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# **COTTON CAMPAIGN**

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## **END FORCED LABOR IN CENTRAL ASIA**

June 30, 2016

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

Dear Secretary Kerry:

We write to commend the U.S. Department of State's decisions to downgrade the governments of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to Tier 3 in the 2016 Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP), decisions we believe accurately reflect the facts on the ground we witnessed while monitoring last fall's cotton harvest in the two countries. We urge the U.S. government to use the Report to press the Uzbek and Turkmen governments to take meaningful steps to end the use of state-sponsored forced labor.

We thank the Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human Rights, the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, the Bureaus of Human Rights and South and Central Asian Affairs, Ambassador Spratlen and her team at the U.S. embassy in Tashkent and Ambassador Mustard and his team at the embassy in Ashgabat for their ongoing efforts to persuade the governments of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to end forced labor. We applaud the U.S. government's decision to downgrade the two countries to Tier 3 as an important step in furthering those efforts.

We believe that as a next step the United States should immediately communicate to the authorities in Tashkent and Ashgabat that if they wish to avoid sanctions available under the TVPA for Tier 3 Countries, they need to take concrete steps to address the problem of state-organized forced labor prior to the start of this fall's cotton harvest. Such efforts could include: enforcing laws prohibiting forced labor, including by instructing officials at all levels of government to refrain from using coercion to mobilize citizens to work in the cotton fields and prosecuting all officials who do; ending mandatory quotas and penalties against farmers who do not fulfil them; raising and eventually freeing cotton procurement prices; permitting citizens to report human rights violations in the cotton sector without fear of retaliation; and ending the harassment of activists monitoring labor practices during the harvest.

In the case of Uzbekistan, we urge the United States to continue to use its voice and vote at the IMF, the World Bank Group and the Asian Development Bank to block any new loans in the agriculture or education sectors until the government demonstrates meaningful progress to end forced labor. The United States should also press the World Bank and ADB to suspend projects when forced labor occurs in the project areas, ensure fully independent third-party monitoring of compliance with core labor conventions, establish confidential and accessible grievance mechanisms that produce effective remedies for forced-

labor victims, and engage the Uzbek government to reform the root causes of forced labor in the agriculture sector.

In light of increased information about risks of corruption in Uzbekistan, we also urge the United States to stress to American companies operating in Uzbekistan the importance of fulfilling their human rights due diligence responsibilities, including by declining to contribute to the cotton harvest. In light of increased evidence of companies becoming entangled in the Turkmen forced-labor system,<sup>1</sup> we urge the U.S. to enforce the Tariff Act for cotton goods from Turkmenistan and to stress to American companies operating in Turkmenistan and the apparel industry the importance of fulfilling their due diligence requirements with respect to human rights.

Again, thank you for making the decision to downgrade Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to Tier 3 in the 2016 Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP). We look forward to working with you towards our common goal of ending the use of government-orchestrated forced labor in the two countries' cotton fields.

For our part, the trade unions, companies, human rights NGOs, industry associations and investors that form the Cotton Campaign will continue efforts to raise corporate, public, governmental and international awareness of the problem and press the Uzbek and Turkmen authorities to implement their human rights commitments.

Sincerely,

The Cotton Campaign

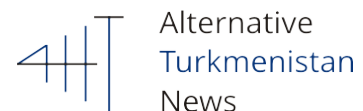
Advocates for Public Interest Law



Alliance to End Slavery & Trafficking



Alternative Turkmenistan News



AFL-CIO



American Apparel & Footwear Association



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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.cottoncampaign.org/us-customs-called-on-to-halt-imports-of-forced-labor-made-cotton-goods-from-turkmenistan.html>

American Federation of Teachers



Anti-Slavery International



Association for Human Rights in Central Asia



Australian Council of Trade Unions



Bennett Freeman, Cotton Campaign Steering Committee and former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Democracy, Human Rights and Labor



BOSTON COMMON  
ASSET MANAGEMENT, LLC

Boston Common Asset Management

Child Labor Coalition



CREA: Center for Reflection, Education and Action



Dana Investment Advisors



Daughters of Charity, Province of St Louise



Dignity Health



Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose



Dominican Sisters of San Rafael



Environmental Justice Foundation



Ethical Trading Initiative



The Eurasian Transition Group, e.V.



Friends Fiduciary Corporation



Inditex



INKOTA-netzwerk e.V.



International Labor Rights Forum



International Partnership for Human Rights



International State Crime Initiative



International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations



Jade Marketing Group & Onyx Design Group



Kids Organic Clothing Company



Korean Teachers and Education Workers Union (KTU)



Mercy Health



Mercy Investment Services



National Consumers League



No Slavery Australia



Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment



Open Society Foundations

Portfolio Advisory Board, Adrian Dominican Sisters



Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, Western American Province



Responsible Sourcing Network



Seventh Generation Interfaith Coalition for Responsible Investment



Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange



Solidarity Center



Sonen Capital



St. Joseph Health



Stop the Traffik



Sunshine Coalition



Tashabbus



Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania



United States Council for International Business



U.S. Fashion Industry Association



Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights



Walden Asset Management



Walk Free



CC: Pamela Spratlen, United States Ambassador to Uzbekistan  
Allan Mustard, United States Ambassador to Turkmenistan  
Thomas E. Perez, Secretary of Labor  
Sarah Sewall, Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights, Department of State

Nisha Desai Biswal, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, Department of State

Daniel N. Rosenblum, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Central Asia, South and Central Asia Bureau (SCA), Department of State

Sarah Fox, Special Representative for International Labour Affairs, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Department of State

Sara Aviel, United States Executive Director, World Bank

Susan Coppedge, Ambassador-at-Large, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, Department of State

Mr. R. Gil Kerlikowske, Commissioner, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Department of Homeland Security