

## A CHRONICLE OF FORCED LABOUR OF CHILDREN AND ADULTS

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For the cotton harvest, local authorities set up special "teams" which will be working on certain farms. These "teams" include college students, public-sector organizations, and medical staff. The banner in the photo above shows the number of people from different demographic groups who are ordered to work in the cotton harvest. This example shows 55 college students and 48 public-sector workers from INSERT.

### UGF Monitoring Team Observations:

#### Andijan:

- According to a college director who participated in local governors meeting, school children and students of colleges and lyceums will not be involved in cotton harvesting. They will continue their studies. Instead, all the university students and workers of companies and organisations will go to pick cotton. Whether this new practice is followed through the end of the harvest remains to be seen; in previous years, most young children were sent to pick cotton at the end of the harvest.
- Authorities ordered that no one will have weddings during the cotton harvest, September 10 until early November. The public was informed that anyone who fails to comply with the order will be penalized. The order includes all entertainment events and ceremonies; they should be postponed until the end of the season.
- It is obligatory for salesmen in markets and unemployed layers of the society to participate in the cotton harvesting.

#### Kashkadarya:

College students and teachers and other public-sector workers will be taken to pick cotton starting September 15 September 10, respectively. [Note: Colleges and lyceums in the education system of Uzbekistan are the equivalent of high school in the United States and many European Union countries; Uzbek children begin at age 15 or 16.]

#### Tashkent city:

On September 5, city park directors ordered all street vendors working in the parks of the capital Tashkent to go pick cotton. The vendors received an order from the Tashkent hokim (city mayor) that they would have to work “voluntarily” in the cotton fields in Syrdarya region for 40 days. Those who refuse would be fined 1.6 million for the entire forty-day period, 40,000 soums per day (\$750 USD). The order informed the vendors that refusal to work or pay the fine would result in criminal charges in which they would be held responsible for having caused economic damage the state.

**Tashkent region:**

- In hospitals of Angren city, the City Prosecutor's Office has been checking patients' medical records to search for „false“ claims of illness that citizens could present to request an exemption from picking cotton.
- A 43-year old high school teacher in Angren who has cancer, asked the oncology department of her hospital about obtaining an exemption from cotton harvesting. Hospital doctors informed her that they were prohibited from issuing exemptions to anyone to free them from agricultural work. They informed her that exemptions were only being issued in Tashkent city.
- A nurse in Tashkent region who has hepatitis, has been instructed by doctors to avoid heavy physical work, nevertheless she received orders to pick cotton. She is registered for the second round of picking cotton this harvest. She could buy an exemption for a minimum of 300,000 sum, but her monthly salary is only 275,000 sum (approximately \$100 USD).

**Multiple regions:**

- School teachers have reported that their students are not expected to pick cotton this year. The teachers themselves were ordered to recruit someone to pick cotton instead of them or pay a substantial fee.
- In some regions, hokims (governors) ordered that first-year college students, many of whom are 15 years old, not to be involved in picking cotton. The 2nd and 3rd year students and teachers of colleges and lyceums, including technical colleges, will be sent to pick cotton starting around September 10.

## **Massive mobilisation in cotton harvesting is expected**

3.09.2013

Government officials throughout Uzbekistan have been preparing to start the mobilisation of people to harvest cotton. While officials have not announced the official date for the start of the harvest, most people understand that this year's harvest will start September 5 in some regions and September 10 in others.

According to several sources, preparations to mobilize citizens to pick cotton have focused on adults. Radio Liberty received a letter stating that this year even private companies that employ 10 people have been ordered to send 2-5 people to pick cotton. Another source wrote that it is expected that all organisations will send their workers to pick cotton in Surkhandarya region.

According to a staff member of one of the banks in Tuytepa, they were told that participation in cotton harvesting for bank employees will be even tougher than previous year.

"Everyone is saying that it will be tough this year. Last year we paid our own expenses and went to pick cotton in Urtachirchiq for to months. This year also we are ready to go now", said the bank employee in Tuytepa.

It appears likely that again this year students, public sector workers – especially teachers, and private-sector workers will pick the majority of cotton harvested in Uzbekistan.

For years Uzbek government used forced child labour and for the last few years it has been trying to abandon the labour of schoolchildren.

<http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/25094184.html>

## **Public Institutions and Private Companies Ordered to „Sponsor“ the Cotton Harvest**

29.08.2013

Public institutions and private companies have received orders to „sponsor“ the cotton harvest by providing accommodations for citizens sent to pick cotton, reported a public-sector worker in Surkhandarya. According to the report, every organization must ensure that all accommodations have cooking facilities.

All the heads of public-sector institutions and private companies were called to a meeting at the beginning of August. At the meeting, clubs and old buildings of collective farms were divided among all organisations, and they were instructed to refurbish them. Neighbourhoods were assigned to provide pots and kettles.

All of these expenses are covered by us, said the head of the company, who wished to stay anonymous. A staff member of „Djarkorgonneft“ society said that they refurbished a field house, and it is ready to receive the helpers: „We were given one field house to refurbish in Okkurgon. We refurbished it, built showers and toilets and prepared it for helpers to use. We and everyone else will go to pick cotton and stay there,“ said the employee.

<http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/25089497.html>

## Cotton harvest began in southern regions

5.09.2013

According to government officials, starting September 6th, workers of company's and public institutions in all southern regions will be massively mobilised to pick cotton.

Local administrations started mobilising these labourers to go to the fields and farms to pick cotton.

According to a source of Radio Liberty who wanted to stay anonymous, some people were sent September 5th:

„Helpers are carried in buses to the cotton fields. A group of 10 people from each company has been gathered. They are going to pick cotton,“ said the farmer from Djarkorgon.

An official of Djarkurkon district also confirmed the focus on mobilizing people to the fields:

„Today an order was given for cotton harvesting. Organisations and companies started today to leave for the cotton fields. From tomorrow on, the massive mobilisation starts,“ said the administrative official.

In Uzbekistan, this year it has been planned to harvest more than three million tons of cotton. Farmers cannot harvest that amount of cotton by themselves; therefore, the government forcefully involves the workers of companies and organisations, universities, college and lyceum students as „helpers“.

<http://www.ozodlik.org/content/article/25096739.html>

## **Jizzakh students being prepared for the cotton season**

04.09.13

Meetings with the regional educators have been taking place in the Jizzakh region in preparation for the cotton picking season.

The school year has just started, and the university and high school students, as well as recent graduates, are being prepared for the annual cotton duty.

At one such meeting on September 4, details and expectations for this year's harvest were discussed between the regional government officials and school administrators.

“We need to harvest the cotton as quickly as possible, before the rains begin,” was the main message from the meeting.

Regional administrations have been ordered to make adequate transport available for transporting the forced labour to the fields.

Should there not be enough buses and other large-scale transport, the cotton pickers themselves – students – are expected to contribute 600 soms (about \$2 USD) for hired cars. If they refuse or are unable to pay, they will stay in make-shift sleeping quarters near the cotton fields for the entirety of their service, the regional administrators have decided.

According to the observers in Jizzakh, this season is expected to be a particularly difficult one. The cotton harvest took a long time to mature and up till now many plants have not been ready to be picked, which threatens to extend the harvest into the rainy season.

[http://www.uznews.net/news\\_single.php?lng=en&sub=hot&cid=2&nid=23647](http://www.uznews.net/news_single.php?lng=en&sub=hot&cid=2&nid=23647)