

# There Is No Work We Haven't Done: Forced Labor of Public-Sector Employees in Uzbekistan



For us, the intelligentsia, the prohibition of forced labor is not news. Our constitution and labor code both prohibit forced labor. But so far, the laws are not followed, including by the people who are supposed to protect us.

—School Director, Zarbdar District, Jizzakh Region, July 3, 2018

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**On the Cover:**

A worker collects mulberry branches to feed silkworm cocoons. May 2018. Photo: Timur Karpov.

The title of this report, “There is No Work We Haven’t Done,” is a direct quote from a state-bank employee in the Samarkand region, interviewed by a UGF monitor on June 3, 2018.



## Executive Summary

Uzbekistan has long faced scrutiny and international outcry for state-organized use of child and forced labor in its annual cotton harvest. But this focus on a single supply chain has obscured the widespread, systematic use of forced labor, especially of public employees, across multiple sectors in Uzbekistan. Although systematic child labor was phased out of cotton picking in 2014, and the government has now publicly committed to end adult forced labor in the cotton fields after more than a decade of international pressure, elsewhere forced labor is rampant. Teachers, health care workers and employees of state agencies are routinely sent to clean streets, plant flowers, do construction work, dredge ditches and perform public maintenance for hours or days every week, at no extra pay and to the detriment of public services. They perform this work involuntarily, under threat of job loss, pay cuts or disciplinary measures if they refuse. In April, following the well-publicized death of a teacher in Samarkand who was struck by a truck while cleaning the highway, Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoev vowed to end all forced labor of public-sector employees.

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This report is based on interviews with public employees and others affected by forced labor, conducted by a small team of Uzbek-German Forum monitors in nine regions in Uzbekistan over two months in spring 2018. It shows that although officials did not force education and health workers to weed the cotton fields in spring 2018, they continued to exploit them for forced labor tasks in other sectors. In detailed interviews, respondents described a consistent pattern of local officials ordering them to undertake forced labor tasks including community maintenance and beautification, street cleaning, wheat harvesting and collection of scrap metal and paper. The report also shows that local officials are forcing public employees to fulfill a community maintenance program called *Obod Kishlok* [Well-Maintained Village] announced by the president in March. Under the program, public-sector employees bear full responsibility for repairing, painting and gardening at private houses, including buying the supplies and doing the work.

Public-sector employees often pay for costs associated with forced labor, including for food and transportation to forced labor assignments as well as for construction supplies, tools and flowers and seedlings to plant. In addition to forced labor, officials also extort or withhold money from public-sector employees for mandatory subscriptions, events and to subsidize public work. Several children and farmers described that children were also taken out of class to harvest silk cocoons under threat of penalty. The report shows that local officials appear to view public-sector employees as a constant source of labor and funds to fulfill local needs or centrally imposed mandates. The other side of the picture is the absolutely devastating toll forced labor takes on essential public services, particularly health care and education, when trained specialists, among the lowest-paid professionals in the country, are taken out of work for hours, days or even weeks to perform manual labor at the whim of officials.

The report also describes how labor unions, which are weak and subordinate to government and/or employers, fail to represent workers or protect them from forced labor. Employees described their unions as ineffective and "helpless," and said that they sometimes even assist in organizing or directing forced labor.

Although forced labor continued at the time of this research, there is evidence that some changes are taking effect. In the Fergana region, all but one respondent said that officials had stopped using them for forced labor following the president's announcement prohibiting forced labor of public employees.

While forced and child labor in the cotton sector has rightly been the focus of intense attention that has produced significant changes, this report demonstrates that declarations and attention to a single supply chain are not enough. Authorities must urgently address systemic root causes of forced labor that allow it to continue. These include the lack of independent and representative labor unions, absence of effective complaint and accountability mechanisms, rampant corruption, lack of accountability of local authorities, centrally imposed mandates and a punitive and exploitative agricultural system.

Residents of rural villages often have to grow silkworms in their own homes, frequently clearing out their living rooms for this purpose. May 2018. Photo: Timur Karpov



## Forced Labor and Exploitation in Uzbekistan

Every year, the government of Uzbekistan mobilizes hundreds of thousands of citizens to pick cotton through a coercive system of forced labor.<sup>1</sup> The implementation of a centrally developed state cotton plan is a priority for the heads of regions and districts, who can be dismissed for “poor organization” and “mistakes” made in harvesting cotton. Under orders by regional heads, employees of organizations and enterprises around the country are being forced to pick cotton under the threat of dismissal. For many years, students and workers in the health care and education sectors were the groups primarily forced to participate in the cotton harvest. Preliminary findings from the 2018 harvest, which was still ongoing as this report was being written, show that fewer of these groups of people were mobilized, and there has been a demographic shift toward mobilization of public-sector employees from different organizations—local maintenance departments, utility companies, grain mills, state-controlled enterprises.<sup>2</sup>

After years of denials, recent government acknowledgement of the existence of forced labor in the Uzbek cotton sector and high-level commitments to end the practice have resulted in several significant developments.<sup>3</sup> Among them is the government’s stated commitment to enforce a prohibition on the participation of university students, education and medical staff, and other public and private-sector workers in cotton work—a policy that has been in effect since 2015, but was unenforced until last year. On September 21, 2017, several weeks into the 2017 harvest, Prime Minister Abdulla Aripov ordered some education and medical workers who had already been mobilized recalled from the fields.<sup>4</sup> The order resulted in the nearly complete recall of university students and a partial recall of medical and education

workers from picking cotton, although some were subsequently sent to pick cotton again or extorted to pay for replacement workers.<sup>5</sup>

The government's commitment to stop forcing public-sector employees to subsidize the state with unpaid labor in cotton fields appeared to strengthen in spring 2018. Spring cotton fieldwork— including field preparation, planting, thinning, weeding and topping—usually starts in April or early May, depending on the region, and can last several months. For years the government forced education and health care workers, and some other public-sector employees, to perform fieldwork for no pay and under threat of penalty, including dismissal from their job.<sup>6</sup> In 2018, the Uzbek-German Forum (UGF) found that for the first time the government did not forcibly mobilize health and education workers to the cotton fields en masse.<sup>7</sup> Although UGF monitors documented several cases of forced spring cotton fieldwork, mainly by technical non-professional staff of health and education institutions, the majority of education and health workers interviewed said that, for the first time, they were not sent to work the cotton fields in spring 2018. As noted above, however, preliminary reports from the 2018 cotton harvest indicate widespread forced labor of some groups of public-sector employees and extortion continued to be a concern.<sup>8</sup>

Beyond the cotton sector, authorities in Uzbekistan have for many years relied on public-sector workers to perform unpaid forced labor unrelated to their regular work. The forced labor tasks include other agricultural work, silk cocoon production and harvesting, street cleaning, maintenance, community beautification, planting and trimming trees and flowers, and construction. Authorities also require public-sector employees to conduct outreach in their communities to collect utility payments and other debts, mobilize workers to pick cotton and coerce people to make financial contributions or purchase tickets for public events. Officials also extort public-sector employees to bring in large quantities of scrap metal and paper, or payments in lieu of these collections, and withhold money from their salaries for mandatory subscriptions to publications, repairs for their institutions and other payments with no clear link to their jobs or without documentation clearly showing how the money will be used. Additionally, weak labor unions that do not operate independently from the government and institution management fail to protect workers from forced labor.

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In March 2018, 23-year-old teacher Diana Enikeeva was struck and killed by a truck while she and other teachers were cleaning the highway in Kattakurgan district in Samarkand region in preparation for a visit by Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev.<sup>9</sup> Enikeeva's death incited a rare public outcry in popular and social media, which have experienced more freedom to discuss critical issues over the last two years, and have begun to report on issues such as forced labor.<sup>10</sup> Enikeeva's death prompted officials to make declarations condemning forced labor of public-sector employees and committing to end the practice.<sup>11</sup> In April, Mirziyoyev ordered officials to stop using public-sector employees and students for street cleaning, repairs and other "public" work, a message reiterated by Aripov at a meeting with regional and district officials.<sup>12</sup> On May 10, Mirziyoyev issued a decree prohibiting the ordering of state employees to do "public" work such as street cleaning and cotton picking.<sup>13</sup>

However, despite the government’s rhetorical commitment to ending forced labor, other statements and actions suggest that officials, even at the highest levels, fail to understand the enormous scope of the problem and continue to enact policies that promote forced labor.

In August, Aripov decreed two days of national public work to clean parks and recreation areas, calling the work “*khashar*.”<sup>14</sup> *Khashar* is a traditional Uzbek concept referring to voluntary assistance by members in a community, not mass volunteerism or work at the government’s behest.<sup>15</sup> In a meeting at which he discussed the announcement, Aripov said that not every instance of *khashar* should be equated with forced labor and denounced “opposition publications” that show images of people performing *khashar* and report it as forced labor.<sup>16</sup> Officials have often hijacked the term *khashar* to provide a cover for forced labor, including for cotton picking and street cleaning. Just a day after Aripov’s remarks, a teacher in the Khorezm region posted on the “Dialogue with the People” Facebook group that she and other teachers were being forced under threat to haul construction waste and weed building grounds, saying, “Please help us!”<sup>17</sup>

Despite mixed messages from the highest levels of government, measures taken to remediate cases of forced labor or hold officials accountable happen, albeit in a sporadic and arbitrary manner.<sup>18</sup> The government lacks a strong, independent labor inspectorate or other mechanism to investigate cases in a timely manner and provide proportionate remedies, though there is some evidence this may be changing. Through the assistance of the International Labor Organization (ILO), hundreds of labor inspectors and law enforcement officials were trained in labor inspection and forced labor prosecution in 2018.<sup>19</sup> To date, investigations have generally targeted low-level officials rather than going up the chain of command, and have failed to investigate root causes. In a recent example, the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Education announced that a university department head in Karakalpakstan was fired for bringing students to the fields to “help” a farmer. However, the ministry’s statement did not explain why the head of a university department decided to involve students in agriculture, or if the university employee acted on his own initiative or at the orders of an official.<sup>20</sup>



In advance of a visit from Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev to Andijan city, the city hokim, Dilmurod Rakhmatullaev, sent teachers in the city to do maintenance work in public spaces and other tasks. April 5, 2016. Photo: Ozodlik—Uzbek Service of RFE/RL

# Methodology

This report is based on 62 in-depth interviews and approximately 200 brief interviews with education and medical professionals, other public-sector employees, farmers and schoolchildren conducted by UGF monitors between May 15 and July 15, 2018, and supplemented with media reports. The in-depth interviews were conducted with 34 men and 25 women between the ages of 21 and 58, and three children, ages 13 and 14. The brief interviews included 50 public-sector employees, 30 of whom work in education. The remaining 20 public-sector employees included nine medical workers, eight employees of state agencies, two state bank employees and one state factory worker. UGF monitors also interviewed three children, seven farmers, one market employee and one inmate of a low-security prison colony where prisoners work outside the facility.

Nine Uzbek-German Forum monitors conducted interviews in the Andijan, Fergana, Jizzakh, Khorezm, Navoi, Samarkand, Syrdarya and Tashkent regions, as well as the Republic of Karakalpakstan. An additional interviewee was from Kashkadarya. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format. All monitors have experience monitoring forced and child labor in Uzbekistan and have participated in training by international experts with experience working in the region on core ILO conventions and decent work standards, research methodology and documentation standards. All interviews were conducted on the basis of informed consent about the purpose of the interview, in private and on a guarantee of anonymity. Some identifying details or places have been withheld to protect the anonymity of interviewees. Monitors are native speakers of Uzbek and/or Russian and conducted interviews in the interviewee's native language without an interpreter.



4-сектор рахбари

А.Валиев

Сулаймонов Илхом

Бириктирилган корхона

“Челак дехкон бозори”

МЧЖ рахбари:

Д.Зиятова

As part of the “Obod kishlok” program, people were assigned to make improvements to the houses of poor families who could not afford to improve the facades of their own houses. This sign on a resident’s house shows that the head of the private enterprise “Chelak dekhkon bozori” is responsible for making the repairs required by the government program. June 11, 2018. Photo: UGF

## Ongoing Forced Labor by Public-Sector Employees in Spring 2018

Despite the government’s pronouncements on forced labor, UGF monitors found widespread forced labor by public-sector employees outside the cotton sector throughout spring and early summer 2018, when this research was conducted. City, district and regional authorities continued to exploit public-sector workers and others over whom they have control, such as farmers, as a source of labor and cash to fulfill centrally imposed mandates and local demands, including for maintenance, construction, improvements and agriculture. This burden fell particularly on schools and educational institutions, but also on other state institutions, such as state banks and factories, public utility companies and local government agencies. In all regions where interviews were conducted except one, interviewees (including the three children) said that although they did not have to work in the cotton fields in spring 2018, government officials continued to force them to work involuntarily, for no additional pay and under threat of penalty, on tasks outside their normal occupations, or they withheld money from their salaries to pay for such work.<sup>21</sup> These assignments included silk cocoon production and harvesting; “public” works such as street cleaning, beautification and preparation for public events; collection of scrap metal and paper; and the “*Obod Kishlok* [Well-Maintained Village] program, decreed by President Mirziyoyev in March 2018 to improve housing and other infrastructure in rural areas.<sup>22</sup>

Eleven public-sector employees emphasized that such work undermined their dignity and the value of their professions.<sup>23</sup> For example, a nurse said, “When we take [patients’] blood pressure, we are ashamed by the dirt under our fingernails.”<sup>24</sup> Two said that they had studied and worked hard to learn their professions to avoid doing

manual labor and fieldwork.<sup>25</sup> A school director who was required to oversee the wheat harvest said he was willing to do the work but acknowledged that it was mandatory and he would be punished if he refused.<sup>26</sup>

Public-sector employees and others forced to work said they could not refuse such assignments because they would suffer punishment or penalties, especially loss of their job or reduction in hours resulting in loss of salary.<sup>27</sup> The use of law enforcement—including patrolmen, police and prosecutors—to supervise forced labor underscored the mandatory, government-controlled nature of the work and the risk of penalty or punishment for those who refuse.<sup>28</sup> Workers also said they feared reprisals or other consequences for reporting or complaining about forced labor.<sup>29</sup> One said that she complained to the *hokimiat* (authorities) about forced labor, but they reported her to her director, who cut her teaching hours in retaliation.<sup>30</sup>

As this research was being conducted, officials in the Fergana region appeared to have been enforcing policies against forced labor. All eight of the public-sector employees interviewed in the Fergana region in May and June described being forced to work outside their regular jobs until April. All except one said that since the president's order prohibiting forced labor for public-sector workers, their employers had stopped requiring them to participate.<sup>31</sup> One doctor in Fergana said that while some forms of forced labor had stopped since April, some hospital staff, including nurses, continued to be forced to sweep, plant flowers and weed, especially on hospital grounds and in the surrounding area.<sup>32</sup>



Teachers of a school in Uzbekistan's capital, Tashkent, were sent to clean up these new buildings in the Sergeli district of the city. November 5, 2018. Photo: UGF

## Forced Labor in 'Public' Works, Street Cleaning, Beautification, *Obod Kishlok*

Street cleaning and other "public" beautification—including sweeping, weeding, hoeing and planting flowers along roadsides and in parks, painting fences, planting and trimming trees, and clearing canals and ditches—is perhaps the most widespread form of forced labor in Uzbekistan outside of cotton picking. As this research was being conducted, the Uzbek press and social media were awash with descriptions of public-sector employees, from teachers to nurses to police officers, being forced to clean highways, plant flowers and do repairs.<sup>33</sup> Public-sector employees and other workers said that schools, hospitals and other institutions are assigned specific lengths of road, plots of land and neighborhoods that they must clean and maintain. Of the 42 public-sector employees who UGF monitors asked about street cleaning and maintenance, all said they are now or had been required to do such work this year as a condition of their employment and they would face discipline, reduction in hours or pay or dismissal if they refused.<sup>34</sup> In addition, a farmer, market employee and schoolgirl also reported similar obligations.<sup>35</sup>

According to the interviewees, forced labor in street cleaning, gardening, construction and repairs, including for the *Obod Kishlok* program, persisted after the president's announcement prohibiting it, with a few exceptions. In the Fergana region, seven of eight public-sector employees interviewed said they had not been forced to work outside their regular jobs after the president's announcement.<sup>36</sup> One teacher from Fergana said that since April, she and her colleagues had not even been made to sweep the school's courtyard.<sup>37</sup>

A teacher in Khorezm also said, “We used to have to work all the time, but big changes” occurred after the president’s announcement, and teachers had not had to carry out forced labor since April.<sup>38</sup>

According to interviewees, despite some local officials releasing public-sector employees from forced work in some districts, public institutions and staff continued to bear the burden of supporting public maintenance after the April decree—whether through work or salary deductions:

- ▶ A teacher in Khorezm said that although she and her colleagues had not been forced to work since April, even more money is now being withheld from their salaries.<sup>39</sup>
- ▶ In Ellikkala district in Karakalpakstan, a teacher and a nurse released from forced labor since April, reported the withholding of 3.5 percent of their salaries to fund workers and supplies for “public” work.<sup>40</sup>
- ▶ A child center employee in Jizzakh said even more money is withheld from teacher’s salaries to pay for so-called *khashar*: “We not only don’t get paid, but they take money from us.”<sup>41</sup>

In some cases, public-sector employees were still forced to clean streets, but authorities took steps to disguise their identities, requiring workers to wear the bright yellow vests often worn by street sweepers or instructing them to lie if asked about their professions.<sup>42</sup> The research conducted cannot explain why authorities might do this, but these cases may indicate that local officials are getting the messages from the government about the prohibition on forced labor but are unwilling to change their practices due to a lack of meaningful accountability for forced labor and corruption. Or officials may be grappling with budgets inadequate to cover public maintenance costs and centrally imposed mandates.

Testimony from public-sector employees shows that officials, in particular regional and district governors, or *hokims*, view public institutions as a source of endless labor available to be deployed for any purpose at any time. All 42 public-sector workers interviewed about street cleaning and maintenance described not simply having extra, unpaid tasks added to their workdays, but being pulled from their regular jobs for hours, days or even weeks, often with no warning, while usually still expected to manage their regular work. They all described forced labor incidents, at a minimum, several times per week for hours at a time, and frequently more often, including on weekends. Responses varied, but interviews indicated that between 20 and 60 percent of the entire staff of their institutions were doing forced labor at any given time—except during the cotton harvest season, when the demand for forced labor is even higher. For example:

- ▶ A doctor said hospital staff spend 20 to 30 percent of their work time on forced labor.<sup>43</sup>
- ▶ A school director said that five of 35 teachers are usually forced away from school for tasks at a time, so the school loses 20 hours of instruction time per week.<sup>44</sup>
- ▶ A state factory employee said 150 workers were sent to do construction every day<sup>45</sup>
- ▶ A teacher said that he is required to work on forced labor tasks outside the school three to four times per week, for about 15 hours.<sup>46</sup>

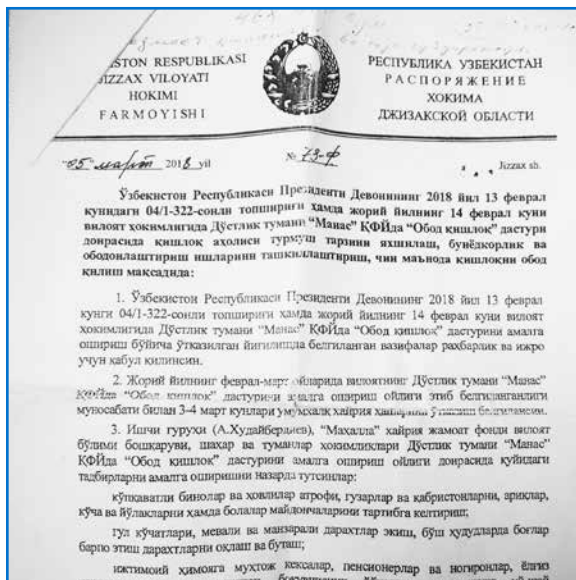
A college director reported that he may not show up to the college for weeks at a time since he is required to manage all the forced labor demands imposed by the local administration: “Each day I have to send 20 teachers there, another 10 somewhere else.”<sup>47</sup> He said the teachers at his college do more forced labor than teaching,<sup>48</sup> an observation confirmed by another college teacher.<sup>49</sup> A university instructor said that staff members keep clothes for manual labor at work so they can change quickly when they are pulled away from teaching for public work.<sup>50</sup>

One nurse said that every morning she and other nurses must clean a 500-meter area around the hospital where she works. The job is assigned to orderlies, but they, too, are pulled away for forced labor, so the task falls to nursing staff. When not cleaning the hospital grounds, nurses pick cotton for several months in the fall and, until 2018, weeded cotton fields in the spring. She said:



Year round we sweep and clean streets, collect branches and deliver them for firewood. We clean around the *hokimiat* and in the park. The café at the park belongs to the deputy *hokim* so we are often tasked with cleaning and gardening in the park around the café for holiday celebrations and events. We have to clean roads, plant flowers along the roadside, paint fences and do repairs.<sup>51</sup>

On a typical day, the nurse said she and her colleagues gather between 5 a.m. and 6 a.m. for street cleaning or other public work, attend to hospital duties from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m., and then are sent to do more unpaid labor until 7 p.m. or 8 p.m.<sup>52</sup>



A copy of the directive to implement the "Obod kishlok" program in the village Manas in the Dustlik district, signed by the acting regional hokim. To fulfill tasks assigned by the Office of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the directive orders local officials and agencies to: mobilize workers locally as part of a mandatory nationwide "khashar" on March 3-4, 2018; ensure activities are completed under the program including garbage collection during landscaping projects, plant and maintain trees, create gardens in vacant lots and plant flowers in other public spaces, and upkeep of private buildings, courtyards, cemeteries, streets, sidewalks and playgrounds. It also orders organizations and institutions "voluntarily" to transfer one-day's salary from workers at public institutions to a "charitable fund" to implement program activities. Local media are also directed to cover the upkeep activities and the national "khashar." Photo: UGF

Some interviewees said they have to use their own money to buy equipment, tools, flowers, plants, tree seedlings, paint and construction materials for use in public spaces, institutions and roads.<sup>53</sup> For example, a teacher from the Khorezm region said 700,000 soum (approximately \$87.50) was deducted from each teachers' salary to buy flowers from Japan that they then had to plant along roadsides. When cold weather killed the flowers, more of the teachers' wages were deducted and they had to plant new flowers.<sup>54</sup> In addition, many respondents said they also incur costs for food and transportation to locations where they are forced to work and to pay for replacement workers if they cannot perform the work themselves.<sup>55</sup>

Thirty-four employees said that although they sometimes received the orders to work from their directors or supervisors, the orders generally came from *hokims* or other local officials.<sup>56</sup> Seventeen people said local administration and law enforcement officials often supervised their work along with their regular bosses.<sup>57</sup> However, two people said they thought the orders came from the central government:

- ▶ “A representative from the district department of education came to take me from class,” said one teacher. “I refused, saying that my job is to teach. He insulted me and said our primary task is to fulfill the president’s orders and made me go with nine other teachers to clean the stadium for Navruz [holiday celebrating spring].”<sup>58</sup>
- ▶ A factory worker said he thought the factory could not send out so many workers for forced labor without the government’s knowledge.<sup>59</sup>

In addition, five workers from the Andijan and Fergana regions emphasized that the demand for street cleaning intensified in advance of visits by high-level officials.<sup>60</sup> According to one university teacher regarding street beautification in anticipation of a visit by Mirziyoyev:



You can clean at night, you can clean during the day. You can do the work yourself or hire someone to do it for you. As long as the sides of the roads are weeded and made to look nice by the deadline. This work continues until the president’s visit. By the time you get to the end of your assigned stretch of road, weeds have grown back where you started. And it isn’t clear when the president will visit. We waited for his visit for three months. Until then, we teachers worked in shifts for three to four hours [cleaning the roads] every day.<sup>61</sup>

In March 2018, Mirziyoyev announced the *Obod Kishlok* program to rehabilitate rural housing and infrastructure. In remarks introducing the program, the president scolded “irresponsible” local officials, as well as homeowners and village residents, many of whom live in poverty, for letting housing fall into disrepair.<sup>62</sup> The program emphasizes cosmetic improvements to home exteriors, as well as beautification of the grounds around houses visible to the street. Public employees in the Andijan, Jizzakh, Khorezm, Navoi and Samarkand regions said local officials imposed the burden of the president’s program on public institutions.<sup>63</sup> Employees provided consistent accounts of the program’s implementation: the *hokim* assigned responsibility for specific villages to specific public institutions. Small groups of employees were then assigned to convince the owners of 10–15 houses at a time to fix up their homes according to specifications or do the work and pay for materials themselves. This included repairing the exterior wall and gate of each house, installing drywall, painting the outer wall and foundation red or yellow, whitewashing tree trunks and ensuring the grounds were weeded and planted.<sup>64</sup>



After the adoption of the “Obod kishlok” program, local authorities throughout the country forced residents of houses along main roads, like this one in Navoi Region, to paint their houses yellow. June 11, 2018. Photo: UGF

An employee of a state bank said, “Of course this is forced labor. If it weren’t forced, would we really leave our jobs to go to a village and tell people there, ‘You should fix your wall,’ and then if they don’t, fix it ourselves?”<sup>65</sup> He said that he knows the work is illegal but he won’t complain because, “I see what happens to people who complain against their bosses.”<sup>66</sup>

According to a news article, law enforcement officers also complained about required participation in the neighborhood maintenance program. A lieutenant police colonel from Tashkent reported to Ozodlik radio, "We are doing cleaning and repair work. Repairs of city territory is the policy of the president! A decree was issued for all state organizations to take part in the program *Obod Mahalla*. Not just police but also employees of the ministry of health and other public organizations are also cleaning neighborhoods."<sup>67</sup>

## Forced Labor in Wheat Harvesting

At the direction of local authorities, public-sector workers and children completed state-ordered agricultural work, especially wheat and silk cocoon harvesting in several regions. In Uzbekistan, farmers have to deliver a contracted quota of wheat to the government at government-set prices and face consequences if they fail.<sup>68</sup> Authorities, including law enforcement, use pressure, including physical violence, against farmers to produce wheat and ensure it is all turned over to the state.<sup>69</sup>

Five school directors, a teacher and another public employee, all men, said local authorities tasked them with overseeing the wheat harvest on particular farms. They had to guard the wheat in the fields and ensure its delivery to the state.<sup>70</sup> They said the work lasted a month to six weeks, and they worked nearly the entire time, even sleeping in the fields to ensure no wheat was stolen. None of the men said they received any special training or equipment for this work, despite possible threats to their safety given the apparent risk of wheat being stolen. The men emphasized they faced penalties if they refused to go to the fields or if they did not perform as demanded. A school director said, "We will answer with our heads if even one gram of wheat is stolen... I am ordered [to guard the wheat] and, like a soldier, I have to follow orders. It is an order from the *hokimiat*."<sup>71</sup> The director said he would lose his job if he refused to guard the wheat or if any was lost.<sup>72</sup>

The seven public-sector workers interviewed who had participated in the wheat harvest said that the order to guard the fields came from the *hokim*.<sup>73</sup> A director from the Tashkent region said, "Yes, I know the president has promised to end forced labor, but I am ordered by the *hokim* and prosecutor, and I report to them. The authorities are still ordering me."<sup>74</sup> Another director was told by the *hokim* that the order to involve public-sector employees in wheat and other agricultural work was a direct "special request" from the president to assist the motherland in a time of economic instability and insufficient labor supply. He said the *hokim* asked them, "Is it right for you only to teach classes? If you take initiative and say, 'I will contribute to the improvement of my country; your initiative will not go unrewarded. Perhaps the High Leader will say, 'Take this my slave!' and give you a car or a house.'" The director said that all participants at the meeting were required to sign a statement promising to promote these words among their colleagues.<sup>75</sup>

Radio Ozodlik reported that the administration of Samarkand region ordered public organizations and employees to participate in the wheat harvest. According to Ozodlik, at a May 28 administration meeting held from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m., *hokim* Turobjon Juraev assigned oversight responsibility for the wheat harvest in the region to heads of public-sector organizations, including schools and colleges.<sup>76</sup> Organizations were assigned to manage the harvest in the most difficult and struggling districts and farms. A participant of the meeting described Juraev's tone as aggressive and said that he acted extremely agitated.<sup>77</sup>

## Forced and Child Labor in Silk Cocoon Harvesting

Farmers also produce silk cocoons under quota at the direction of the government and face penalties for refusing or failure to meet the quota.<sup>78</sup> Although the production cycle for silk cocoons is short, it is labor intensive and expensive for most farmers, many of whom produce them at a loss. When silk cocoons are ready for harvest, they must be plucked by hand from mulberry branches, a process that must be completed quickly. In several cases in Jizzakh and Syrdarya regions, local officials took children out of school to force them to harvest silk cocoons for no pay:

- ▶ A farmer in Jizzakh said that his daughter and her classmates, ages 14 and 15, harvested cocoons on his farm for a day in exchange for lunch.<sup>79</sup>
- ▶ In Bayavut district in Syrdarya, a farmer said a school director and head of the local *mahalla* [neighborhood] council brought a group of ninth graders (ages 14 and 15) to harvest cocoons at his farm. He noted that “the children only came because it is now forbidden to send the teachers.”<sup>80</sup>
- ▶ A 14-year-old schoolgirl in Gulistan, also in Syrdarya, said that the school director ordered her class of 30 students to harvest silk cocoons. She said that she had asked to stay at school to prepare for exams but the director refused, saying the work was “*khashar*.”<sup>81</sup> The director threatened students, saying those who did not work would not be allowed to take exams required to pass to the next grade while students who did work would receive high marks. She said she worked with her class for three days and was aware that other classes went to farms as well. The work was difficult, in the heat, with little shade. After the children returned to school, she said, they were unprepared for exams because of the lessons they had missed, and the director “forgot” the promise to give high marks to children who worked.<sup>82</sup>
- ▶ In Buvaida, also in Syrdarya, a teacher said the head of the teachers’ union interrupted her class during an exam to order students to harvest silk cocoons on several farms. When the students attempted to refuse, the union representative scolded them and told them the work was necessary to support their homeland and was ordered by the head of the administration. The teacher said all the older children in the school harvested silk cocoons for two days.<sup>83</sup>



Uzbek residents often vacate their homes to grow silkworm caterpillars. May 2018. Photo: Timur Karpov

## Other Forms of Exploitation and Extortion

Local authorities also exploit public-sector employees, farmers and others over whom they wield control, as a steady source of revenue for which they do not publicly account. In a longstanding and widespread practice, local officials require public institutions and farmers to submit large quantities of scrap metal and paper, ostensibly to meet regional or district quotas. In some cases, teachers, pupils and others spend time scouring their neighborhoods to find metal to submit, a time-consuming and arduous task.<sup>84</sup> One teacher said his school is required to submit eight metric tons of metal per year.<sup>85</sup>

In many cases, however, the scrap metal and paper requirement simply operates as a regular extortion scheme through which schools and other institutions collect money from employees and students, to pay for the institution's metal or paper quota. Three teachers said they were required to assign their pupils to collect scrap metal and paper or bring in money for the school to pay a bribe to meet its metal and paper obligations.<sup>86</sup> One medical worker said her organization must submit 1,000 kilograms of scrap metal twice per year, "and no one cares where you get it. Our boss tells us to find a way, but we often end up paying bribes to get a certificate saying we submitted it."<sup>87</sup> Another said that part-time employees have to pay 30,000 soum per month (approximately \$3.75) and full-time employees pay 45,000 soum per month (approximately \$5.63), but she brought in 150 kilograms of metal to get exempted from payment.<sup>88</sup>

A 13-year-old schoolgirl described collecting scrap metal for her school as required by the authorities. "We ask at people's houses, search the dumps, find it at the old tractor park. It's difficult of course. Sometimes there is no metal because more than a thousand schoolchildren in the village are searching for it, and there is none left anywhere so we have to look for a long time. And when you find it, bringing it to school is also a problem [because it is so heavy]."<sup>89</sup> This interview raises serious concerns about the existence of the worst forms of child labor in scrap metal collection in Uzbekistan. The ILO has outlined the dangerous nature of trash collecting,<sup>90</sup> as this indicates at least some children are forced to do it in Uzbekistan by local officials.

Another regular form of exploitation of public-sector and other workers is unexplained wage deductions to pay for construction materials or replacement workers for forced labor, or to support or buy mandatory tickets for holiday celebrations and other events.<sup>91</sup> A teacher described a litany of deductions:



What else do they deduct money for at school? For subscriptions, concerts, scrap metal, repairs, receptions for visiting commissions and the like. Not long ago they came up with an interesting method for collecting money for the *Obod Kishlok* program. The *hokimiat* is supposed to repair and clean two neighborhoods as a model. To repair the houses, pave the roads and do other building work in these neighborhoods, the *hokimiat* started eying teachers' salaries. Since they couldn't find a way to take them directly, they organized a charity concert and forcibly distributed tickets to all teachers for 10,000 soum each (approximately \$1.25) and withheld the money from our salaries—100% of teachers throughout the district.<sup>92</sup>





Health and education workers also saw regular salary deductions, including for mandatory subscriptions to newspapers and magazines they did not want.<sup>93</sup> According to one medical worker, “Every month they withhold money for something. Last year was it was 80,000 soum (approximately \$10) for a subscription to a newspaper no one reads. I don’t know what the deduction is for now.”<sup>94</sup>

The widespread culture of worker exploitation by authorities has also resulted in abuse of some employees for private benefit. Four public-sector employees, all in the Andijan region, said their directors or supervisors forced them to perform domestic chores such as childcare, cooking, cleaning, manual labor or agricultural work in private gardens or orchards.<sup>95</sup> One said she was made to clean the house of a union representative.<sup>96</sup> As with other forced labor, the workers said their participation was involuntarily and they would be fired or disciplined if they refused or complained.

All workers interviewed spoke of the devastating impact of forced labor, which robs workers of their time, dignity and ability to earn a decent wage; institutions of thousands of hours of qualified staff time per year; and public services, particularly in the education and health care sectors, of their quality. Teachers and other public-sector employees face a double form of exploitation in that they are required to perform unpaid work outside the scope of their professional duties as well as bear an extra workload to cover for colleagues absent because of forced labor.

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Forced labor also has a disproportionate impact on the poor. Low-wage public-sector employees are not willing to risk their jobs or incomes by complaining about or refusing forced labor, are unable to hire people to replace them, and are less able to bear the cost of food, transportation and supplies that often accompany forced labor. Poor people are less able to pay for better services, such as private doctors or tutors, when the quality of their clinics and schools declines because staff are cleaning ditches or working in the fields. A nurse at a rural clinic said that patients who had the financial ability traveled to the city for health care since clinic staff were absent so often they could not care for patients, so only the poorest families continue to rely on the clinic.<sup>97</sup> Teachers said when they have to leave school to clean streets, plant flowers or do maintenance work, they cancel classes or their classes are covered by another teacher who may not teach the same subjects. A university teacher said sometimes he has students fulfill his labor assignments, saying that he does not pay them but gives them high marks instead.<sup>98</sup>



## Labor Unions Not Independent, Do Not Protect Workers

With just six exceptions, all public employees interviewed said they belong to a labor union. Of the six, three people said they did not know if they were members, but that union dues were withheld from their salaries.<sup>99</sup> One person refused to join;<sup>100</sup> one had no contract;<sup>101</sup> and one was retired.<sup>102</sup> Some said they signed up for membership when they signed their contracts; others said they were enrolled automatically when they were hired. All unions currently in existence in Uzbekistan are affiliates of the Federation of Trade Unions of Uzbekistan (FTUU). While no laws prohibit establishment of unions independent of the FTUU, the only recent effort to do so resulted in a legal decision to dissolve the nascent organization and incarcerate two of the three co-founders of the union, one of whom died in prison.<sup>103</sup>

Independent researchers have documented the Uzbek government's extensive control over the FTUU, and the connection its leadership has with employers.<sup>104</sup> Public employees interviewed provided support for that research, describing their unions as weak and subordinate to or controlled by management or

Photo: This caricature is based on discussion about constant involvement of teachers in various kinds of forced labor not related to their direct professional duties that took place at the "International Press Club" in Tashkent on July 7, 2017. Svetlana Ortikova and Bakhodir Tojiev, members of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis (Parliament) of Uzbekistan, responded to questions put forward by journalists about forced labor. Journalist Barchinoy Juraeva noted that there was clear evidence that the obligation to clean streets and carry out agricultural work was undertaken by employees of all public institutions, and asked for a response. Senator Bakhodir Tojiev replied that "he had never heard a single complaint from teachers regarding forced labor." Senator Svetlana Artykova added that such employees needed to engage in this work because "nobody from outside would come to clean our streets." Photo: UGF

government. They described unions as serving a social function by collecting money for holiday and birthday celebrations, providing occasional material support to members in the form of groceries or clothing, and offering subsidized holiday trips and children's camps.<sup>105</sup> One teacher said that unions provide material support so that employees "keep their mouths shut."<sup>106</sup>

Workers said their unions played no role in promoting or protecting worker rights or helping them resolve problems. Instead, four employees described union leadership as an extension of management or local government or subject to interference by management.<sup>107</sup> According to one teacher, the union was "a slave to the institution."<sup>108</sup> Three directors acknowledged this interference. The director of one public organization said, "We have a union but it is not independent. To a certain extent it is dependent on the management. Our union is like this. I have never heard of the union doing any independent activity. My union helps me fulfill the *Obod Kishlok* program."<sup>109</sup> Another said that "the union itself needs protection."<sup>110</sup> Another admitted that "the union is subordinate to me, so of course it does nothing."<sup>111</sup>

A teacher who served as union chairperson for five years described the school director's overt interference. By agreement with the school director, she had the unwritten task of "hearing complaints from teachers who thought their rights were violated and explaining to them that they were wrong."<sup>112</sup> The teacher said when she angered the director by standing up for a teacher who failed to show up for mandatory street cleaning, he removed her from her chairmanship.<sup>113</sup>

Workers also said their unions did nothing to stop persistent forced labor and exploitation of public-sector employees.<sup>114</sup> On the contrary, some described their unions as "helpless"<sup>115</sup> or "toothless"<sup>116</sup> and reported that union leadership carries out forced labor along with other workers.<sup>117</sup> Others said their unions actually help authorities organize, direct and supervise forced labor of their members.<sup>118</sup>

Only one teacher said the union chairman told members about the decree banning forced labor and reminded them of its prohibition at a subsequent meeting. He did not, however, advise members on what to do if their rights are violated. She also said that the union does not know its rights and only fulfills orders from above.<sup>119</sup>

Two workers said they had seen advertisements for the feedback mechanism run by the FTUU but did not trust it would prove effective or protect them from retaliation.<sup>120</sup> One teacher said she would never call the FTUU hotline based on the example of her own union chair, saying "Even though she is the chairperson of the union, she does not have the will to go against the director or the *hokimiat*. She can't say, 'We won't carry out forced labor. It's against the government, it's illegal.' Instead she tells teachers [to work]."<sup>121</sup>

Some [workers] described their unions as "helpless" or "toothless" and report that union leadership carries out forced labor along with other workers. Others said their unions actually help authorities organize, direct and supervise forced labor of their members.

# Conclusion

In more than 260 interviews with public employees, farmers and other workers subjected to forced labor, conducted in Uzbekistan by independent monitors in May, June and July 2018, the following observations were discernable:

- ▶ The central government has recently taken a stand against the forced labor of public-sector employees that has begun to influence regional and local officials, inducing some to stop using forced labor or take steps to try to hide it.
- ▶ Despite this, most public-sector employees interviewed said that their supervisors or local officials continued to exploit them for forced labor and/or money. Officials rely on public-sector employees and others over whom they have control to do a variety of unpaid work, including street cleaning, community maintenance and beautification, construction, wheat harvesting and collection of scrap metal and paper.
- ▶ Despite declarations against forced labor, the central government has continued to require regional and local officials to fulfill mandates, such as wheat and silk quotas and the *Obod Kishlok* program, which they carry out using forced labor.
- ▶ Public-sector employees spend enormous amounts of time on forced labor, amounting to hours or days a week, robbing public institutions of staff time and undermining the quality of public services such as health and education. Public-sector employees also bear costs for forced labor, including for food, transportation, tools, supplies and flowers and trees to plant.
- ▶ Labor unions are weak and subordinate to influence from both government and management. Union members said that their unions do not protect them from forced labor and, indeed, some union leaders assist management in organizing forced labor. This undermines the perceived effectiveness of union-led mechanisms for grievance and remedy.

The worker rights violations discussed here show that forced labor and exploitation in the cotton sector are not isolated but rather part of a wider set of problems endemic to authoritarianism, including the lack of internationally recognized decent work norms, freedom of association and representative or independent labor organizations. Excessive oversight by local government and the use of law enforcement to oversee the implementation of abusive policies, as well as corruption, exacerbate these problems and leave public workers and others highly vulnerable to exploitation.

While significant efforts are underway to address forced labor in cotton production, ending forced labor and protecting worker rights in Uzbekistan will require implementation of a broader set of reforms designed to empower workers, establish a culture of prevention and accountability for forced labor, and provide effective grievance mechanisms and access to remedies for victims. The government should also ensure that mandates imposed on regional and district officials are adequately funded, enact measures to combat corruption and ensure budget transparency. Fundamental to enacting these reforms will be allowing for meaningful freedom of association in Uzbekistan to ensure that independent and representative workers' organizations can help protect workers against forced labor.

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25 Uzbek-German Forum interviews with doctor, Buvaida district, Fergana region, June 15, 2018; and teacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, May 26, 2018.

26 Uzbek-German Forum interview with school director 2, Bekabad district, Tashkent region, July 4, 2018.

27 Uzbek-German Forum interviews with farmer, Gurlen district, Khorezm region, May 27, 2018; teacher, Andijan, Andijan region, May 11, 2018; teacher, Alty-Oryk district, Fergana region, June 20, 2018; doctor, Buvaida district, Fergana region, June 15, 2018; child center employee, Olty-Aryk district, Fergana region, June 20, 2018; school director Chirkachi district, Kashkadarya region, May 14, 2018; nurse, Khuzhobod district, Andijan region, June 5, 2018; university instructor, Andijan, Andijan region, June 2, 2018; teacher, Bulokboshi district, Andijan region, June 6, 2018; teacher, Oltynkul district, Andijan region, June 7, 2018; head of farm, Gurlen district, Khorezm region, June 18, 2018; kindergarten employee, Bulokboshi district, Andijan region, June 9, 2018; teacher, Buz district, Andijan region, June 24, 2018; child center employee, Pakhtakor district, Jizzakh region, June 7, 2018; hospital orderly, Andijan, Andijan region, June 23, 2018; inmate of pre-release prison colony, Gulistan district, Syrdarya region, June 9, 2018; farmer, Pakhtakor district, Jizzakh region, June 9, 2018; teacher, Bulokboshi district, Andijan region, June 16, 2018; factory worker, Khanabad district, Andijan region, June 10, 2018; teacher, Pakhtakor district, Jizzakh region, June 26, 2018; teacher, Gurlen district, Khorezm region, June 8, 2018; teacher, Gurlen district, Khorezm region, May 7, 2018; public health employee, Jizzakh, Jizzakh region, June 22, 2018; public employee, Poyaryk district, Samarkand region, June 5, 2018; medical worker, Nukus, Karakalpakstan, June 30, 2018; public employee, Buka district, Tashkent region, July 4, 2018; school director 1, Bekabad district, Tashkent region, July 4, 2018; school director 2, Bekabad district, Tashkent region, July 4, 2018; school director 1, Zarbdar district, Jizzakh region, July 3, 2018; school director 2, Zarbdar district, Jizzakh region, July 3, 2018; teacher, Poyarik district, Samarkand region, June 4, 2018; public utility employee, Mirzachel district, Jizzakh region, June 1, 2018; schoolgirl, Mirzachel district, Jizzakh region, June 1, 2018; bank employee, Okdarya district, Samarkand region, June 3, 2018; public employee, Kanimekh district, Navoi region, June 7, 2018; public organization Kanimekh district, Navoi region, June 6, 2018; market worker, Poyarik district, Samarkand, June 4, 2018; schoolgirl, Navoi district, Navoi region, June 8, 2018; teacher, Andijan, Andijan region, May 25, 2018; medical worker, Khuzhobod district, Andijan region, June 1, 2018; college director, Bulokboshi district, Andijan region, May 31, 2018; public utility engineer, Izboskan district, Andijan region, May 15, 2018; teacher, Nukus, Karakalpakstan, May 3, 2018; 14-year old schoolgirl, Gulistan district, Syrdarya, May 2018; and letter from teacher, Buvaida district, Syrdarya region, May 23, 2018.

28 Uzbek-German Forum interviews with school psychologist, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, May 26, 2018; bank employee, Okdarya district, Samarkand region, June 3, 2018; public employee, Buka district, Tashkent region, July 4, 2018; school director 1, Bekabad district, Tashkent region, July 4, 2018; school director 1, Zarbdar district, Jizzakh region, July 3, 2018; teacher, Poyarik district, Samarkand region, June 4, 2018; teacher, Kattakurgan district, Samarkand region, June 3, 2018; public employee, Kanimekh district, Navoi region, June 7, 2018; director of public organization, Kanimekh district, Navoi region, June 6, 2018; and teacher, Buz district, Andijan region, June 24, 2018.

29 Uzbek-German Forum interview with tax inspector, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, June 11, 2018; child center employee, Olty-Aryk district, Fergana region, June 20, 2018; inmate of pre-release prison colony, Gulistan district, Syrdarya region, June 9, 2018; farmer, Pakhtakor district, Jizzakh region, June 9, 2018; teacher, Pakhtakor district, Jizzakh region, June 26, 2018; farmer, Gurlen district, Khorezm region, June 7, 2018; public health employee, Jizzakh, Jizzakh region, June 22, 2018; public employee, Buka district, Tashkent region, July 4, 2018; school director 1, Bekabad district, Tashkent region, July 4, 2018; school director 1, Zarbdar district, Jizzakh region, July 3, 2018; school director 2, Zarbdar district, Jizzakh region, July 3, 2018; public utility employee, Mirzachel district, Jizzakh region, June 1, 2018; schoolgirl, Mirzachel district, Jizzakh region, June 1, 2018; bank employee, Okdarya district, Samarkand region, June 3, 2018; bank employee, Ishtykhan district, Samarkand region, June 3, 2018; director of public organization, Kanimekh district, Navoi region, June 6, 2018; and schoolgirl, Navoi district [Karmana], Navoi region, June 8, 2018.

30 Uzbek-German Forum interview with teacher, Andijan, Andijan region, May 11, 2018.

31 Uzbek-German Forum interviews with teacher, Alty-Oryk district, Fergana region, June 20, 2018; tax inspector, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, June 11, 2018; child center employee, Olty-Aryk district, Fergana region, June 20, 2018; teacher, Buvaida district, Fergana region, May 19, 2018; school psychologist, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, May 26, 2018; teacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, May 26, 2018; and teacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, June 1, 2018.

32 Uzbek-German Forum interview with doctor, Buvaida district, Fergana region, June 15, 2018.

33 See for example, “The Doctor Will See You—As Soon as He’s Done Street-Cleaning,” Khurmat Babajan and Farangis Najibullah, *RFE/RL*, July 9, 2018, <https://www.rferl.org/a/the-doctor-will-see-you—as-soon-as-he-s-done-street-cleaning/29353178.html> (accessed July 13, 2018); “Maxam-Chirchiq” корхонаси ишчилари Охангаронда биноларни бузишга мажбурланмоқда [Employees of Maxam-Chirchiq are forced to demolish buildings in Ahangaran], *Ozodlik*, July 21, 2018, <https://www.ozodlik.org/a/uzbekiston-majburiy-mehnat-maxam-chirchiq/29380925.html> (accessed October 10, 2018); “БЕКОБОД – ‘Металлурги’ шифофонаси ходимлари яна мажбурий меҳнатга жалб этилди [Employees of ‘Metallurg’ Hospital Again Forced to Work],” *Ozodlik*, July 17, 2018, <https://www.ozodlik.org/a/sizdan-telegram-majburiy-mehnat/29372105.html> (accessed October 10, 2018); “САМАРКАНД – «Пайарикдаги коллеж ўқитувчилари мардикорга айланиб қолди» [Samarkand—Teachers from college in Paiaryk have become true day laborers],” *Ozodlik*, July 6, 2018, <https://www.ozodlik.org/a/sizdan-telegram-kollej/29347250.html> (accessed October 10, 2018); Ўқитувчиларни ободонлаштириш ишига жалб этган мактаб директори лавозимидан

четлатилди [School Director Brought to Account for Forcing Teachers to Work on Street Maintenance], Kun, May 23, 2018, <https://kun.uz/news/2018/05/23/ukituvcilarni-obodonlastiris-isiga-zalb-etgan-maktab-direktori-lavozimidan-ctlatildi> (accessed October 10, 2018).

34 Uzbek-German Forum interviews with teacher, Andijan, Andijan region, May 11, 2018; doctor, Buvaidda district, Fergana region, June 15, 2018; public utility employee, Nukus, Karakalpakstan, May 3, 2018; school director Chirkachi district, Kashkadarya region, May 14, 2018; nurse, Khuzhobod district, Andijan region, June 5, 2018; university instructor, Andijan, Andijan region, June 2, 2018; teacher, Bulokboshi district, Andijan region, June 6, 2018; teacher, Oltynkul district, Andijan region, June 7, 2018; kindergarten employee, Bulokboshi district, Andijan region, June 9, 2018; teacher, Buz district, Andijan region, June 24, 2018; child center employee, Pakhtakor district, Jizzakh region, June 7, 2018; hospital orderly, Andijan, Andijan region, June 23, 2018; teacher, Bulokboshi district, Andijan region, June 16, 2018; factory worker, Khanabad district, Andijan region, June 10, 2018; teacher, Pakhtakor district, Jizzakh region, June 26, 2018; public health employee, Jizzakh, Jizzakh region, June 22, 2018; public employee, Poyaryk district, Samarkand region, June 5, 2018; medical worker, Nukus, Karakalpakstan, June 30, 2018; teacher, Poyarik district, Samarkand region, June 4, 2018; public utility employee, Mirzachul district, Jizzakh region, June 1, 2018; bank employee, Okdarya district, Samarkand region, June 3, 2018; teacher, Kattakurgan district, Samarkand region, June 3, 2018; public employee, Kanimekh district, Navoi region, June 7, 2018; director of public organization, Kanimekh district, Navoi region, June 6, 2018; nurse, Bulokboshi district, Andijan region, May 12, 2018; teacher, Andijan, Andijan region, May 25, 2018; medical worker, Khuzhobod district, Andijan region, June 1, 2018; college director, Bulokboshi district, Andijan region, May 31, 2018; teacher, Andijan district, Andijan region, May 28, 2018; public utility engineer, Izboskan district, Andijan region, May 15, 2018; teacher, Nukus, Karakalpakstan, May 3, 2018; teacher, Alty-Oryk district, Fergana region, June 20, 2018; tax inspector, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, June 11, 2018; child center employee, Olty-Aryk district, Fergana region, June 20, 2018; teacher, Buvaidda district, Fergana region, May 19, 2018; school psychologist, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, May 26, 2018; teacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, May 26, 2018; teacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, June 1, 2018; teacher, Gurlen district, Khorezm region, May 28, 2018; teacher, Gurlen district, Khorezm region, June 8, 2018; nurse, Ellikkala district, Karakalpakstan, June 9, 2018; and teacher, Ellikkala district, Karakalpakstan, June 10, 2018.

35 Uzbek-German Forum interviews with farmer, Pakhtakor district, Jizzakh region, June 9, 2018; market worker, Poyarik district, Samarkand region, June 4, 2018; and schoolgirl, Mirzachul district, Jizzakh region, June 1, 2018.

36 Uzbek-German Forum interviews with teacher, Alty-Oryk district, Fergana region, June 20, 2018; tax inspector, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, June 11, 2018; child center employee, Olty-Aryk district, Fergana region, June 20, 2018; teacher, Buvaidda district, Fergana region, May 19, 2018; school psychologist, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, May 26, 2018; teacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, May 26, 2018; teacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, June 1, 2018.

37 Uzbek-German Forum interview with teacher, Alty-Oryk district, Fergana region, June 20, 2018.

38 Uzbek-German Forum interview with teacher, Gurlen district, Khorezm region, June 8, 2018.

39 Uzbek-German Forum interview with teacher, Gurlen district, Khorezm region, June 8, 2018.

40 Uzbek-German Forum interviews with nurse, Ellikkala district, Karakalpakstan, June 9, 2018; and teacher, Ellikkala district, Karakalpakstan, June 10, 2018.

41 Uzbek-German Forum interviews with child center employee, Pakhtakor district, Jizzakh region, June 7, 2018.

42 Uzbek-German Forum interviews with state factory worker, Khanabad district, Andijan region, June 10, 2018; public employee, Kanimekh district, Navoi region, June 7, 2018; teacher, Buz district, Andijan region, June 24, 2018; hospital orderly, Andijan, Andijan region, June 23, 2018; college director, Bulokboshi district, Andijan region, May 31, 2018.

43 Uzbek-German Forum interview with doctor, Buvaidda district, Fergana region, June 15, 2018.

44 Uzbek-German Forum interview with school director Chirkachi district, Kashkadarya region, May 14, 2018.

45 Uzbek-German Forum interview with factory worker, Khanabad district, Andijan region, June 10, 2018.

46 Uzbek-German Forum interview with teacher, Pakhtakor district, Jizzakh region, June 26, 2018.

47 Uzbek-German Forum interview with college director, Bulokboshi district, Andijan region, May 31, 2018.

48 Ibid.

49 Uzbek-German Forum interview with teacher, Andijan, Andijan region, May 11, 2018.

50 Uzbek-German Forum interviews with university teacher, Andijan, Andijan region, June 2, 2018.

51 Uzbek-German Forum interview with nurse, Khuzhobod district, Andijan region, June 5, 2018.

52 Ibid.

53 Fifteen total respondents reported this, but it was not asked as a survey question directly. It emerged through responses to other questions, indicating it may be more widespread than indicated by the actual reports of it received in this survey.

54 Uzbek-German Forum interview with teacher, Gurlen district, Khorezm region, May 2018.

55 Uzbek-German Forum interviews with teacher, Andijan, Andijan region, May 11, 2018; teacher, Alty-Oryk district, Fergana region, June 20, 2018; doctor, Buvaidda district, Fergana region, June 15, 2018; tax inspector, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, June 11, 2018; child center employee, Olty-Aryk district, Fergana region, June 20, 2018; nurse, Khuzhobod district, Andijan region, June 5, 2018; university teacher, Andijan, Andijan region, June 2, 2018; teacher, Bulokboshi district, Andijan region, June 6, 2018; teacher, Oltynkul district, Andijan region, June 7, 2018; kindergarten employee, Bulokboshi district, Andijan region, June 9, 2018; teacher, Buz district, Andijan region, June 24, 2018; hospital orderly, Andijan, Andijan region, June 23, 2018; teacher, Bulokboshi district, Andijan region, June 16, 2018; factory worker, Khanabad district, Andijan region, June 10, 2018; teacher, Pakhtakor district, Jizzakh region, June 26, 2018; teacher, Gurlen district, Khorezm region, June 8, 2018; teacher, Gurlen district, Khorezm region, May 2018; school psychologist, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, May 26, 2018; teacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, June 1, 2018; teacher, Poyarik district, Samarkand region, June 4, 2018; public utility employee, Mirzachul district, Jizzakh region, June 1, 2018; bank employee, Okdarya district, Samarkand region, June 3, 2018; public employee, Kanimekh district, Navoi region, June 7, 2018; director of public organization, Kanimekh district, Navoi region, June 6, 2018; nurse, Bulokboshi district, Andijan region, May 12, 2018; nurse, Bulokboshi district, Andijan region, May 12, 2018; medical worker, Khuzhobod district, Andijan region, June 1, 2018; college director, Bulokboshi district, Andijan region, May 31, 2018; and public utility engineer, Izboskan district, Andijan region, May 15, 2018.

56 Uzbek-German Forum interviews with teacher, Andijan, Andijan region, May 11, 2018; teacher, Alty-Oryk district, Fergana region, June 20, 2018; doctor, Buvaidda district, Fergana region, June 15, 2018; tax inspector, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, June 11, 2018; child center employee, Olty-Aryk district, Fergana region, June 20, 2018; school director Chirkachi district, Kashkadarya region, May 14, 2018; nurse, Khuzhobod district, Andijan region, June 5, 2018; kindergarten employee, Bulokboshi district, Andijan region, June 9, 2018; teacher, Buz district, Andijan region, June 24, 2018; child center employee, Pakhtakor district, Jizzakh region, June 7, 2018; teacher, Pakhtakor district, Jizzakh region, June 26, 2018; teacher, Gurlen district, Khorezm region, June 8, 2018; teacher, Gurlen district, Khorezm region, May 26, 2018; public health employee, Jizzakh, Jizzakh region, June 22, 2018; public employee, Poyaryk district, Samarkand region, June 5, 2018; school psychologist, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, May 26, 2018; public employee, Buka district, Tashkent region, July 4, 2018; school director 1, Bekabad district, Tashkent region, July 4, 2018; school director 2, Bekabad district, Tashkent region, July 4, 2018; school director 1, Zarbdar district, Jizzakh region, July 3, 2018; school director 2, Zarbdar district, Jizzakh region, July 3, 2018; teacher, Poyarik district, Samarkand region, June 4, 2018; public utility employee, Mirzachul district, Jizzakh region, June 1, 2018; bank employee, Okdarya district, Samarkand region, June 3, 2018; bank employee, Ishtykhan district, Samarkand region, June 3, 2018; school director, Buka district, Tashkent region, July 4, 2018; public employee, Kanimekh district, Navoi region, June 7, 2018; director of public organization Kanimekh district, Navoi region, June 6, 2018; market worker, Poyarik district, Samarkand region, June 4, 2018; nurse, Bulokboshi district,



Andijan region, May 12, 2018; teacher, Andijan, Andijan region, May 25, 2018; medical worker, Khuzhobod district, Andijan region, June 1, 2018; college director, Bulokboshi district, Andijan region, May 31, 2018; and public utility engineer, Izboskan district, Andijan region, May 15, 2018.

57 Uzbek-German Forum interviews with child center employee, Olty-Aryk district, Fergana region, June 20, 2018; teacher, Andijan, Andijan region, May 11, 2018; teacher, Gurlen district, Khorezm region, May 26, 2018; school psychologist, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, May 26, 2018; public employee, Buka district, Tashkent region, July 4, 2018; school director 1, Bekabad district, Tashkent region, July 4, 2018; school director 2, Bekabad district, Tashkent region, July 4, 2018; school director 1, Zarbdar district, Jizzakh region, July 3, 2018; school director 2, Zarbdar district, Jizzakh region, July 3, 2018; teacher, Poyarik district, Samarkand region, June 4, 2018; bank employee, Okdarya district, Samarkand region, June 3, 2018; school director, Buka district, Tashkent region, July 4, 2018; teacher, Kattakurgan district, Samarkand region, June 3, 2018; public employee, Kanimekh district, Navoi region, June 7, 2018; director of public organization, Kanimekh district, Navoi region, June 6, 2018; nurse, Bulakboshi district, Andijan region, May 12, 2018; and public utility engineer, Izboskan district, Andijan region, May 15, 2018.

58 Uzbek-German Forum interview with teacher, Bulokboshi district, Andijan region, June 16, 2018.

59 Uzbek-German Forum interview with factory worker, Khanabad district, Andijan region, June 10, 2018.

60 Uzbek-German Forum interviews with university instructor, Andijan, Andijan region, June 2, 2018; kindergarten employee, Bulokboshi district, Andijan region, June 9, 2018; teacher, Buz district, Andijan region, June 24, 2018; school psychologist, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, May 26, 2018; and teacher, Uchkuprik district, Fergana region, May 26, 2018.

61 Uzbek-German Forum interview with university teacher, Andijan, Andijan region, June 2, 2018.

62 “Принята программа ‘Обод Кишлоқ’ [The Well-Maintained Village Program is Passed],” *Uz Daily*, March 30, 2018, <https://www.uzdaily.uz/articles-id-36774.htm> (accessed September 11, 2018).

63 Uzbek-German Forum interviews with teacher, Gurlen district, Khorezm region, June 8, 2018; teacher, Oltynkul district, Andijan region, June 7, 2018; teacher, Poyarik district, Samarkand region, June 4, 2018; public utility employee, Mirzachul district, Jizzakh region, June 1, 2018; bank employee, Okdarya district, Samarkand region, June 3, 2018; bank employee, Ishtykhan district, Samarkand region, June 3, 2018; public employee, Kanimekh district, Navoi region, June 7, 2018; director of public organization, Kanimekh district, Navoi region, June 6, 2018; market worker, Poyarik district, Samarkand, June 4, 2018; public utility engineer, Izboskan district, Andijan region, May 15, 2018; public employee, Poyaryk district, Samarkand region, June 5, 2018; and teacher, Pakhtakor district, Jizzakh region, June 26, 2018.

64 Uzbek-German Forum interview with teacher, Poyarik district, Samarkand region, June 4, 2018; public utility employee, Mirzachul district, Jizzakh region, June 1, 2018; public employee, Poyaryk district, Samarkand region, June 5, 2018; bank employee, Okdarya district, Samarkand region, June 3, 2018; teacher, Oltynkul district, Andijan region, June 7, 2018; hospital orderly, Andijan, Andijan region, June 23, 2018; factory worker, Khanabad district, Andijan region, June 10, 2018; and medical worker, Khuzhobod district, Andijan region, June 1, 2018. Media outlets also reported on the forced labor of public-sector employees in *Obod Kishlok*; see for example: “НАВОИЙ – «Санитария-эпидемиология хизмати ходимлари томоркани текширяпти [Navoi: Employees of the Sanitary-Epidemiological Station Inspecting Gardens],” *Ozodlik*, June 8, 2018, <https://www.ozodlik.org/a/sizdan-telegram-majburiy-mehnat/29280202.html> (accessed October 26, 2018).

65 Uzbek-German Forum interview with bank employee, Okdarya district, Samarkand region, June 3, 2018.

66 Ibid.

67 “В Ташкенте сотрудников милиции заставили подметать улицы [Police in Tashkent Forced to Sweep Streets],” *Mekhrizon Bekieva*, *Ozodlik*, July 12, 2018, <https://rus.ozodlik.org/a/29283687.html> (accessed July 13 2018).

68 For example, this World Bank irrigation study includes a description of the state-order wheat production system. See: Rob Swinkels, Ekaterina Romanova, and Evgeny Kochkin, “Exploratory assessment of factors that influence quality of local irrigation water governance in Uzbekistan,” World Bank Group, 2015, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/590421472098503155/pdf/108006-REPLACEMENT-PUBLIC-Local-Irrigation-Governance-UZ-Eng-FINAL-08092016.pdf> (accessed October 10, 2018), pp 13, 22, 30. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/590421472098503155/pdf/108006-REPLACEMENT-PUBLIC-Local-Irrigation-Governance-UZ-Eng-FINAL-08092016.pdf>. Photos circulated on social media in October 2018 showed men holding heavy rocks and standing knee-deep in an irrigation ditch, apparently as punishment. Subsequent investigations by journalists revealed they were punished by local officials for failure to irrigate wheat crops on time. “6 киши сувга туширилгани ортидан О ўр онда 3 мулозим жаримага тортилди [Three Fined for Forcing 6 into the Water],” *Saddridin Ashur*, *Ozodlik*, October 27, 2018, <https://www.ozodlik.org/a/fermer-ariq-tahqirlash/29567143.html> (accessed October 29, 2018).

69 Uzbek-German Forum interview with farmer, Gurlen district, Khorezm, June 7, 2018; farmer, Dustlik district, Jizzakh region, June 20, 2018. See also, “В отношении главы районной милиции, беспощадно избившего фермеров, начата служебная проверка [Internal Investigation Launched against Chief of District Police for Brutally Beating Farmers],” *Saddridin Ashur*, *Ozodlik*, June 28, 2018; “Police officers forcefully take wheat collected by farmers,” [video], *El Tuz*, July 6, 2018; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5KJe7HaODDc> (accessed July 14, 2018).

70 Uzbek-German Forum interviews with school director 1, Bekabad district, Tashkent region, July 4, 2018; school director 2, Bekabad district, Tashkent region, July 4, 2018; school director 1, Zarbdar district, Jizzakh region, July 3, 2018; school director 2, Zarbdar district, Jizzakh region, July 3, 2018; school director, Buka district, Tashkent region, July 4, 2018; teacher, Buz district, Andijan region, June 24, 2018; public employee, Buka district, Tashkent region, July 4, 2018.

71 Uzbek-German Forum interview with school director, Bekabad district, Tashkent region, July 4, 2018.

72 Ibid.

73 Uzbek-German Forum interviews with school director 1, Bekabad district, Tashkent region, July 4, 2018; school director 2, Bekabad district, Tashkent region, July 4, 2018; school director 1, Zarbdar district, Jizzakh region, July 3, 2018; school director 2, Zarbdar district, Jizzakh region, July 3, 2018; school director, Buka district, Tashkent region, July 4, 2018; teacher, Buz district, Andijan region, June 24, 2018; public employee, Buka district, Tashkent region, July 4, 2018.

74 Uzbek-German Forum interviews with school director 1, Bekabad district, Tashkent region, July 4, 2018.

75 Uzbek-German Forum interview with teacher, Buz district, Andijan region, June 24, 2018

76 “Самарқандда пишмаган галла учун сафарбарлик эълон қилинди [Mobilization announced in Samarkand for harvest of not yet ripened wheat],” *Ozodlik*, June 5, 2018, <https://www.ozodlik.org/a/самарқандда-пишмаган-галла-учун-сафарбарлик-эълон-қилинди/29273131.html> (accessed August 1, 2018).

77 Ibid.

78 The Uzbek-German Forum interviewed eight farmers who produced silk cocoons in spring 2018: Uzbek-German Forum interviews with farmer, Zarbdor district, Jizzakh region, June 4, 2018; farmer, Bayavut district, Syrdarya region, May 30, 2018; farmer, Izboskan district, Andijan region, June 10, 2018; farmer, Gurlen district, Khorezm region; farmer, Zarbdor district, Jizzakh region, May 28, 2018; farmer, Zarbdor district, Jizzakh region, May 29, 2018; and farmer, Markhamat district, Andijan region, June 3, 2018. An updated report on silk production in Uzbekistan is forthcoming in 2018. See also “Silk Loop for Uzbek farmers,” *Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights*, September 12, 2015, <http://uzbekgermanforum.org/report-silk-loop-for-uzbek-farmers/> (accessed September 10, 2018).

79 Uzbek-German Forum interview with farmer, Zarbdor district, Jizzakh region, May 28, 2018.

80 Uzbek-German Forum interview with farmer, Bayavut district, Syrdarya region, May 30, 2018.

81 Uzbek-German Forum interview with 14-year old schoolgirl, Gulistan district, Syrdarya, May 26, 2018.

82 Ibid.

83 Letter from teacher, Buvaida, Syrdarya region, to the Uzbek-German Forum, May 28, 2018.

84 Uzbek-German Forum interviews with teacher, Poyarik district, Samarkand region, June 4, 2018; schoolgirl, Mirzachul district, Jizzakh region, June 1, 2018; bank employee, Okdarya district, Samarkand region, June 3, 2018; teacher, Andijan, Andijan region, May 25, 2018; medical worker, Khuzhobod district, Andijan region, June 1, 2018; teacher, Oltynkul district, Andijan region, June 7, 2018; farmer, Gurlen district, Khorezm, June 7, 2018; farmer, Dustlik district, Jizzakh region, June 20, 2018; and public health employee, Jizzakh, Jizzakh region, June 22, 2018.

85 Uzbek-German Forum interview with teacher, Pakhtakor district, Jizzakh region, June 26, 2018.

86 Uzbek-German Forum interviews with teacher, Oltynkul district, Andijan region, June 7, 2018; teacher, Pakhtakor district, Jizzakh region, June 26, 2018; and teacher, Andijan, Andijan region, May 25, 2018.

87 Uzbek-German Forum interview with medical worker, Khuzhobod district, Andijan region, June 1, 2018.

88 Uzbek-German Forum interview with public health employee, Jizzakh, Jizzakh region, June 22, 2018.

89 Uzbek-German Forum interview with schoolgirl, Navoi district, Navoi region, June 8, 2018.

90 International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour, International Labour Organization, "Investigating the Worst Forms of Child Labour: A synthesis report of selected rapid assessment and national reports," pg. 24-26.

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108 Uzbek-German Forum interview with teacher, Bulokboshi district, Andijan region, June 6, 2018.

109 Uzbek-German Forum interview with director of public organization Kanimekh district, Navoi region, June 6, 2018.

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**UGF** is a Berlin-based NGO whose main activity is monitoring and reporting on the human rights situation in Uzbekistan, as well as supporting local activists who work inside the country. The organization was founded and is led by the award-winning human rights activist, Umida Niyazova, who was forced to flee her native Uzbekistan in 2006 because of her human rights work.



Teachers in Andijan region were forced to do maintenance work cleaning public spaces in advance of a visit from Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. April 5, 2018. Photo: Ozodlik—Uzbek Service of RFE/RL



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