputy Head19	Deputy Principal of school xx				
20	120	Farm №20								80	Head20	Chair of mahalla				Deputy Head20	Teacher of school xx	
21	121	Farm №21								82	Head21	Chair of mahalla				Deputy Head21	Secretary of mahalla	
22	122	Farm №22											85	Head22	Chair of mahalla			

Report from the conference call with the governor of Samarkand region.

The governor of Samarkand Region again held a conference call on 8 September 2017. I took part in it from Narpay. The meeting discussed the preparations for the cotton harvest campaign in the various districts of the region. The heads of the district administration were harshly criticized. The governor of the region insulted them using offensive language. The meeting continued until half past midnight. Among other things, the governor said: “Why are some heads of departments missing from my meeting? You should have brought them in here in handcuffs if necessary, you halfwits!” He gave the following order to the heads of the district administrations and police bosses: „Disembowel” the heads of departments who are absent from the meeting! I will take responsibility if something happens.“

„The heads of organizations, chairmen of neighborhoods and you farmers, arrange the places for your deployments to live and sort out all the living conditions. You all are being paid!” Tell the cotton-pickers not to hold any sort of ceremonies and weddings during the cotton harvest campaign. If you see anyone leaving the cotton field before 6pm, break their legs. I do not care whether they have a child or someone else in the house, they should all be in the field!”

„I will be telling you this over and over again by holding conference calls until you lazy people (he means the heads of district administrations, farmers, police bosses and prosecutor’s offices), improve your work. I will be following you everywhere!” „You will either improve your work or we will be holding meetings like this till one or two o’clock in the morning.“

He made the following remarks to the head of Narpay District administration:

„How many petrol stations are there in Narpay?”

The head of Narpay District administration: „There are 12“.

The governor: „Tell those gangs of thieves who own filling stations to build field camps for cotton-pickers - they can afford it. If they refuse, turn off their gas and electricity supplies. That will be a lesson for them. No one has the right to be indifferent to the cotton harvest campaign. Let the farmers provide the cotton pickers with potato, carrots, tomatoes and turnips. They won’t lose much even if they have to sacrifice one of their bulls as well. If anyone refuses to pick cotton during the campaign, the chairmen of neighborhood committees will handcuff them and bring them to the cotton field. Apart from those who are under 18, pregnant or mentally disabled, it is compulsory for everyone. Over.“

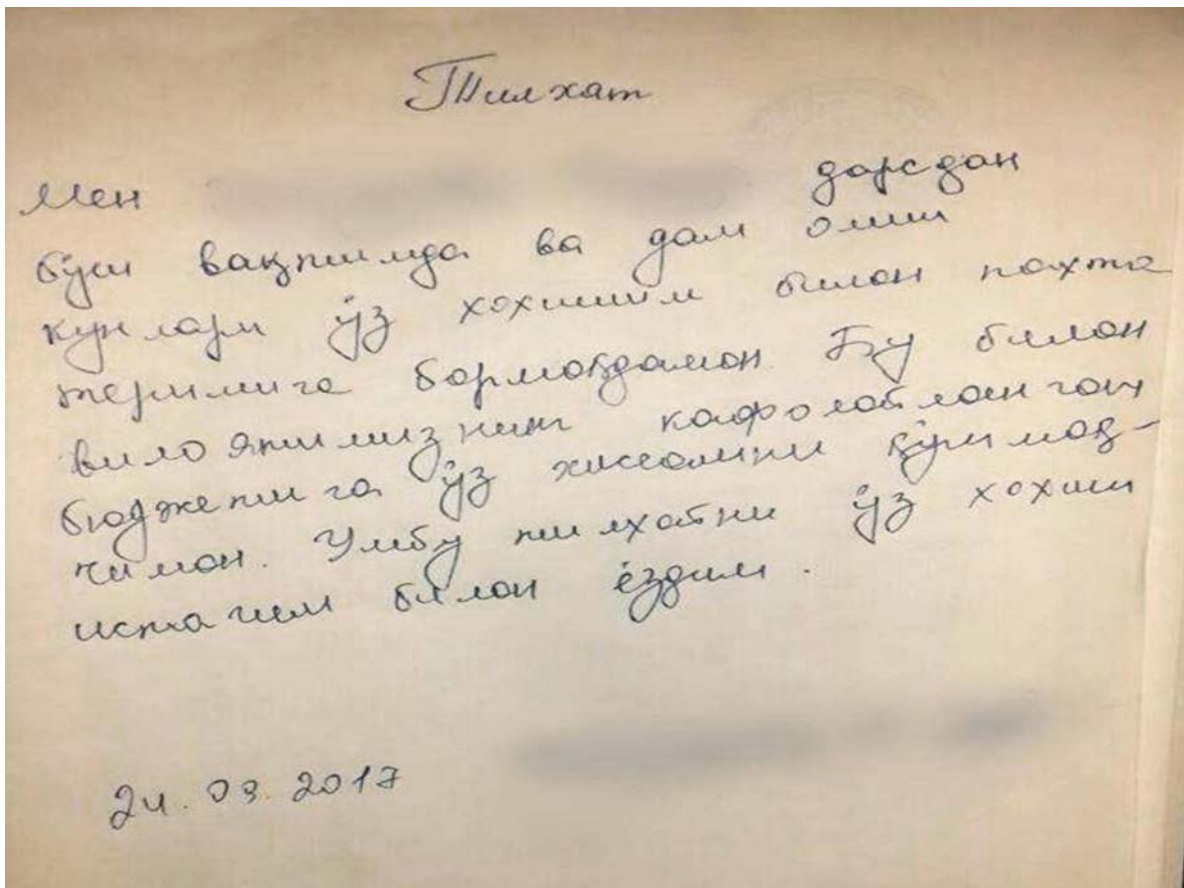
Addressing his remarks to the heads of universities, he said, “All your students will go to pick cotton. Above all you will provide me with the list of all students, masters students, and post-graduate and PhD students, as well as teachers and what you call associate professors and professors. They will all pick cotton! No one will be visiting Samarkand until the cotton-harvest target is met. If the private cars of the heads of organizations are spotted, they will be arrested. The traffic police has been warned about that. Over.”

Addressing officials of Narpay and Pakhtachi districts, he continued, „If Narpay and Pakhtachi districts fail to meet their targets, you had better not return to Samarkand. I will not allow you to work. The nearest place is Navoi Region. You can go there and find a job for yourselves. It is forbidden to send school and college teachers and medical staff to pick cotton by force. But

you tell them to write down that they will be picking cotton voluntarily. Do I have to teach you this too? Let all the heads of construction companies repair the places where cotton-pickers will stay. Imprison them if they refuse to do so. I have thousands of reasons to make sure that they will spend their lives in prison. Because many shortcomings will be revealed if their business activities are thoroughly inspected.“

Postscript:

Since yesterday, the governor’s office has been giving verbal orders to the heads of districts and regional administrations to appeal in writing to the governor’s office with the following letter: „We ask you to provide practical assistance to take part in the cotton-harvest campaign of 2017 of our own free will and based on the initiative of our staff“. All organizations across the region were informed of this today by phone too. There were even warnings that „if you do not file such a letter of initiative, the governor will cut your head off“. Secondary schools and colleges have also been warned about this. Everyone has been asked to write this letter of initiative. It has been reported that at least 50 per cent of the staff should take part in picking cotton.




Statement

I, (name erased), collect cotton in my free time after classes and on the weekends voluntarily. By doing this, I want to contribute to the guaranteed budget of our region. This receipt has been written voluntarily.

September 24, 2017

Signature erased



Activists Elena Urlayeva and Malokhat Eshonkulova observed on October 7-8, 2017 how pupils of schools and colleges collected cotton in the Nishan district of the Kashkadarya region. The activists were accompanied by employees of the district hokimiyat (administration). They were approached in the field by a woman named Feruza who was picking cotton and complained to Urlaeva that she had not received payment since September 11. Since that time, she had collected 1 ton and 700 kg of cotton. Local officials ordered the farmer to pay the woman, which he then did. However, after the activists returned to Tashkent, Feruza called Urlaeva and said that she had been beaten by another cotton grower, who was working with the farmer, because of her complaint. She also said that the farmer, Saidali Tursunov, whose fields the activists had visited, beat a cotton weigher named Siroj, who had initially invited the activists to the field.

UGF

May, 2018