

**STOP FORCED
AND CHILD LABOUR
IN THE COTTON INDUSTRY
OF UZBEKISTAN!**

June 19, 2012

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Clinton:

We write to express our sincere disappointment that the State Department once again did not downgrade Uzbekistan to Tier III in the *2012 Trafficking in Persons Report*, and we call on the U.S. government to urge the Uzbek government to immediately invite the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to conduct unfettered monitoring of the 2012 cotton harvest. In 2011 and years prior, the Uzbek government-controlled system of cotton production forced more than a million adults and children to pick cotton. We are disheartened by the disconnect between the failure to downgrade Uzbekistan and the Uzbek government's continued and systematic use of forced labor, repression of its citizens who attempt to monitor the situation, and overall denial of the problem.

In 2011, the State Department exercised its authority to waive an automatic downgrade of Uzbekistan to Tier III for Trafficking in Persons (TIP), citing a written and funded plan of action from the government of Uzbekistan. Since then, the Uzbek government continued to implement its forced labor cotton production system, consistently denied the existence of forced labor, and silenced citizen monitors. According to reports from non-governmental organizations working in Uzbekistan and academic studies, provincial government offices (*khokimiyats*) shut down schools and mobilized children and adults -- including employees of a General Motors plant -- to meet the 2011 harvest quotas. According to Ambassador George Krol, with whom we met recently at the Global Chiefs of Missions Conference, the mobilization of adults and children continues to be the prevalent practice in Uzbekistan, and the new inter-ministerial committee of the Uzbek government had not done much. To the contrary, after working with UNICEF in 2011, the Fergana provincial governor attempted to establish and implement systematic monitoring of the harvest, and the Uzbek government dismissed him.

Further indication of the Uzbek government's lack of political will to address this issue has been its continuous and relentless crackdown on independent civil society activists who attempt to monitor the use of forced and child labor in the cotton sector -- in 2011 including Elena Urlaeva, Gulshan Karaeva, and Nodir Akhatov, who was again recently attacked for her activism. International non-governmental organizations and foreign media outlets are prevented from operating in Uzbekistan to support Uzbek civil society and report on forced labor and other egregious human rights abuses. The Uzbek government has also failed to follow the recommendations of the tripartite ILO supervisory system to accept a high level monitoring mission and avail itself to technical assistance from the ILO.

Next year the State Department will no longer have the authority to waive downgrading Uzbekistan to Tier III status. Currently, Uzbekistan does not meet the standards of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act for inclusion in the Tier II category. Therefore, this fall's harvest represents the last chance for the kind of real progress necessary before the State Department is required to downgrade Uzbekistan, under the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act. The minimum step the government of Uzbekistan should take to avoid that outcome is to invite the ILO to monitor the 2012 cotton harvest. We understand that for ILO monitoring to proceed in the fall, the Uzbek government needs to expedite an official invitation to the ILO. We call on the U.S. government to urge the Uzbek government to demonstrate its intent to abide by its international

commitments to end forced labor and child labor by immediately inviting the ILO into Uzbekistan to conduct unfettered monitoring of the 2012 cotton harvest. In the wake of the regrettable failure to downgrade Uzbekistan to Tier III in the 2012 *Trafficking in Persons Report*, it is all the more important that the administration conveys a strong and unequivocal message in this regard.

We understand that you have a number of important issues to consider with respect to Uzbekistan, but we firmly believe that human rights, including forced labor, forced child labor, and human trafficking, are fundamental concerns that cannot be ignored.

Sincerely,

The Cotton Coalition:

Advocates for Public Interest Law
South Korea



American Apparel and Footwear Association
United States of America



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



American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
United States of America



Anti-Slavery International (ASI)
United Kingdom



Aquinas Associates
United States of America



Article 19
United Kingdom



Association for Human Rights in Central Asia
France



Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans
Australia



Calvert Investment Management Inc.
United States of America



The Child Labor Coalition
United States of America



Center for Reflection, Education and Action
United States of America



Clean Yield Asset Management
United States of America



Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes
United States of America



Eileen Fisher
United States of America



Environmental Justice Foundation
United Kingdom



Eurasian Transition Group
United States of America and European Union



European Centre for Constitutional and Human Rights
Germany



**EUROPEAN CENTER FOR
CONSTITUTIONAL AND
HUMAN RIGHTS**

Human Rights Watch
United States of America



International Labor Rights Forum
United States of America



Marianist Province of the US
United States of America

National Consumers League
United States of America

National Council of Jewish Women of Australia Ltd.
Australia

National Retail Federation
United States of America

NorthStar Asset Management, Inc.
United States of America

Open Dialog Foundation
Poland

Open Society Foundations
United States of America

Progressive Asset Management, Inc.
United States of America

Responsible Sourcing Network
United States of America

Retail Leaders Industry Association
United States of America

Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia
United States of America

Solidarity Center
United States of America



OTWARTY DIALOG



STOP THE TRAFFIK
Australia



U.S. Association of Importers of Textiles & Apparel
United States of America



Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania
Australia



Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights
Germany



World Fair Trade Organizations (WFTO)
Netherlands



cc: Hilda L. Solis, Secretary of Labor
William J. Burns, Deputy Secretary of State
Robert O. Blake, Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs
Michael H. Posner, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor
George Krol, United States Ambassador to the Republic of Uzbekistan
Luis CdeBaca, Ambassador-at-Large, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons