

A CHRONICLE OF FORCED CHILD LABOUR: REPORTS FROM THE UZBEKISTAN COTTON HARVEST 2010

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To date, over 30 world known international retail, apparel and trading companies, committed to Corporate Social Responsibility and Ethical and Fair Trade have stated their intention to discontinue using cotton produced by forced child labour from their supply chain. The Government of Uzbekistan responds that the campaign originates from its U.S. cotton supplying competitors. Yet, in 2008 due to international pressure, Uzbekistan was forced to ratify ILO Conventions 138 and 182 – Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and Worst Forms of Child Labour, and, in September 2008, adopted a resolution that banned the use of child labour. Just a week after this resolution, children were sent to cotton fields to work for one and a half months. In harvest 2009, the kids spent the longest period of time for years in the cotton fields, until the beginning of December. World prices for cotton soared during that season from 60 to 80 US cents per pound. As for today, cotton prices reached 89 US cents per pound.

The Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights has been following the situation of child labour in the Uzbek cotton industry for past 2 years. During this harvest season we will inform you on developments in order to once again examine how Uzbekistan honors its international commitments and its own laws that prohibit the use of child labour.

U.S. Places Uzbek Cotton on List of Products Produced Using Forced Child Labour.

The U.S. Department of Labor has updated its list of products manufactured from forced child labor, including Uzbekistan on this list. This decision to include Uzbekistan was made based on information from media reports as well as reports from human rights organizations.

In December 2009, a group of U.S. lawmakers urged the Obama administration to place restrictions on trade with Uzbekistan because of the use of forced child labor in the cotton industry. Five members of Congress sent a letter to the U.S. Trade Representative requesting that urgent measures be taken.

That same month, Uzbek President Islam Karimov signed another law that prohibits forced child labor. There are already several such laws in Uzbekistan, however,

human rights activists report that in reality little has changed, and that the adoption of such laws are mere smoke and mirrors.

Apart from Uzbekistan , the U.S. department of labour also blacklisted Tajik cotton for child labour, although the situation there is not as harsh and widespread as in Uzbekistan and cotton campaigners never called for boycotting Tajik cotton.

In operational terms, the blacklist means that cotton from none of listed countries can be imported by US government for its federal needs.

Source: [BBC-Uzbek service](#), 21.07.2010; RFE/RL, 22.07.2010,

http://www.bbc.co.uk/uzbek/uzbekistan/2010/07/100721_cy_uzbek_cotton.shtml

http://www.rferl.org/content/US_Blacklists_Tajik_Cotton_Despite_Child_Labor_Ban/2106652.html

... However, AmCham President has a different view of Uzbek cotton. He plans to buy, manufacture it and trade it further. Possibly to US troops in Afghanistan.

The president of the US Chamber of Commerce in Uzbekistan, AmCham Uzbekistan, Donald Nicholson, told a news conference at the US Embassy in Tashkent on August 19 that his organization would not discontinue the purchase of Uzbek cotton because child labour is used in its production.

Asked by a journalist whether the US association of labour recommended businessmen not to use Uzbek cotton because of child labour concerns, Nicholson said that he was not a politician and he would continue to do business as long as it was profitable to make clothes from Uzbek cotton fibers.

Following this, he took the following question from a representative of Uzmtronom.com: “does that mean that to deal in mattresses stuffed with hair from Buchenwald is a normal business?” The translator translated, Nicholson shrugged his shoulders in a response that could only be understood as “why not?”

Mr. Nicholson led the delegation of American businessmen supported and facilitated by the U.S. Department of Defence to garner Uzbekistan 's support to supply U.S. troops in Afghanistan with necessary goods.

Sources: [Uznews.Net](#), 20.08.10; Uzmtronom.com, 20.08.2010

http://www.uznews.net/news_single.php?lng=en&cid=2&nid=14817

http://www.uzmetronom.com/2010/08/20/biznes_mozhno_delat_i_v_bukhenvalde.html

Positive Outlook on the Cotton Crop in Uzbekistan

The magazine “Cotton Outlook” which covers the world cotton industry, and is published in the UK , warns that there may be a shortage of cotton this season by as much as two million tons.

At this time, consumers in some cases pay more than one U.S. dollar per pound of cotton (including delivery) due to the limited supply in July, August, and September, according to “Cotton Outlook.” Even on July 21, the price of cotton remained at a minimum of 82.7 cents per pound, and is now sold at 85 centers per pound on the New York Stock Exchange.

“Cotton Outlook” notes that the lack of raw cotton this year is seen against the background of good harvests, which will be collected in cotton growing countries, including Uzbekistan.

Source: [Uznews.Net](http://uznews.net), 09.08.10 15:25

http://www.uznews.net/news_single.php?lng=ru&=hot&cid=2&nid=14646

Tashkent Cotton Fair to be held, as usually, in October

The Ministry for Foreign Economic Relations, Investment and Trade of the Republic of Uzbekistan has announced that the VI International Uzbek Cotton Fair will be held on October 13-14, 2010 in Tashkent.

In 2009, the fair was held at the same time of year. 252 companies registered to take part in that fair, including 38 from Europe, and 6 from US. Germany and UK were presented by 9 companies each, Switzerland by 8, France by 2, Latvia by 3, Lithuania by 2, etc.

Germany was presented by following companies: Banico; Comilla Spinning Mills LTD; Cotton Logistics Company AG; M&M Miltzer und Muench; Otto Stadlander GmbH; Rieter; RPL Tashkent; Textima Export & import GMBH; Younus Trading GMBH.

Switzerland was represented by Paul Reinhart AG; Bellatex; Ecom Agroindustrial; ICT Cotton Ltd; Louis Dreyfus Commodities Suisse; MSC Uzbekistan; SGS Tashkent ltd; Syngenta Agro AG.

From UK, the following companies registered: Cargill Cotton ltd; Plexus cotton Ltd; Amin Invest; Arex Commerce LTD; Baumann Hinde and co ltd; Paxtaunteks konsalting LLC; Tagus; Wakefield; Inspekstion Services ltd; Xiang Gang jia ji You Xian Gong Si.

Some foreign companies were in fact created by Uzbek nationals. It is notable that shortly after the fair, Minister of Foreign Economic Relations Mr. Elyor Ganiev, according to some reports a former high ranking officer with the National Security Service, was decorated by President Karimov and promoted to the position of Deputy Prime Minister.

Sources: [Ministry for Foreign Economic Relations, MFER.uz](http://mfer.uz); [Ferghana.ru](http://ferghana.ru), 12.11.2009; our own information

<http://www.ferghana.ru/article.php?id=6367>

Uzbek Cotton and Children at an Exhibit at Free University of Berlin

Organized by the Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights (UGF) in cooperation with the University Library (UB), an exhibition titled “Erntezeit – Forced Child Labour in the Cotton Fields of Uzbekistan” is being held from August 4th to September 17th.

The exhibition shows photos taken by the documentary photographer Thomas Grabka in 2004, as well as new images from last year’s cotton harvest in 2009 taken by UGF. It was interesting that the Uzbek Embassy in Berlin responded to the exhibition, sending its representative who denied any wrongdoing on the part of Uzbekistan.

Source: [Uznews.net](http://uznews.net), 04.08.10; our own information.
http://www.uznews.net/news_single.php?lng=ru&cid=2&nid=14578

ILO Committee adopts critical conclusion on Uzbekistan

As part of the International Labour Conference's agenda, the ILO Committee on Application of Standards held a hearing in June 2010 on Uzbekistan's fulfilment of its obligations under Convention 182 on Worst Forms of Child Labour. The conclusions are critical of the situation in this country. The Committee noted that the report of the ILO Committee of Experts on the basis of which Uzbekistan was included in the agenda referred to 'comments from the International Organization of Employers (IOE) relating to the systematic and persistent use of forced child labour in the cotton fields of Uzbekistan for up to three months every year, as well as the substantial negative impact of this practice on the health and education condition of school children to participate in the cotton harvest.' The Committee noted that, although Uzbekistan's various legal provisions prohibited forced labour and the engagement of children in hazardous work, 'it remained an issue of grave concern.' The Committee urged the Government of Uzbekistan to accept an ILO high-level tripartite observer mission that would have full freedom of movement and timely access to all situations and relevant parties, including in the cotton fields in order to assess the implementation of Convention No.182. Finally, concerning the issue of insufficient data of children working in the cotton sector, the Committee suggested that the Government of Uzbekistan carry out a national household survey on child labour.

Source: [International Labour Organization](http://www.ilo.org), www.ilo.org.

Feel free to disseminate these reports further and post them on your websites.

More reading:

FAQ: <http://www.cottoncampaign.org/frequently-asked-questions/>

Academic view of the subject: <http://www.soas.ac.uk/ccac/events/cotton-sector-in-central-asia-2005/file49842.pdf>

Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights, 2010, <http://www.uzbekgermanforum.org/>