

# State-Imposed Forced Labor in Turkmenistan

- › Forced labor in the cotton sector
- › Child labor in the cotton sector
- › Persecution of activists and human rights defenders who seek to document it

## Cotton Campaign

Coordinated  
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# Forced Labor Recommendations from the 3rd Cycle

## **Noted:**

“Establish a time-bound national plan of action to address forced labour in cotton farming and abolish mandatory production and sanctions for non-compliance with cotton quotas”  
(Chile -116.85).

## **Supported:**

“Introduce legal measures that prohibit forced and child labour”  
(Poland - 116.89)

“Strengthen its policy on prevention and combat of child labour, and on the full guarantee of the rights of child, with special attention to children without parental care”  
(Tajikistan - 114.86)

“Work in partnership with the International Labour Organization to eliminate forced labour in connection with State-sponsored cotton harvesting”  
(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland - 114.50)



# ILO Committee on the Application of Standards

“the Committee deplored the persistence of the widespread use of forced labour in relation to the annual state-sponsored cotton harvest in Turkmenistan and **the Government’s failure to make any meaningful progress on the matter since the Committee discussed the case in 2016 and 2021.**”

*June 2023 review of Turkmenistan’s compliance with ILO Convention on the Abolition of Forced Labour*



## Forced Labor

*“Everyone knows that if you refuse to participate in the cotton harvest, you lose your job... Therefore, everyone is silent, dutifully doing what the leader requires of them.”*

School employee, Dashoguz

- The Govt forces tens of thousands of public and private sector workers to pick cotton each year, or pay to avoid it, under threat of penalty.
- Independent monitoring conducted in 2022 found that forced labor was **widespread and systematic**.
- The Govt continues to publicly deny the use of forced labor in the harvest.



## Child Labour

- Child labor has been documented during every cotton harvest since the Government's last review
- Driven by poverty and the forced labor system
- In 2022, children as young as eight were seen picking cotton alongside adults



## **Repression of civic freedoms**

- The Govt takes extensive measures to prevent documentation of the cotton harvest – including strict surveillance.
- All CSOs that are publicly critical of the Govt's repressive regime must work from exile.



## Recommendations

- Develop a time-bound plan to reform the root causes of forced labor in the cotton sector, in consultation with independent worker and employer organizations, civil society, and the ILO.
- Instruct government representatives at all levels on the prohibition of forced labor and strengthen law enforcement - including by prosecuting or sanctioning appropriately officials found to be mobilizing forced labor.
- Allow independent monitors, journalists, and human rights defenders to document and report labor conditions without fear of reprisal.



## Recommendations

- Enforce national laws that prohibit the use of forced and child labor, in alignment with ratified ILO Conventions.
- Acknowledge that forced labor exists in Turkmenistan and make public, high-level policy statements condemning it, specifically including forced labor in the cotton sector, making clear that all work should be voluntary and fairly compensated.
- Fully cooperate with UN agencies and human rights bodies, including by facilitating all requests for visits by the Human Rights Council's special procedure mandate holders and allowing unhindered access to the country to the ILO.