

## **A CHRONICLE OF FORCED CHILD LABOUR: REPORTS FROM THE UZBEKISTAN COTTON HARVEST 2011**

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### **Cotton campaign pushed a teenager to run away from home**

In late September, a 17-year-old student from the radio-technical school in Angren ran away from home as he did not want to pick cotton instead of studying. His current whereabouts are unknown.

In early September, the administration of the radio-technical school announced the mandatory participation of all students in the cotton harvest, said Dimitry Tichonow, a human rights activist

from Angren.

Those who for whatever reason could not or did not want to pick cotton were obliged to either hire a cotton picker or to pay between 200 to 300 thousand Soms per head (USD 80–120). Those who had a medical certificate that exempts them from agricultural work also had to pay, however only half of the amount.

The students were usually picked up at home by their school teachers, who explained to the students and their parents the necessity to participate in the cotton campaign. One of the teachers also went to Vladislav's house.

His mother explained to the uninvited guest that Vladislav will get a medical certificate, exempting him from cotton picking, and that she does not have the money, even not half of it, to pay the requested amount. She is raising her son without a father and does not have relatives who could offer financial support.

Knowing the purpose of the teachers' visit and that no money was left to pay the ransom, Vladislav radically decided on the question – he just run away from home. If he is not home means that nobody has to pay for him, not now and not in the future.

Vladislav's mother still does not know where he is and where he sleeps. The only thing she knows is that he is alive and healthy, because he recently phoned his mother. Presumably, he is in Tashkent.

Every year for many years now students from all colleges and schools in Angren are mobilized to pick cotton from September to November. This year's campaign is accompanied by extortions of money against parents and threats against those, "who do not understand".

Source: UzNews, 07.10.2011

[http://www.uznews.net/news\\_single.php?lng=ru&sub=hot&cid=4&nid=18099](http://www.uznews.net/news_single.php?lng=ru&sub=hot&cid=4&nid=18099)

### **While the West Refuses Uzbek Cotton, China is Actively Buying It**

Cotton from Uzbekistan and products made from it are not "fashionable" in the West, but have preserved its popularity in the East. We already reported that clothing manufacturers from Europe and the United States have signed a boycott against Uzbek cotton fibers produced through the use of forced child labour, and that European Union legislators voted against the preference of Uzbek textile products. It is against this background that China evolved into a leading buyer of the "white gold" from Uzbekistan, becoming simultaneously the largest exporter and importer of cotton worldwide.

A correspondent of the Uzbekistan National News Agency (UzA) talked with the extraordinary and plenipotentiary Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Uzbekistan, Zhang Xiao. The representative of Beijing sung praises on the Uzbek partnership.

"Uzbekistan became famous throughout the world for its high-quality and relatively inexpensive cotton fibers," said Zhang Xiao. "Uzbek cotton attracts the attention of experts from foreign countries on account of its high yield and quality. This is confirmed by the fact that Uzbekistan is the world's sixth largest producer and third largest exporter of cotton. Almost anywhere in the world one might see stitched clothing made from Uzbek cotton and other types of products."

We also remind that the 7<sup>th</sup> International Uzbek Cotton and Textile Fair opened in Tashkent on October 12<sup>th</sup>. According to the Chinese ambassador in Uzbekistan, during previous fairs around twenty Chinese trading companies and yarn manufacturing enterprises entered into contracts with Uzbek partners for the purchase of cotton. "In 2009-2010, China imported 250 000 tons of cotton fibers from Uzbekistan, while it already bought 94 000 tons of Uzbek cotton during the first 8 months in 2011," said the Chinese diplomat.

Source: Fergana, 10.10.2011

<http://www.fergananews.com/news.php?id=17422&mode=snews>

### **13 year old Bahodir - a victim of a car accident on his way back from the cotton field.**

A 7<sup>th</sup> grader from Chiroqchi District, Bahodir Paradaev, remains unconscious after a car accident which occurred on his way back from the cotton harvest 13 days ago.

Bahodir was struck by a car on September 24<sup>th</sup> while returning from cotton picking. According to reports given to Radio Liberty by Bahodir's father, Adham Paradaev, his son has been unconscious for the last 13 days.

«His teachers took him to the cotton field. They took him illegally, only on the basis of the command of the school principal and representatives from a local mayor's office. The school principal gave the order and took the boys to the field in his own car. He made them pick cotton and let them go at noon. On a central road a car of the brand Matiz, struck the kids from behind. Only my son was struck and injured. They took him to the hospital. This accident happened on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September since then my son remains unconscious. Doctors say he has a hematoma. He has been in a critical condition for already 13 days and without any changes. He is in a coma», says Ahmad Paradaev.

During the conversation with Radio Liberty the school principal Guzal Mustafaeva affirmed that Bahodir had an accident on his way back from the cotton field. However, the school principal is of the opinion that Bahodir became the victim of an accidental coincidence. According to her, school children were taken to the field for one day only for freely assistance (hasher).

«This is an accidental coincidence. Nobody wanted it to be this way. In the meetings we, "teachers and students were asked for voluntary help"; thus, we took children to the field as volunteers. It was supposed to be one day of volunteering during the weekend to help cotton pickers. Nobody forced any of the children to go to the field. Indeed, cotton is our national wealth, isn't it?» - says a school principal Guzal Mustafaeva.

The rights activist Gulshan Koraeva who is investigating the case, considers 13 year old Bahodir has fallen victim to the government's cotton policy.

Together with the parents of Bahodir, I have been in the hospital room #9. Bahodir's conditions are critical, he remains in a coma. Why should our children become victims of the cotton policy and become handicapped forever? Why are children sent to the cotton field?

«They shouldn't be sent to the field at all. I have been conducting an investigation which reveals that children older than 5<sup>th</sup> graders, and in some districts older than 7<sup>th</sup> graders are sent to the field», - says Gulshan Koraeva.

Source: Ozodlik, 10.11.2011

<http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/24354846.html>

## **Andijan cotton thieves were judged in mobile court.**

It has been reported that two residents of Izboskan were arrested while attempting to sell cotton to Kyrgyzstan.

According to information obtained from the Criminal Court of Izboskan, 30-year old Hurshidbek Abdusalolov sold cotton picked by himself to his co-villager Malika Ahmedova.

She, in her turn, was arrested by front-guards while attempting to sell cotton to customers from Kirghizstan.

«The case was reviewed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October. Malika Ahmedova was penalized with a fine in the amount of 10 minimal state salaries while Hurshidbek Abdusalolov only with the fine of 5 minimal state salaries», - said one of the workers in the Criminal Court of Izboskan in a talk with Radio Liberty.

.According to the information obtained from a local supervisor of the area, two residents which were arrested by front guardians have been judged in front of all villagers in mobile court. The local supervisor stated that the case was about 60 kg of cotton.

«This lady Malika obtained 13- 14 kg of cotton from this young man. Then, she got some more cotton from another minor. Thus, she was arrested while attempting to smuggle cotton», - said one of the local supervisors in a private talk with Radio Liberty.

Yoqubjon Bustonov, a farmer who had grown that 60 kg of cotton said that he was not at the cotton field when the incident occurred.

While requesting his talk with Radio Liberty not to be recorded and the incident not to become chit-chat, he stated that during a mobile court two arrested residents expressed their apologies and regrets in front of their co-villagers explaining the reason of crime to be a need and ignorance.

According to the observations of the population residing in the area of Andijan Region bordering with Kyrgyzstan the reason for attempted crime is that in Uzbekistan a kilo of picked cotton costs 150 sums while in Kyrgyzstan it is paid 500 sums per kilo of picked cotton.

Source: Ozodlik, 10.10.2011

<http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/24355160.html>

## **School-Children Forced to Pick Cotton in Andijan Region; Potemkin Fields for President.**

Authorities have begun to mobilize school-children in Andijan province for the cotton harvest, the Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights reports.

Starting October 6, children from Uzbekistan 's most densely populated province of Andijan were taken to pick cotton. Earlier, local administrators (the hokimiyat) had stated that this year, they would not force middle-school children to take part in the harvest.

But once again, the children were brought to the fields of farmers who in the past year could not manage to meet the state quota for cotton deliveries.

Children from grades 7 through 9 in the middle school (from ages 12 to 16) are now working in the fields. They are being paid 120 soums per kilogram of cotton, i.e. the equivalent of 5 cents per kilo.

Under instructions from the khokim, or local administrator, farmers who have school-children working in their fields must provide them with one hot meal a day (lunch) and clean drinking water.

But not all the farmers have the capacity to build temporary housing for the cotton-pickers, or to prepare them hot food, or to put a samovar on to boil in the fields. Most of the children are bringing food from home, and are putting down old newspapers by the side of the road to sit on and have their lunch.

In the local press in Andijan, there was a notice that as of October 1st, Andijan province had submitted 71 percent of its quota to the government. There is a lot of cotton left unpicked in the fields. Adults are able to pick about 100- 120 kg per day. They are paid 150 soums per kilogram of cotton (more than 5 cents per kg).

According to the state media, President Islam Karimov visited Andijan province from September 30-October 1, and it was reported that he went to inspect the cotton fields. Special fields were prepared for his visit, which had been sprayed with defoliants not long before that and no cotton-pickers were allowed in the area. But the field was left filled with snowy-white cotton bolls to show to the leader.

According to the available information, the harvest is expected to be completed before early November, that is, local people are hoping to gather in the whole crop before the onset of rains.

Source: Cotton Campaign, 11.10.2011

<http://www.cottoncampaign.org/2011/10/11/school-children-forced-to-pick-cotton-in-andijan-region-potemkin-fields-for-president/>

## **Anti-terrorism officers assist human rights campaigner**

Employees of the anti-terrorism department have helped Elena Urlaeva, leader of the Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan (PAU), to deliver a statement to the Procurator of her district on the use of child labour to harvest cotton in the regions of Uzbekistan and Karakalpakstan.

“We have to deal with the arbitrary actions of officials through legal channels, and this means taking our demand to the Procurator that people who are guilty of using children for cotton harvesting should be punished,” says Urlaeva.

On 11 October, Urlaeva went to deliver the PAU ’s statement in person to the duty Procurator’s office for signature.

“The Procurator, without worrying at all about being seen, threw the two copies of our statement in the waste bin,”

Employee of the anti-terrorism department persuaded the receptionists in the Procurator's Office to document the receipt of PAU statement said Urlaeva.

After this less-than-enthusiastic reception, the PAU leader organised a picket near the entrance to the Procurator General’s office.

Urlaeva says that employees from the anti-terrorism office of Mirzo-Ulugbek District Interior Ministry Office instantly arrived at the picket and did not, as usual, begin to load people into police cars but seemed interested in what was behind the demonstration.

When they found out about the refusal to read Urlaeva's statement, the police went to the Procurator General's building and persuaded the Procurator to take the statement out of the bin and to register the correspondence in the appropriate fashion.

"It would be great if the anti-terrorism department always helped us so effectively when we're dealing with these dismissive officials, then campaigners like us would have a little less work to do," says Urlaeva.

She believes that many officials in Uzbekistan pose as much of a threat to state security as terrorists, and that they are often obliged to perform their official tasks only with the help of the police.

Source: UzNews, 12.10.2011

[http://www.uznews.net/news\\_single.php?lng=en&sub=top&cid=3&nid=18124](http://www.uznews.net/news_single.php?lng=en&sub=top&cid=3&nid=18124)

## **Uzbekistan is preparing to sell 600 thousand tons of cotton**

### **The cotton fair is open**

The "Uzekspomarkaz" international cotton and textile fair of Uzbekistan has opened in Tashkent. According to the fair organizers, in total 660 representatives of 330 companies of 38 countries around the world are taking part in this fair.

Every year Uzbekistan grows around 3, 5 million tons of cotton and produces more than 1 million cotton fibres. Last year more than 600 thousand tons of cotton fibre was sold abroad and around 400 thousand tons of fibre was kept for internal usage.

According to the Uzbek Information Agency (UzA), last year Uzbekistan exported cotton in the amount of 500 mln dollars.

According to a staff member of the company "Uzinterimpeks", who is taking part in this fair, Uzbekistan is preparing to sell around the same amount of cotton abroad this year as well.

The three largest companies in Uzbekistan which work with cotton export—"Uzmarkazimpeks", Uzinterimpeks" and "Uzprommashimpeks" reserve the rights to sell Uzbek cotton to foreign companies.

The main clients of Uzbek cotton are companies, which are owned by Russia, China, Bangladesh, Iran, India, Pakistan, South Korea and the United Arab Emirates.

About 40 percent of Uzbek cotton is exported to Russia.

UzA reports that, 80 percent of the imported cotton by Bangladesh is bought from Uzbekistan. Last year Bangladesh bought 2,5 thousand tons of cotton from Uzbekistan. And this year the country has planned to sign a contract to buy 5 thousand tons of cotton fibre from Uzbekistan.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of September more than 60 world leading clothing companies announced boycott to Uzbek cotton in relation with forced child labour in cotton production. However, the boycott could not stop Uzbekistan from holding this cotton fair in Tashkent.

According to a staff member of the company “Uzinterimpeks” who did not want to introduce himself, mainly the same clients from Asian countries came to the Uzbek cotton fair this year as well.

Mihail a staff member of the Russian company “Rosko” says that he has absolutely no information about the use of child labour in cotton production in Uzbekistan and that for that reason it has been boycotted by the west.

Elena Urlaeva the head of the Alliance of Human Rights defenders of Uzbekistan who is conducting monitoring on use of child labour in harvesting cotton crop in Uzbekistan says that:

- The businessmen are not interested whose labour is being used in the cotton harvest. They are mainly interested in the quality of cotton and how much it costs for them. I am just so surprised why organizations which work with child’s rights are keeping silence. UNICEF in Uzbekistan is absolutely silent on this topic. They have not spoken out against the use of child labour in harvesting cotton in Uzbekistan so far. Ombudsman of Uzbekistan and other such organizations have not commented on child labour either,- says Elena Urlaeva.

Source: Ozodlik, 12.10.2011

<http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/24357653.html>

## **European Cotton Decision Unlikely to Change Uzbek Policies**

A decision by European Parliament’s foreign affairs committee to block trade concessions for Uzbek cotton is likely to prompt Tashkent to redirect exports of the commodity to other markets, experts say.

On October 4<sup>th</sup>, the committee voted against including cotton purchases from Uzbekistan in the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement the EU signed with the country in 1999. It cited the continuing use of child labour in cotton cultivation.

The decision means Uzbek cotton imports to the EU will not benefit from reduced tariffs.

Uzbekistan is the world’s fifth-largest cotton producer and third-largest exporter.

Pressure on Tashkent to curb child labour culminated in 2008 with a boycott imposed by four major western clothing and retail associations, which were joined by big chains like Tesco, Marks & Spencer and Gap.

Although formally banned by Uzbek national law, state-organised coercion of minors to pick the cotton crop has continued into autumn 2011. (See Child Labour Persists in Uzbek Cotton Industry on the current situation.)

In response to the boycott, Uzbekistan has shifted much of its sales from Europe to Asia and the Middle East, so that its cotton goes to China, Iran, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Turkey, South Korea and Vietnam, as well as Russia, a traditional market. China purchased more than 90,000 ton of Uzbek raw cotton in the first eight months of 2011.

Experts say Tashkent does not regard European markets as crucial, and are likely to pay little heed to the concerns raised in the European parliament.

Moscow-based expert Dmitry Verkhoturov said, "Judging by the programme to boost cotton processing within the country, Uzbekistan is already targeting markets in underdeveloped countries, to which it will sell cotton yarn and textile. In other words, semi-finished products at prices the buyers can afford."

Tashkent-based analyst Abdurahmon Tashanov noted that Uzbek cotton could still reach Europe as resales from Asian countries, further reducing the European Union's economic leverage.

He predicted that Uzbek cotton exports would grow and the use of child labour would continue.

Another commentator, who works to monitor Uzbekistan's compliance with its international human rights obligations, said sanctions and other mechanisms were ineffective because the authorities were unmoveable on certain issues. He drew a comparison with the sanctions the EU imposed after Uzbek security forces shot hundreds of protesters in the town of Andijan in 2005.

"These cases have one thing in common – they have no effect at all," he said. "Remember the sanctions imposed on Tashkent – it cut itself off [by boosting ties] with Russia and China, which made sanctions ineffective. The same thing will happen with the cotton issue."

Source: IWPR, 13.10.2011

<http://iwpr.net/report-news/european-cotton-decision-unlikely-change-uzbek-policies>

## **Shavkat Mirziyoev wants to produce cotton fibre inside Uzbekistan as much as possible**

According to what Shavkat Mirziyoev, the prime minister says, there is a plan to develop the textile industry in the next few years and re-produce the two third of the Uzbek cotton fibre inside the country.

Mr. Mirziyoev announced this plan in International Fair of Uzbek Cotton on Textile products opened in Tashkent. Apparently, at the moment the amount of cotton fibre reproduced in Uzbekistan consists more than 30 percent of the total.

If you look at some of the information, Uzbekistan produces 1- 1.2 million tons of cotton fibre per year. And it has been said that, last year during the cotton fair, 650 thousand tons of that amount was contracted to be sold abroad.

Bangladesh, Iran, China, South Korea, Moldova. United Arab Emirates, Pakistan, Russia, Turkey and Japan are the main clients of Uzbek cotton.

This is not the first time when the prime minister of Uzbekistan came up with such initiative. Shavkat Mirziyoev last year declared that by the 2015 the amount of reproduced cotton fibre in Uzbekistan will reach up to 70 percent.

This announcement of Uzbek government came out when the cost of the cotton in world market reached up the heights, which hasn't been seen for decades. Uzbek economy depends mainly on agriculture and farming and the main income of the budget comes from cotton trade.

According to what Jahongir Shosalimov, the Uzbek independent analyst of economy says, while the economic situation of the country is hard, budget shortcomings and financing the government expenses are quite urgent problems which have to be solved, it might be impossible to fulfil this initiative of prime minister.

At the same time, the analyst mentions the current condition of textile companies and highlights that the country does not have proper means to reproduce the planned amount of cotton fibre inside the country.

"For instance, Tashkent Textile Factory which had the facilities to reproduce large amount of cotton fibre has been bankrupted", says Jahongir Shosalimov.

However, according to the prime minister Shavkat Mirziyoev's reports, in the last five years the production of textile products in Uzbekistan was increased three times more.

The analyst notes that if this plan gets fully realised, that means in exchange for high profits from textile products, the country can decrease the cotton production and replace it with other agriculture products and most importantly, it will increase the profits of beneficiaries.

Source: BBC, 13.11.2011

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/uzbek/uzbekistan/2011/10/111013\\_cy\\_uzbek\\_cotton\\_prime\\_minister.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/uzbek/uzbekistan/2011/10/111013_cy_uzbek_cotton_prime_minister.shtml)

## **This year Tashkent university students were also sent to pick cotton**

Unlike previous years, students and staff members of government jobs in Tashkent city were taken to fields to pick cotton this year.

During the post Soviet period, the students used to stop the studies and go to cotton fields for 2-3 months, but it was partly stopped after Uzbekistan became independent and it was one of the main topics of media in criticizing the Soviet period.

It even reached to a point where the generation of the Independence era started dreaming of studying and living in Tashkent just for this reason of not to be sent to pick cotton.

But the initiative to go to pick cotton started by some universities last year in Tashkent has spread to almost all the universities this year. Tashkent students were all publicly sent to pick the "national wealth".

According to a student who studies in one of the universities in Tashkent, there is no more cotton left in the fields. He could only pick one kilo from morning till afternoon. The payment for the picked cotton will not even cover the expenses for the given food. But they have to go to the fields and stay there from early morning till the dawn. "They said they will reimburse the food expenses from our stipends, our daily food intake costs 2 thousand soms per day",- he said.

### **Reawakened traditions**

The tradition of going to pick cotton was started by the Tashkent Textile University. And this year almost everyone from this university is in the fields.

"Most of the students are picking cottons. We don't know why they are sent to cotton fields. We are just doing what we have been ordered to do",- said the staff member of the textile university, who answered the phone.

This year even the famous Uzbekistan National University and Tashkent Technology University students in Tashkent city were taken to the fields to pick cotton.

Surat Ikromov, the human rights defender from Tashkent says that this year the cotton campaign is much tougher than previous years. "It wasn't as tough as this year before. Many people who work for government jobs are also going to pick cotton, even the imams who work in mosques are going. This is the first time such thing happened",- says Surat Ikromov.

The authorities never explained the reasons why students are being sent to pick cotton. In most cases it is confidential who is picking the cotton or such reports are denied by them.

The observers say that the fact that schoolchildren, students and other layers of society are being forced to the fields to pick cotton means that Uzbek authorities care less than little

about their reputation in front of the international community. "Once I told an official that all these things are not good for Uzbekistan's reputation and asked his opinion. He answered that, it did not matter", he said.

"In other words, they don't even know to feel embarrassed about such situation. They think that people can talk about it but it will not stop us doing from what we are doing",- says Surat Ikromov.

Source: BBC, 13.10.2011

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/uzbek/uzbekistan/2011/10/111013\\_cy\\_tashkent\\_cotton.html](http://www.bbc.co.uk/uzbek/uzbekistan/2011/10/111013_cy_tashkent_cotton.html)

## **Uzbek Farmer Commits Suicide After Failing to Meet State Quota**

On September 14, a funeral was held for a farmer from Murzrabot district in the Surkhandarya region, who committed suicide, the Uzbek Service of the BBC reported.

According to accounts from other farmers and villagers, Ismail Turanazarov, age 50, had been reprimanded at a meeting in Murzrabot about the cotton harvest by the head of Surkhandarya region for failing to meet the daily state quota. Turanazarov was even arrested for 24 hours, which then served as the motivation for his desperate act. Although officials in Surkhandarya deny this account, human rights activists are saying that the pressures and harsh treatment of farmers unable to meet their quotas can be seen throughout Uzbekistan .

Farmers from Murzrabot describe the meeting on the cotton harvest that took place on September 12 with Turobjon Zhurayev, head of the Surkhandarya region. Zhurayev asked farmers who had not fulfilled their quotas to stand and then began berating them. After the meeting, the official ordered Turanazarov, another resident, Ziyodulla Kuldasheva, and three other farmers put in jail. After being held in the isolation cell for a day, Turanazarov returned home and wrote a suicide note and then killed himself. In his note, he blamed local authorities for the fact that he could not meet the quota, and said that as a farmer, he had not received timely financial support and fuel and that when he had appealed to the authorities for help with his problem, he still received nothing.

A criminal investigation has been opened into Turanazarov's death. Uzbek human rights activists have commented on the extreme sensitivity of the farmer's case, and have surmised that an official conclusion about his death will most likely not be publicized, and that likely no mention will be made that the government's cotton policy was at fault. No mention will be made of the fact that farmers in Uzbekistan are not free to choose what to grow, or that the quotas for grain and cotton are the reason for many troubles in previous years. In 1996, a woman farmer from Jizzak who had her crops confiscated even after fulfilling the state grain quota threw herself under a combine.

Both local and foreign observers have noted that the chief problem for farmers is their treatment by state agencies. Although the government claims to protect farmers, in fact, officials create difficulties for sowing and harvesting, causing many to give up farming. The inability to get fuel in a timely manner, and even the inability to withdraw cash from their own bank accounts are some of the difficulties farmers face.

Despite international criticism, Uzbekistan continues to offer a rather low wholesale price for cotton and grain; this year, when a kilogram of grain was valued at 2000 soums (about US \$1.50), farmers were paid only several hundred soums by the state (about 10 cents).

Source: Cotton Campaign, 14.10.2011

<http://www.cottoncampaign.org/2011/10/14/uzbek-farming-commits-suicide-after-failing-to-meet-state-quota/>

## **Students Go to Fields Along with Teachers**

Not long after teachers were forced to go to the cotton fields in Uzbekistan to help bring in the harvest, their pupils from middle schools followed them.

The BBC Uzbek Service has received reports that children in the 6th grade who are 12 years of age have been forced to work in large numbers in the harvest.

As we know from Uzbek monitors, children as young as 10 have been reported in the fields in past harvest, and the tendency has been to bring younger children out as the harvest progresses; adults and university students are sent for the more lucrative and larger-yield work at the beginning of the harvest.

Parents of students and education workers themselves have been pressured by local officials who have demanded that the children be taken out to the fields.

A housewife from Yangiyul whose husband was sentenced to prison for his religious beliefs told the BBC that due to the lack of a bread-winner in the house, she was forced to pay to have her son, who is a college student, remain at home.

The woman who requested anonymity said she paid 70,000 soums (about \$30) to hire a person who would pick cotton in her son's place. But the college official reneged on the agreement, saying that he would keep the \$30 for the cost of her son's food, and make her son go to the cotton harvest nonetheless. The woman said since she had brought her son home at the start of the harvest, there shouldn't have been any amount owed for his food.

Another resident of Yangiul, Komila Halimova, and her daughter, a 9th grader named Furkat, began working on September 14 in the fields and had been working for five days at the time of the interview for BBC. They get to the fields on foot at 8:00 in the morning and return home at sundown. Furkat suffered from a skin infection and was supposed to avoid exposure to the sun and dust, but all her mother's efforts to get her exempted from the cotton harvest were in vain. Doctor's excuses either don't help, or were good for only two or three days, after which the teachers come to the house and demanded that the students come to the fields.

Source: Cotton Campaign, 14.10.2011

<http://www.cottoncampaign.org/2011/10/14/students-go-to-fields-along-with-teachers/>

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Source: Cotton Campaign, 14.10.2011

<http://www.cottoncampaign.org/2011/10/14/students-go-to-fields-along-with-teachers/>

## **UNICEF is investigating the child labour allegations in Uzbekistan**

UNICEF observers group started conducting a monitoring in regions on accusations of use of child labour in cotton production in Uzbekistan.

John Budd the area representative of the UNICEF in Geneva headquarters told the Radio Liberty that the UNICEF representatives were sent across the fields in Uzbekistan.

- Under the child's rights protection mandate the UNICEF is conducting monitoring in order to learn the situation related to the use of child labour during cotton harvest season in Uzbekistan. Our observers were sent to various regions of the country. We will report our monitoring results to our partners and Uzbek government in its due time,- said John Budd.

John Budd the area representative of the UNICEF in Geneva also added that these short observations taking place in Uzbekistan will not be able to replace the full and long monitoring.

-The short observations we are holding will not substitute the full, thorough and independent monitoring conducted by the standards of International Labour Organisation. We support the conduct of such monitoring,- says John Budd.

However, the official Tashkent has been refusing the calls to invite the independent monitoring group of the International Labour Organisation to the country during the cotton harvest season in Uzbekistan.

Also, the human rights defenders inside the country are strictly oppressed from not to report the situation.

Last month activists from Kashkadarya were caught and taken by police while they were monitoring the departure of children to cotton harvest fields in Koson district.

Earlier the confidential diplomatic documents published by the Wikileaks internet website revealed that the UNICEF tried to downplay the scale of the problem related to the use of forced child labour in Uzbekistan.

"It seems, the organisation took such steps in order to keep good relationship with Uzbek government", wrote Eurasianet news agency about it.

The UNICEF did not comment on the revelations of the documents published by the Wikileaks.

Many international organisations accuse Uzbek government on use of child labour.

Lyceum student Jasur from Jizzakh says that children as young as 5<sup>th</sup> grade are also sent to pick cotton from morning to dawn.

-Children higher than 5<sup>th</sup> grade are going to pick cotton. Until the 1<sup>st</sup> of October the lower grade children were sent to the fields after the school. From the beginning of this month the schools are closed. Children now pick cotton all day,- said Jasur.

Uzbek authorities deny the use of child labour in farming.

Source: Ozodlik, 14.10.2011

<http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/24359773.html>

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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, 2011: <http://www.uzbekgermanforum.org>