



## Statement from the Cotton Campaign on the Start of the Cotton Harvest in Uzbekistan

The 2013 cotton harvest is underway in Uzbekistan. The Uzbek Cotton Industry Association “Uzkhlopkoprom” [estimates](#) a total harvest of 3.35 million tons, making Uzbekistan the 6<sup>th</sup> largest cotton producer and 2<sup>nd</sup> largest cotton exporter in the world. Yet Uzbek citizens continue to suffer human rights abuses under the state-controlled cotton industry.

We are pleased that this year the International Labour Organization (ILO) expects to deploy teams to Uzbekistan to monitor during the harvest. We remain concerned that the ILO monitors will be accompanied by representatives of the Government of Uzbekistan and the official state union and employers’ organizations, whose presence will have a chilling effect on Uzbek citizens’ willingness to speak openly with the ILO monitors. Therefore, we encourage the ILO to make every effort possible to obtain independent information, publicly report all findings and any interference by Uzbek Government, and validate the findings and monitoring process with the International Trade Union Confederation and International Organisation of Employers.

Since 2010 the tripartite ILO Committee on the Application of Standards has [recommended](#) a high-level, tripartite ILO monitoring mission. Such a mission would include tripartite oversight, independent civil-society participation, a mandate to address forced labour and child labour and public reporting. While the ILO monitors will not have unfettered access this year, we will support the ILO in their effort.

Cotton production in Uzbekistan is a [state orchestrated forced-labour system](#). The Government of Uzbekistan forces over a million children, teachers, public servants and private sector employees to pick cotton under appalling conditions each year. Those who refuse are expelled from school, fired from their jobs, and denied public benefits or worse. The Government harasses and detains citizens seeking to monitor the situation. During the Spring 2013, Government authorities mobilised children and adults to [plough and weed](#), and authorities [beat](#) farmers for planting onions instead of cotton. In August, authorities initiated [preparations](#) to coercively mobilize nurses, teachers and other public sector workers to harvest cotton.

Reports from independent Uzbek citizens who document the cotton harvest will be posted regularly at:  
<http://uzbekgermanforum.org/category/cotton-chronicle/> and  
<http://www.cottoncampaign.org/reports/>.

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



Aquinas Associates



Association for Human Rights in Central Asia



Calvert Investments



Catholic Health East



Child Labor Coalition



Domini Social Investments



European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights



Expert Working Group

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Freedom House



Gonggam Human Rights Law Foundation



Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan “Ezgulik”



Human Rights Watch



International Labor Rights Forum



Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate –  
Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Office



National Consumers League



National Retail Federation



Open Society Foundations



Responsible Sourcing Network



Retail Industry Leaders Association



Sisters of St Francis of Philadelphia



Solidarity Center



Stop the Traffik Australia



Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, Uniting Church in Australia



United States Association of Importers of Textiles and Apparel



Uzbek German Forum for Human Rights



Walden Asset Management

