

A CHRONICLE OF FORCED CHILD LABOUR: REPORTS FROM THE UZBEKISTAN COTTON HARVEST 2009

Week 3



Local administration creates a division charged with mobilizing schoolchildren to participate in the cotton harvest and forces schoolteachers to pick cotton as well.

Synopsis: Human rights activist Dimitri Tikhonov reports that in the Angren city khokimiyat, namely its the department of education, is the headquarters for the campaign to mobilize schoolchildren and university students to participate in the cotton harvest. The division is headed by a Makhmud Turgunbayev, formerly director of High School No. 18, and who was convicted under several articles of the Criminal Code in 2000. As chief of the campaign, Turgunbayev issued the decree for each school to sent 30 percent of its teachers to the cotton fields to pick cotton until the end of the harvest. Turgunbayev has threatened those teachers who refuse to participate with dismissal.

The Alliance of Human Rights Defenders of Uzbekistan calls upon participants of the picket on October 14, 2009 in Washington DC to stand up for the teachers of Angren and all of Uzbekistan.

Source: Alliance of Uzbekistan Human Rights Defenders, distributed on 12/09/09 via HR-Uzbekistan Yahoo Group listserv

Alliance of Uzbekistan Human Rights Defenders reports from Jizzak, Tashkent, Ferghana and Navoi regions, October 9

Synopsis:

- According to a report from human rights activist Gavhar Berdiyeva, in Galloralski district, Jizzak region, schoolchildren from eighth and ninth grades of Secondary Schools 16, 26, 25, 44, 42, 56, 27, 78, have not attended school since September 20, 2009 and are working in the cotton fields from 8am until 6pm seven days a week.

- According to a report from human rights activist of Yangiyulski district, Tashkent region, Akromkhodji Mukhiditinov, schoolchildren from the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades from Secondary School Nos. 4 and 5 are forced to pick cotton at the farm and at the “Agrotekhnika” and “Agronom” plots, and do not attend school. Schoolchildren from the first through sixth grade are picking cotton under the auspices of “helping their parents.”
- According to reports from human rights activist Salomat Boimatova of Ferghana region, in Besharyk district, schoolchildren from eighth and ninth grades have stopped attending school and have been picking cotton since October 8, 2009. Likewise, students from technical colleges have been sent to the cotton fields. The Administration of Ferghana region has compelled women who receive state childcare support to go to the fields to pick cotton.
- According to reports from human rights activist Elena Urlayeva and Oleg Sarapulov, schoolchildren from fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth grades of secondary schools in the rural areas of Jizzak region are involved in the cotton harvest. For example, schoolchildren from Schools Nos. 3 and 11 and students from Ikhsot College, Pakhtakor district have been picking cotton at the Akmal Ikromov Farm since the end of September 2009. Similarly, ninth graders from School No. 1 in Jizzak city go daily at 8am to pick cotton. Children do not attend school and are forced to pick cotton every day without any days off.
- According to a report from human rights activist Vladimir Husanov, since the end of September 2009, eighth and ninth graders from Navoi region have been forced to pick cotton.

Source: Ким Аделаида, пресс-центр Альянса, distributed on 10/09/09 via HR-Uzbekistan Yahoo Group listserv.

Parents Protest Against Forced Labor of Children in Uzbekistan, October 10

Synopsis: Parents have been protesting to the authorities over the forced exploitation of their children to pick cotton, the Ezgulik Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan reported in a press release distributed October 10 via email. A group of about 10 parents from the Nishan district of the Kashkadarya region appealed to the khokimiyat (local administration) not to send their children to the cotton harvest. The group was subject to pressure from prosecutor's office.

Source: Ezgulik Human Rights Society. Distributed on 10/09/09 via HR-Uzbekistan Yahoo Group listserv. Synopsis by OSI Central Eurasia Project.. Synopsis by OSI Central Eurasia Project

Schools in Karshi Closed for Cotton Harvest, October 9

Synopsis: The Human Rights society of Uzbekistan reported on October 9 that all of the schools in Karshi City, the Kashkadarya regional center, were closed and students from eighth and ninth grades were sent to pick cotton, according to a report distributed on the Yahoo group HR-Uzbekistan. On October 8, regional state TV broadcast an appeal to the public that due to rainy and cold weather, the cotton crop had to be brought in faster.

Source: Kashkadarya branch of the Uzbekistan Human Rights Society, distributed on 10/09/09 via HR-Uzbekistan Yahoo Group listserv. Synopsis by OSI Central Eurasia Project.

President Karimova’s Daughter Displaying Uzbek Fashions Made from Forced Child Labor, October 5

Synopsis: While children in Uzbekistan are working in the cotton fields, Gulnara Karimova, the daughter of Uzbekistan's President Karimov is showing off Uzbek clothing and jewellery during Milan's fashion week.

A reporter noted that in the brochures about the Uzbek fashion shows, it was emphasized that the clothing was made of silk. The fabric is called "Adras" and is produced at textile factories in the Ferghana region. In an interview with Radio Ozodlik, the Uzbek language service of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, an unidentified worker at one of the factories said that Adras consists half of silk and half of cotton. The cotton is produced domestically.

Original title: Children in the Fields, Cotton in Milan

Source: Radio Ozodlik/10/05/09. Translation and synopsis by OSI Central Eurasia Project

Full version: <http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/1844074.html>

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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>

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