

Media Advisory
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Global Action Demands End to Forced Labor in Uzbek Cotton Fields
*Protestors call on government to stop using education system as
source of modern-day slavery*

October 1 is National Teacher's Day in Uzbekistan, but many classrooms will be empty as teachers and, in some cases, their students are sent to the fields to harvest cotton. The government of Uzbekistan, as the sole organizer and beneficiary of this forced-labor cotton harvest, could return them to classrooms where they belong.

On September 30, the government will receive a petition from concerned people around the globe calling on them to do just that. The petition will be delivered at the Uzbek Ministry of Education in Tashkent and embassies in four cities: Washington, D.C., Berlin, London and Paris.

Preliminary reports from the 2014 harvest mobilization, which began September 15, indicate that public-sector workers, particularly teachers and professors, will be hit especially hard this year. All universities and institutes of higher learning have been shut down so professors and students can participate in a mandatory 40-day shift picking cotton. Other public institutions are required to ensure 40 to 70 percent of staff are in the fields at any given time. Education has ceased entirely in some parts of the country as teachers fulfill their cotton quotas.

The signatories to this petition join more than 300,000 people around the world who have called for the end of the forced-labor system of cotton production in Uzbekistan in the last two years. Printed copies will be delivered to the Uzbek government at each action site, where protestors will demand that Uzbek teachers and students should be in classrooms, not cotton fields. More information on each action is below.

Tashkent: Petition delivery
Location: Ministry of Education of Uzbekistan
Contact: Elena Urlaeva, elena.urlaeva@gmail.com

Washington, DC: Petition delivery and embassy demonstration
Location: Embassy of Uzbekistan, 1746 Massachusetts Ave NW
Time: Noon Eastern
Contact: Abby McGill, International Labor Rights Forum, abby@ilrf.org,
(913) 620-5063

Berlin: Petition delivery and embassy demonstration
Location: Embassy of Uzbekistan, Perleberger Strasse 62
Time: 10 a.m.

Contact: Umida Niyazova, Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights,
umida.niyazova@gmail.com,

London:

Petition delivery

Contact: Elizabeth Muggleton, Anti-Slavery International,
e.muggleton@antislavery.org

Paris:

Petition delivery

Contact: Nadezhda Atayeva, Association for Human Rights in Central
Asia, n.atayeva@gmail.com

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The Cotton Campaign (www.cottoncampaign.org) is a global coalition of human rights, labor, investor and business organizations coalesced to end forced labor in the cotton sector of Uzbekistan.

EDITORS NOTE: Pictures from each action can be obtained by contacting the appropriate contact person. Pictures from the 2014 harvest are available from Matt Fischer-Daly.