



August 12, 2014

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

Dear Secretary Kerry:

Within weeks the annual cotton harvest will begin in Uzbekistan. Unless they can be persuaded to change course before then, the authorities in Tashkent will once again coercively mobilize more than a million of their own citizens to pick cotton. We appreciate that the U.S. government has made forced labor one of its top human rights issues in contacts with the government of Uzbekistan. We write today to urge that before the harvest begins you communicate to the government of Uzbekistan at the highest possible level that it needs to take concrete measures this fall to eradicate forced labor of children and adults in the cotton sector, including:

- Instructing government officials and citizens acting on behalf of the government not to coerce anyone to pick cotton and prosecuting anyone who does engage in such coercion;
- Ensuring farmers can recruit labor by: setting the price for raw cotton to exceed production costs, including labor; setting minimum wages for work in the cotton sector sufficiently high to attract voluntary labor; and publicly advertising on behalf of farmers to recruit unemployed citizens to work the harvest;
- Permitting unfettered access for the International Labour Organization (ILO) to monitor the use of forced and child labor during the upcoming harvest and to conduct a survey of the application of ILO Convention No. 105 on the Abolition of Forced Labour throughout the Uzbek economy, with the participation of the International Organisation of Employers, International Trade Union Confederation and International Union of Food Workers; and
- Allowing independent human rights organizations, activists and journalists to investigate and report on conditions in the cotton production sector without facing retaliation.

Although government-mobilized forced labor of adults and children remains the norm in the cotton sector in Uzbekistan, over the last two years international pressure has brought some results, including a decrease in the use of forced child labor and permission for limited ILO monitoring of child labor. It is essential to build on this momentum to prevent the process from stalling, as it did for several years after Uzbekistan ratified key ILO child labor conventions in 2008 and 2009. We urge you to build on the United States' leadership by urgently communicating to senior officials of the government of Uzbekistan the importance of making real progress this fall. For our part, the trade unions, industry associations, investors, and NGOs that form the Cotton Campaign will continue efforts to raise corporate, public, governmental, and international awareness of the problem and press the Uzbek authorities to implement their human rights commitments.

Sincerely,
The Cotton Campaign

Advocates for Public Interest Law



American Apparel and Footwear Association



American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations



American Federation of Teachers

Anti-Slavery International



Association for Human Rights in Central Asia



Calvert Investments



Child Labor Coalition



Christian Brothers Investment Services, Inc.



Environmental Justice Foundation



The Eurasian Transition Group, e.V.



International Labor Rights Forum



Korean Teachers and Education Workers Union



National Consumers League

Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment



National Council of Jewish Women of Australia



National Retail Federation



Open Society Foundations



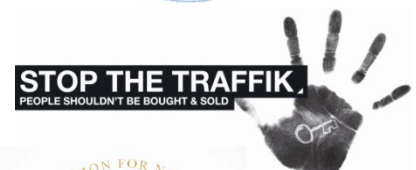
Retail Industry Leaders Association



Solidarity Center



Stop the Traffik



The Sunshine Coalition



Textile Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia



Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania



United States Fashion Industry Association



Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights



Walden Asset Management



Walk Free



cc: Thomas E. Perez, Secretary of Labor
William J. Burns, Deputy Secretary of State
Nisha Desai Biswal, Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs
Tom Malinowski, Assistant Secretary 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
Sarah B. Sewall, Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights
Dan Rosenblum, Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs