



Review of the Use of Forced Labor in Turkmenistan During the 2020 Cotton Harvest

March 2021

This report is based on material provided by turkmen.news observers and monitors for the Turkmen Initiative for Human Rights (TIHR) working in Turkmenistan. Interviewees' names are withheld from the report in order to protect their safety.

Monitoring was carried out in four of the five regions of Turkmenistan — Ahal, Dashoguz, Lebap, and Mary.

“Agriculture cannot play this dynamic, wealth-creating role without an enabling policy environment, which ensures adequate institutions, decent work, and sufficient, well-targeted public and private investment.”

“Promotion of rural employment for poverty reduction.” International Labour Conference, 2008.

Contents

| | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Introduction | 4 | |
| Protection from forced labor in international and domestic law | 7 | International law |
| | 9 | Domestic law |
| Inadequate social protection | 11 | Manual labor |
| | 12 | Health risks |
| Overall situation in the cotton fields in 2020 | 14 | Cotton yield by region |
| | 17 | Mutual settlements between cotton producers. Cashless payments and cash “top-ups” |
| | 19 | Handing in cotton at reception points |
| Cotton harvest: real and assigned figures. Inefficient management | 22 | Cotton harvest in 2020 |
| Monitoring of the use of forced labor in 2020 | 26 | Public sector workers and students in the cotton fields |
| | 28 | Extorting money |
| | 30 | Forced labor |
| | 40 | Child labor in the cotton fields |
| | 45 | Conscripts used as forced labor |
| Turkmen authorities’ reaction to criticism | 47 | |
| Recommendations | 49 | Recommendations to the government of Turkmenistan |
| | 50 | Recommendations to the Ombudsman of Turkmenistan |
| | 51 | Recommendations to the governments of foreign countries |
| | 52 | Recommendations to the business community |
| | 53 | Recommendations to the UN and ILO |
| Links | 55 | |

Introduction

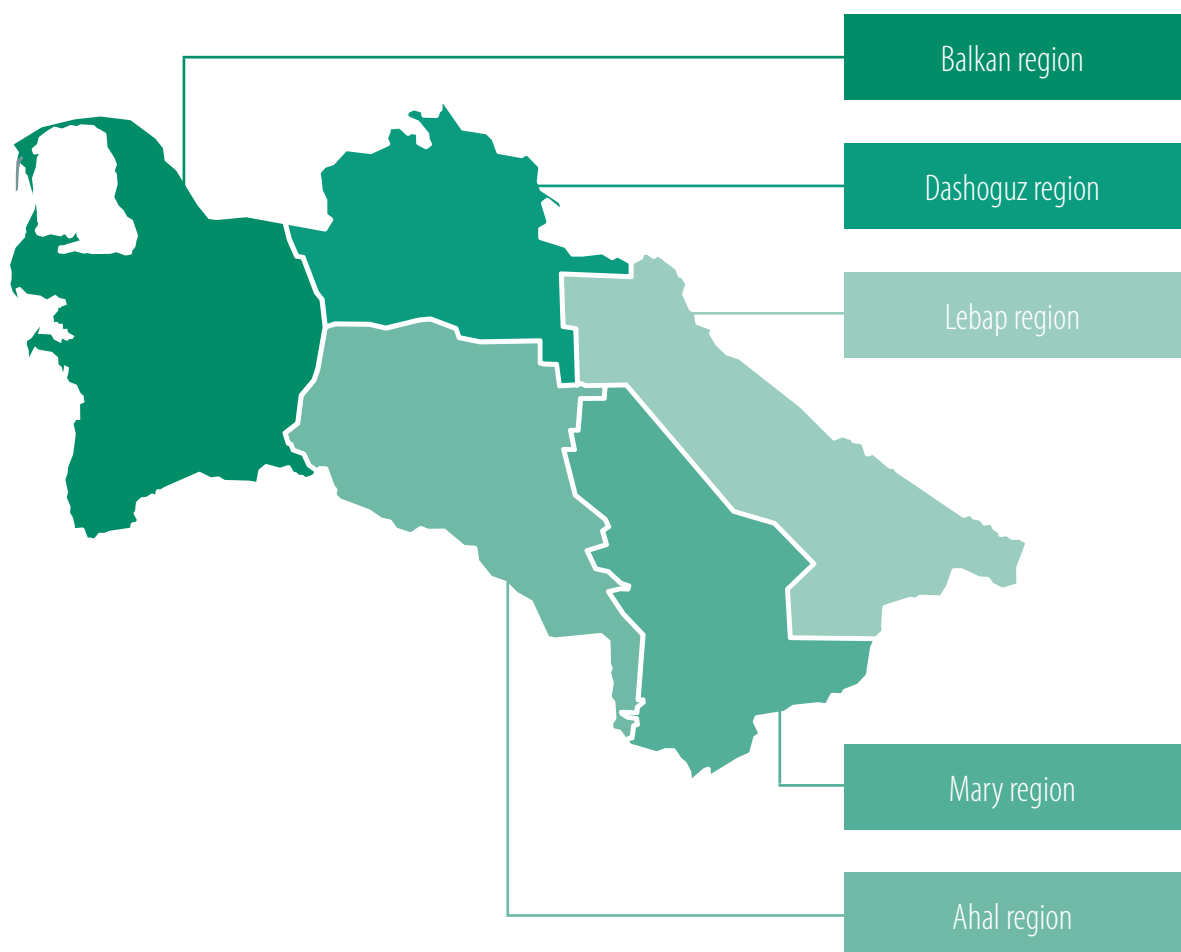
Cotton is one of the main crops in Turkmenistan's agriculture. Cotton cultivation is fully controlled by the state and retains elements of the planned economy from Soviet times.

The state has monopoly rights to purchase from the tenant farmers specified quantities of crops at prices set by the state.

This extremely bureaucratic system is wide open to abuse by the state and puts tenants and cotton pickers in a straitjacket. The cotton pickers, moreover, are public sector employees who are sent to the fields on a voluntary-compulsory basis on pain of dismissal.

- Agricultural land belongs to the state. Farmers' associations (farmers) rent land from the state to grow cotton, wheat, and other crops. Every tenant undertakes responsibility to fulfill the plan for the cotton harvest set by the state.
- If the tenants do not meet their obligations they are fined and may have their tenancies torn up (their land taken away). In 2019 the cotton plan was not met in many regions of Turkmenistan and the farmers' associations were left in debt to the state for the shortfall in the supply of raw cotton.
- Traditionally cotton is grown in Mary, Ahal, Lebap, and Dashoguz regions. Until 2014 cotton was also grown in Balkan region in the west of the country, but cotton sowing stopped in the region because of the poor soil and climate, and low yields, and Balkan's quota was divided up among the other regions. In 2019 cotton cultivation resumed¹ in Balkan region, which experts put down to the systematic failure to meet the state order throughout the country.

- The harvest in Balkan region — around 5 000 tonnes — constitutes a fraction of the overall annual plan set by the state, which in 2019 was 1 050 000 tonnes.
- In 2020, a brief report from the Turkmenistan State News Agency² said: “The heads of Ahal, Balkan, Lebap, Mary, and Dashoguz regions reported to the head of state that agriculturalists had successfully met their contractual obligations to produce raw cotton.” The size of the harvest in each region was not reported.



The rural districts of Turkmenistan have a high level of poverty, a developed system of informal relations, limited capacity to pay for services and, correspondingly, limited access to services, especially health care. At the same time, social security systems in Turkmenistan have a highly restricted reach, which leaves agricultural workers economically and socially vulnerable. They do not have a stable income — everything depends on the harvest and the work they put in. They try to grow their own produce in their yards, and also grow produce for sale on part of their rented land, if they manage to reach agreement with the authorities.

- The tenants often have large families. Monthly child benefits are paid up to the age of three, and in 2020 were 209.36 manats per child (this is around \$60 at the official exchange rate and \$8 at the real rate). Benefits increase by 10% every year.
- Pensions in Turkmenistan vary between 450 and 800 manats (depending on years of work, average earnings, for women the number of children they have, etc.)³. But even if a tenant receives the maximum pension, it is just \$30 at the current rate.
- Tenants who have reached pension age receive a pension of between 650 and 800 manats a month.
- Farmers frequently experience financial difficulties so have to join the ranks of illegal labor migrants abroad (mostly in Turkey). But they may become illegal migrants in their own country too. Since residence registration still exists in Turkmenistan, residents of one region cannot legally rent accommodation and work in other regions. Because of a lack of jobs in their own region, people often have to go to Ashgabat where they live illegally and do jobs with poor working conditions and low pay.
- The lack of real prospects of an improvement in the economic situation, poor public health conditions including lack of access to health care and clean drinking water, and lack of access to a proper education for the younger generation give rural residents hardly any chance of lifting themselves out of poverty.

Protection from forced labor in international and domestic law

International law

The basic principles and rights in the labor sphere apply to everyone. They guarantee freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, the abolition of child labor, the elimination of forced labor, and prohibition of discrimination at work.

The report cites cases that violate the following provisions of international law:

Art. 6

The right to work, which includes the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his living by work which he freely chooses or accepts.

Art. 7

a) fair wages;
b) safe and healthy working conditions;
d) rest, leisure and reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay, as well as remuneration for public holidays. (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights)

Art. 8. 3 (a)

No one shall be required to perform forced or compulsory labour. (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights)

Art. 1

Each Member of the International Labour Organisation which ratifies this Convention undertakes to suppress and not to make use of any form of forced or compulsory labour...

b) as a method of mobilising and using labour for purposes of economic development (International Labour Organization Abolition of Forced Labour Convention).

There has been an official ban on involving children in the cotton harvest in Turkmenistan since 2005.

Child labor is also prohibited in the following international conventions ratified by Turkmenistan:

- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- International Labour Organization Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour
- International Labour Organization Convention concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment

Domestic law

Forced or compulsory labor also violates the following provisions of internal legislation:

Art. 8. of the Labour Code of Turkmenistan, which defines forced or compulsory labor as “any work (service) required of someone under duress which said person has not offered to perform voluntarily.”

Art. 129.1. of the Criminal Code of Turkmenistan bans , human trafficking, “that is, recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force, carried out irrespective of the agreement of the victims for purposes of exploitation . . .”



Public sector workers in a cotton field.
October 2020 (Photo: Turkmen.news)

Inadequate social protection

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality. (Art. 22, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948)

Manual labor

- Cotton cultivation is labor intensive — cotton has to be sown, weeded, hilled, fertilized at the right time, and watered. While sowing cotton requires hardly any manual labor (it is sown by tractor-mounted seed planters), weeding the fields to get the required plant density is usually done by hand in May. It's quite a labor-intensive process — the weeder has to squat and work row by row, usually 100 meters or more. Village teachers often have their pupils do the work on their leased land. Chemical inputs are not used at this stage.
- The cotton harvest in the southern districts of Ahal, Mary, and Lebap regions begins in late August — early September. In the northern districts of Dashoguz region it begins in mid to late September. The cotton bolls open in sequence: first, the bolls lower down on the plant open, then those higher up — usually in three or four stages. This is why the cotton harvest has to be done several times. Tenant farmers prefer to do the first harvest by hand, as this does not damage the structure of the fibers and the top-grade cotton reaches the best price. The use of equipment at this stage depends on the harvest. If the cotton bushes are low with a small quantity of bolls, the tenant farmers see no point in harvesting mechanically. First, harvesting by hand means less cotton is lost, and second, tenant farmers have to pay for the mechanized pickers out of their own pockets.

Health risks

- Chemicals are used intensively at harvest. They are sprayed from planes or tractors in order to strip the cotton bushes of their leaves, which allows for a cleaner harvest of the cotton. The use of chemicals can be bad for the health of the pickers, while cotton that continues to flower in September can be dangerous for allergy sufferers.
- The picker has to get all the cotton fiber out of every boll on the plant. Cotton bushes have thorns, which prick the fingers. The work is strenuous and requires great physical effort as the picker has to bend down and repeat the same movements throughout the working day. The cotton is placed in special sacks (each one weighs 20 to 30 kg), which have to be carried to the truck (often several hundred meters).
- **Impact of the weather.** The pickers work in the open cotton fields either in the direct sunlight or damp, chilly fall. They often do not get medical help when needed. Several teachers from school №14 in the town of Dashoguz who went cotton picking in the fall break (the last 10 days of October) fell seriously ill a few days later. The morning chill and bitter wind aggravated chronic conditions such as cystitis and bronchitis.

"I'd have been better off paying the 240 manats [to hire a worker]. I have to spend more now on antibiotics, injections, and drips." (From an interview with a teacher).
This woman said they had not been paid for the cotton they picked in the first few days. The tenant of the field where they were working told the teachers: "I haven't got any money and I didn't ask you to come here."

Health risks

- **Epidemiological safety. There is a pandemic.** Though there is officially no coronavirus in Turkmenistan, strict public health measures have been introduced in the country. Both in the capital and the provinces police fine people for not wearing masks on the street. Drivers of public transport are fined if they are carrying more passengers than there are seats. But these rules are not applied to people being taken to work in the cotton fields. Many of the workers have coughs and no one is interested if this is because of a cold or coronavirus. People do not wear masks and they are taken to work in overcrowded buses. Teachers from the town of Mary comment that posters have been put up in their schools about observing social distancing and avoiding public transport in order to reduce the risks of COVID-19 infection. At the same time they are taken to the cotton fields in packed buses. “The officials are only concerned about the ‘cotton battle’, not people’s health,” the teachers say.
- **Provision of food and drinking water for the workers.** Water is usually brought to the fields in 40-liter canisters or small tankers. This is ordinary mains water or water from a well — unfiltered and untreated. There is no guarantee that the often loss-making associations will pay for food for the helpers from the cities. In Lebap region the regional food trade board, whose responsibilities include providing cotton pickers with groceries (pasta, rice, meat, and vegetable oil), refused to do it⁴.

Overall situation in the cotton fields in 2020

On March 25 Turkmenistan's state media reported the start of the cotton sowing season across the country. The official report said, "In accordance with the timetable, on March 25 the cotton growers of Ahal, Balkan, Lebap, and Mary regions began sowing." A little later, on March 29, the farmers of Dashoguz region joined them⁵. According to the government site, the country's agricultural sector is becoming more efficient; ahead of the new harvest campaign the latest equipment was purchased, and funds were provided for irrigation and improvement of the soil. In addition, work was done to digitize agriculture and "improve the tenancy relationship and make it more cost effective."

The material below depicting the reality of cotton production in Turkmenistan in 2020 provides an interesting contrast with the idealized image.

Cotton yield by region

Lebap region

The weather in Lebap region meant that around 60% of the fields sown to cotton had to be sown a second time. Spring rain and floods followed by the summer drought left dozens of larger tenant farmers without a crop.

Dashoguz region

Farmers in Dashoguz region say that not only did the irrigation channels that usually supply water for the fields dry up this summer, the drainage ditches did too, though their water is not fit for irrigation.

The cotton did not produce a good harvest in Koneurgench, Gubadag, and Boldumsaz districts of Dashoguz region. In the words of tenant farmers in Koneurgench: "We'd even have been glad to water the fields with the dirty drainage water, if there'd been any, but the pumps were idle this summer on all the farms. As a result, the cotton stalks scarcely reached the height of a youngster's knee, while the bolls are the size of a walnut." The harvest campaign started on September 16 in Dashoguz region. The crop was not ready at the end of August, as many of the tenant farmers had had to re-sow their fields after the rains in mid-May.



Cotton harvester in a field.
November 2020 (Photo: Turkmen.news)

Cotton yield by region

“We planted some herbs on part of the land but it won’t help us meet the costs of the cotton seeds and sowing. We’ve been warned that this will be deducted from us, though it’s not our fault at all.”

(From an interview with a resident of the village of Bayrach)

Some tenants did not manage to re-sow their cotton. The heads of several farmers’ associations in Boldumsaz and Koneurgench districts refused to help the affected farmers with equipment or seeds for re-sowing, so the farmers decided to leave things as they were as they could not afford the expense. As a result, half the fields in Dashoguz region allocated to cotton cultivation had not even been sown at the end of May.

Where the tenant farmers did put their own effort and funds into growing at least something, the cotton still did not grow well and bare patches without a single stalk could be seen in the fields.

Mary region

Tenant farmers in Garagum, Mary, and Oguzhan districts of Mary region had hardly any cotton harvest. A breach of the Sultan Bent dam on the Murgab river in June flooded a significant area of agricultural land and the cotton shoots died. By the time the dam had been repaired and the earth had dried out, it was already too late to sow cotton a second time. Worst affected were tenants in the Bayrach, Khakykat, Momatay, Atchapar, and Rahat farmers’ associations in Yoloten district.

Ahal region

Half of the cotton died because of a lack of water in the fields. Although the state controls the watering of the cotton fields, by the end of June 95% of the fields in Ahal had not yet received any water.

Mutual settlements between cotton producers. Cashless payments and cash “top-ups”

Sowing

The established system of noncash settlement by tenant farmers for work done in their fields would allow for full, transparent accounting between those involved in cotton production. But in practice, if tenant farmers want tractor drivers to do a good job, for example, as well as giving them a check, they also make an additional payment in cash. Kerven, a tenant farmer from Bayram district in Mary region, explains the reasons for this in the interview below:

“Because the tractor driver has to give someone money too for hiring him and giving him a tractor. As well, drivers from Obahyzmat have to buy spare parts themselves if their tractors break down. Some of them pay for lubricating oil too. If you don’t pay the tractor driver a ‘tip’, he will just plow your field on the surface and won’t do the other jobs properly — harrowing, leveling the soil, bedding, cotton sowing, cultivation between the rows, hoeing between the rows, top dressing. The crops suffer as a result and I lose everything.”

Talking to the tenant farmers we found that a farmer makes a top-up cash payment of an average of 120 manats per hectare to prepare the land for sowing. This sum includes 40 manats to the tractor driver for deep plowing, 20 manats for leveling off the soil, ten manats for harrowing and bedding, 10 manats for sowing and so on. Payment is made for every type of mechanized work.

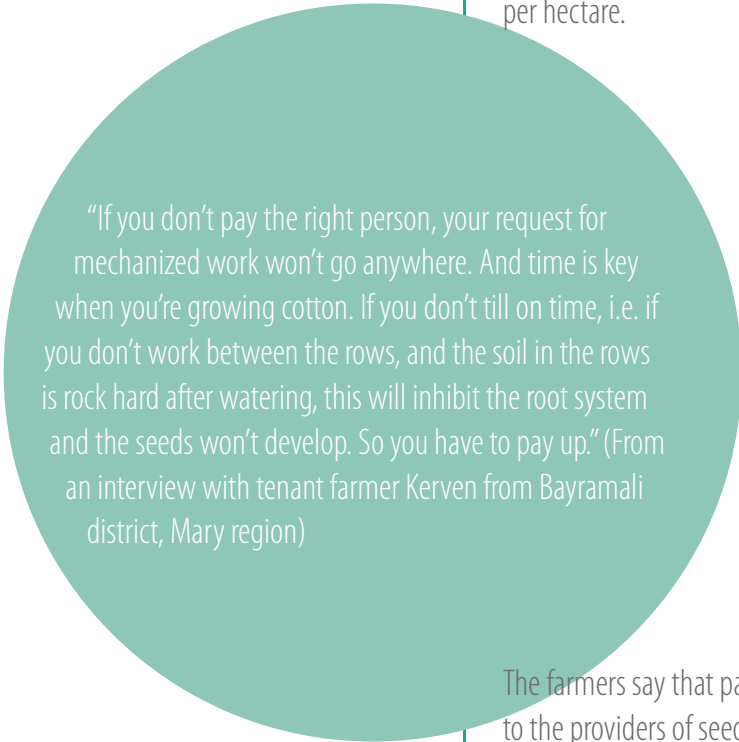
Looking after the cotton crop

While the state media say that all the agricultural services are working without interruption to meet the needs of the producers, farmers’ associations have to give top-up money without interruption at almost every stage of the cotton cultivation process.

Mutual settlements between cotton producers. Cashless payments and cash “top-ups”

The tenant farmers are able to do some of the jobs themselves: for example, thinning out the plants or weeding. According to the established procedure for cotton cultivation, from the appearance of the first shoots up to the start of the harvest, the shoots need to be thinned out twice, while weeds need to be removed at least three times or the field will be full of reeds or other weeds. The plant also has to be pinched out once — the upper growth tips removed from the bushes. This is costly physical work and the tenant farmers can manage themselves at this stage.

But there are jobs that require mechanical intervention. During the growing season farmers have to hoe between the rows, bank up the soil, fertilize the crop and do other jobs six to nine times. All this work, including a top-up payment for delivery of the fertilizers, costs the tenant farmer 250–260 manats per hectare.



“If you don’t pay the right person, your request for mechanized work won’t go anywhere. And time is key when you’re growing cotton. If you don’t till on time, i.e. if you don’t work between the rows, and the soil in the rows is rock hard after watering, this will inhibit the root system and the seeds won’t develop. So you have to pay up.” (From an interview with tenant farmer Kerven from Bayramali district, Mary region)

The farmers say that paying a top-up is basically giving a bribe to the providers of seeds, fertilizers, irrigation water, and pest and disease control agents. There’s no way round it, as without water and fertilizer the cotton plants will be stunted and the pods and buds and other fruiting elements will fall off, and without control agents cotton pests will devour the crop.

Handing in cotton at reception points

Marking down the weight of cotton deliveries:

“Last year they deducted 100–150 kg per tonne from us, and now they’re deducting 200. The heads of the cotton reception points sell the withheld cotton to tenant farmers who had a poor harvest. Or to be more exact, they give them a certificate saying that they handed in more cotton than they really did. Our contracts show the quantity of cotton we have to hand in, depending on our leased land.” (From an interview with a tenant farmer from Suvchyoba)

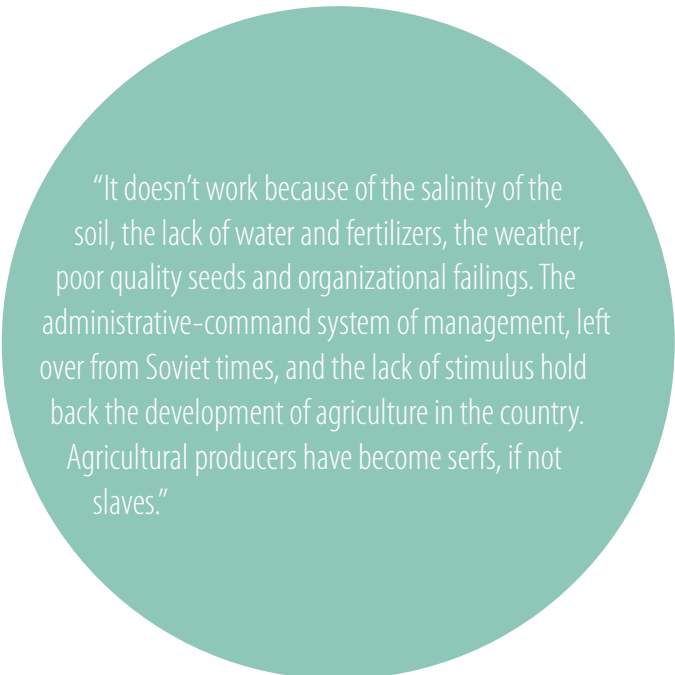
Delivering cotton to the state is the next problem for the tenant farmers. The farmers themselves must take the cotton to the reception point, i.e. find a tractor driver and reach agreement with him to deliver the harvest. Official payment is made via checks and unofficial payment in cash. However, the farmers say their real problems are at the reception points.

“They’re real vultures at the reception point — the gin director, weigh-in operator, and lab assistant. If you don’t give them any money, they can mark down the conditioned weight of your cotton for no good reason. I saw one tenant farmer having a go at the receivers. He had weighed the cotton before loading it onto the tractor trailer and had 1260 kg. But when he took his cotton to the gin, he was given a receipt for 890 kg. It was as though 370 kg had evaporated.”
(From an interview with tenant farmer Kerven from Bayramali district, Mary region)

Similar cases were observed at cotton reception points in Lebap region too. Here a weigh-in operator suggested reducing the weight of the cotton by 200 kg per tonne. If the farmers refused, the operator threatened to write a laboratory report showing high levels of impurities and humidity in the raw cotton, which could reduce the weight of the cotton even further and increase the tenants’ losses. So people were forced to agree to the weigh-in operator’s terms.

Handing in cotton at reception points

A former agronomist from an agricultural association in Halach district thinks it is quite difficult in reality to harvest the quantity of cotton shown in the tenants' agreements:



"It doesn't work because of the salinity of the soil, the lack of water and fertilizers, the weather, poor quality seeds and organizational failings. The administrative-command system of management, left over from Soviet times, and the lack of stimulus hold back the development of agriculture in the country. Agricultural producers have become serfs, if not slaves."

As a result, the tenant farmers lose the will to work. Many of the farmers in Mary region, for example, said they were giving up their plots of land and planning to go and work abroad as soon as the borders are open again. (See the section on "Inadequate social protection")

Handing in cotton at reception points

Arrears in payments for deliveries of cotton

Cotton producers in Lebap region could not receive payment for their delivered crop for around 30 days. At a meeting with the leaders of the farmers' associations before the start of the harvest campaign, the governor said that the price of a kilogram of cotton would be 0.6 manats this year, and that the farmers would be paid once every 10 days. Residents of the Azatlyk and Seydi farmers' associations in Sayat district, and the Vatan and Lebap farmers' associations in Charjou district regularly approached the heads of the local authorities in the hope they would receive the promised payment for the cotton, which had been duly harvested and delivered. They were not given their money or even a promise to pay them in the near future. On the contrary, the authorities threatened to take away from the farmers their leased land and their crop for supposedly being unable to meet their contractual obligations⁶.

Impossible to withdraw cash earned for cotton sales

Ten older tenant farmers from the Ak Altyn local council in Garagum district, Mary region, went to the district administration as they could not withdraw cash with their plastic cards. The farmers explained in meetings with officials that the cotton harvest was low this year because of the lack of water, but that they had still not got their money for the cotton they had been able to grow and supply to the state⁷.

"The heads of the local councils cannot resolve anything. Whoever goes to them gets short shrift, because they themselves don't know what to do. So the village elders went to complain to the district administration in the hope of getting somewhere." (From an interview with a local resident).

The authorities are trying to reassure the people, but haven't solved the problem.

Cotton harvest: real and assigned figures. Inefficient management

In early 2019 the Turkmen Initiative for Human Rights acquired figures from the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Management, which show that in 2018 less than half the planned quantity of cotton was produced. Nonetheless, the official media reported that not only had the plan been met, it had been exceeded.

Example of 2018 over-reporting:



Cotton harvest in 2020

At the same time, in early 2019, President Berdimuhamedov said that the cotton harvest in 2020 should be 1 250 000 tonnes, an increase of 200 000 tonnes. These figures show that the “cotton sham” is continuing in Turkmenistan and the leadership has lost all semblance of reasonable economic reporting.

Cotton harvest in 2020

The example given below shows how the authorities try to bridge the gap between the real and the reported state of affairs.

On October 23 heads of organizations and agricultural associations were told at a meeting on the cotton harvest campaign at the district administration in the town of Turkmengala (formerly Turkmen-Kala) in Mary region that since most of the agricultural associations had not delivered even half of the state order for cotton, every enterprise, including schools, hospitals, the public utilities service, construction organizations, and the branch of Obakhymat had to supply 2.5 tonnes of cotton to the cotton reception points and bring back written confirmation. This means that these enterprises and organizations had to buy the cotton somewhere else. The heads of agricultural associations were very unhappy about this. They are responsible for leasing out land and purchasing cotton from the tenants at the state price. They say that it's not the first year this tactic has been used, and it always causes them problems as the organizations buy cotton from their tenant farmers.

The pursuit of fictitious numbers, the lack of transparency in reporting, the arbitrary behavior of officials on the ground, the lack of opportunity for farmers to stand up for their rights and express their dissatisfaction, the lack of a representative voice, the inappropriate level of social protection, and corruption de facto lead to a reduction in the cotton harvest and poverty for the farmers.

Even when the leadership does put forward plans to improve the agro-industrial complex, it's not possible to put them into practice on the ground. For example, in fall 2018 Berdimuhamedov ordered the creation of a special land bank and the allocation of land to applicants for 99 years. They were to sow cotton and wheat on 70% of the land and to grow other crops on the remaining 30%.

Cotton harvest in 2020

The tenants had the chance to sow a third of the land to crops that were more profitable and less fickle than wheat or cotton. But the local authorities would not allow it.

The story of a tenant Agayusup in Bayramali district, Mary region: A tenant from Bayramali used to grow lucerne on three hectares of his rented land and supplied part of his crop to the state. He used the rest to feed his cattle and produce meat and milk, which he sent to the closest dairy. In 2019 the leadership of the agricultural association demanded that only cotton be grown. The fields where the lucerne was just starting to turn green were plowed up and cotton was sown. Action to protect the plants from predators, led by the agricultural association, was late.

As a result, the cotton harvest was so poor that the farmer could not cover his costs. This year a lack of water and fertilizers also prevented a good harvest. So the region's tenant farmers are in debt for the second year running.

Agricultural producers could gain additional income by growing interseasonal crops — sorghum, mung beans, sesame. But they have to make additional payments to sow interseasonal crops. Farmers' associations wishing legally to grow interseasonal crops are obliged to pay 800 manats for a license. The tenant farmers are fined for sowing profitable crops without permission. The "illegal" crops are plowed up and destroyed.

Cotton harvest in 2020

Dashoguz region

Dozens if not hundreds of tenant farmers in Turkmenbashi district, Dashoguz region, are badly affected by the actions of the governor of the district, Serdar Meredov. In order to get rid of competition he illegally destroys the farmers' interseasonal crops and turns off their irrigation water. The governor grows the grains on his own land and they are now in short supply and therefore more expensive.

Mary region

In May in at least four village councils in Garagum district, Mary region — Akmeydan, Durnalyyan, Sahra and Shatlyk — local governor Meylis Gurbanmuhammedov ordered the destruction of vegetable and cucurbit crops, grown by villagers on the edges of the cotton fields. Cucumbers, tomatoes, squash, melons and watermelons were all plowed up by the tractor⁸.

On November 26 2020 Deputy Prime Minister Esenmyrat Orazgeldiev announced the creation of a special land bank in the regions to grow crops that are part of the government order. Seventy percent of the bank's land is to be offered on a contractual basis to grow wheat, cotton and other crops to meet the government order. The rest of the land can be sown to other crops on condition that the plan for the production of wheat and cotton has been met in full. It can only be hoped that this initiative will give some freedom to tenant farmers and that they will be able to cover their costs. It is cause for concern, though, that the remaining 30% of land can be sown to other crops only if the government order for cotton has been met in full. Bearing in mind that in 2018 the Potemkin harvest was more than twice the real harvest (see page 43), it's hard to predict the government order for next year and how it will be calculated.

Monitoring of the use of forced labor in 2020

Public sector workers and students in the cotton fields

The ongoing socioeconomic crisis, the high level of unemployment, and poverty make public sector workers dependent on the state. The fear of losing their jobs and, therefore, the means to survive render this group of the population helpless before the arbitrary behavior of the authorities. The use of public sector employees in the fields disrupts the working rhythm of educational and medical institutions and whole sectors of the economy.

Women are especially vulnerable in this situation, since they make up the majority of the public sector workforce who are involved in the cotton harvest. They include an even more disenfranchised group — support staff, i.e. women in jobs that do not require special education or qualifications, such as caretakers in residential blocks, school janitors, hospital orderlies and so on. When unemployment is high, bosses quickly find replacements for employees who raise objections. Since they are paid between 700 and 800 manats a month, the women cannot afford to hire a worker to go to the fields in their place. So in most cases they go to pick cotton themselves, irrespective of age or health.

Students and pupils in higher education, colleges and vocational schools in the regions (not in the capital) do not have the opportunity either to refuse the voluntary–forced mobilization to work in the cotton fields, since the management are able to give “punishments” (disciplinary penalties, exclusion from the institution) which can affect a student’s entire career.



High school students pick cotton along with their teachers.
October 2020 (Photo: Turkmen.news)

Extorting money

“There isn’t enough money as it is, and now we’ll have to pay 400 manats to hire workers — that’s my elderly mum’s pension, but this is how much we have to pay into the cotton account at the height of the season.” (From an interview with a schoolteacher in Mary)

According to what has become a toxic tradition, every year public sector workers have to pay a “voluntary contribution” from their salaries “to the successful achievement of the state plan for the cotton harvest.” A meeting of the authorities in Turkmenabat on November 1 was told, “If any of the workers does not agree with this decision, the managers are instructed to take enforcement action. In the worse case scenario, lists of those who refuse to pay will be given to the deputy governor working with the law-enforcement agencies.”

It’s not clear what this money is spent on, especially since it’s a question of substantial sums in the highly corrupt cotton sector. Just two cases from different districts of Turkmenistan are given below.

Mary, August 24. Public utility workers had to pay 300 manats to hire workers in the cotton fields for 15 days at a rate of 20 manats per day. Hired workers were not sent to the fields in August because the cotton harvest was too small. They collected 20 manats from teachers in the town’s special schools, and in September — October the rates and frequency of requisition usually go up.

The illegal collection of money from teachers began **in some schools in Lebap region on August 29** and did not finish until December 12, although by November there was no cotton left in the fields. Initially they collected 20 manats from the teachers twice a week, then in September and October it was three times a week. In November and December the school principals went back to 20 manats twice a week. Schoolteachers receive approximately 2000 manats a month (around \$70). In Lebap region health care workers were exempt from cotton obligations because of the coronavirus situation. This is what a Turkmenabat school staff meeting was told at the end of August⁹.

Extorting money

In **Balkan region** workers at the international maritime port were sent cotton picking in the remote areas near the border with Ahal region. The instruction came straight from the director of the international maritime port, Annadurdy Kosaev. The “cotton shift” lasted 10 days. The workers had to take their food with them and they were told at a staff meeting: find somewhere to spend the night yourself. The workers could buy themselves out of cotton picking for 300 to 350 manats, but drivers, longshoremen, and other workers at the lower end of the scale are paid less than 500 manats a month.

Forced labor

“There’s not much cotton. We can pick it all ourselves. Why pay other people out of my own income?”
(From an interview with a tenant farmer in the Khuduk Muratov association in Gerogly district)

In order to look busy, officials on the ground issue instructions on sending public sector workers or students to the cotton fields regardless of the progress of the crop. It’s often pointless and economically unprofitable. In 2020, many of the tenant farmers did not want “helpers from the city” because of the small quantity of cotton and berated the heads of the agricultural associations. But the officials used threats and persuasion to make the villagers accept the “crack troops” from the city.

It’s not only cotton that’s in short supply but hard cash too to pay the workers from the city. Any cash payment is a problem when there’s a shortage of cash in the country and people have to stand in line for hours at an ATM to withdraw money. Meanwhile in Dashoguz region some farmers willingly agreed to accept help from the city and paid workers 0.30 manats per kilogram of cotton. The pickers think this is too little, as the state buys cotton from the farmers for 1.4 manats per kilogram. The process of mobilizing public sector employees to work in the cotton fields was modified because of the pandemic. In some regions doctors in medical institutions were exempt from cotton duties, and workers in education had to bear the additional burden¹⁰.

Public sector workers were often taken to the fields without any advance agreement with the tenant farmers. The farmers were surprised to see the pickers and people had to look themselves for places to do their “compulsory service”.



A bus arrives at a pick-up point for public sector workers.
October 2020 (Photo: Turkmen.news)

Forced labor

“We arrived but we weren’t assigned anywhere. We had to look for a field ourselves. We eventually found somewhere. The tenant farmer wasn’t pleased to see us, but agreed to let us pick cotton. He said he was ready to pay 0.30 manats per kilo, but that he had no small change. There was very little cotton — on average one worker couldn’t pick even five kilos a day. In the end the group had to club together and pool all the harvested cotton so that the farmer could pay us in large-denomination notes, and then we had to divide them up ourselves. My income from a whole day of work was 1.5 manats. For comparison, a bottle of vegetable oil at our district market costs 23 manats (\$1). Many pickers think that the tenant farmers pay them too little, just 0.30 manats when the state buys the cotton for 1.40 manats. I understand that when the farmers’ associations hand in the raw cotton, some of it is written off because it has impurities or is damp, and of course they have to cover all the costs of sowing and tending the soil, and they have to make some sort of profit at the end of it all. So if you tell them you’re not happy, the farmer replies reasonably: I don’t even have to give you this. I didn’t ask you to come.”
(From an interview with a public sector worker from Boldumsaz district, Dashoguz region)¹¹

The work of public sector employees in the cotton fields is badly organized.

- There is no single, common system of requirements. For example, teachers in Turkmenabat were obliged to contribute money twice a week to hire workers, and to go to the fields themselves every other Sunday or send someone else in their stead. But in one district in Dashoguz region teachers were sent to the fields only on Sundays, and not always then. They were not required to pay for hired workers at all during the harvest season.

Forced labor

- Transport is not organized to take the public sector workers to the fields. Public sector workers usually have to meet early in the morning, at 6.30, to go and pick cotton. But they often had to wait out on the street for hours without any guarantee that they would not have to walk to the fields.

“Around 150 of us from different organizations went to the district executive authorities at 6.30 in the morning, as instructed. But the transport didn’t turn up until 8.45. It was very cold, around +5° C, and windy. People were wearing hoods over their hats and wrapped up in scarves. It was unbearable waiting two and a half hours in the cold wind; some people went home, saying, we came when they insisted we go cotton picking, but nothing has been organized. Then instead of buses for the freezing people they sent a single ZIL pick-up truck, which took the women who had their children with them and teenagers. At the last minute the employers sent their own minibuses for the forced cotton pickers. There wasn’t room for everyone so those left behind had to hitch their own rides. Around 40 people walked five kilometers along the highway, then turned off into the collective farms and walked another three kilometers to get to their destination. This group included youngsters who were going picking in place of their parents or to earn some money. People walked on the side of the main highway from Dashoguz to the districts and there was a real danger they’d be run over by a passing vehicle. It’s not safe on the collective farms either. There aren’t many people or cars about, but there are lots of dogs. The men in our group only just managed to beat off a furious sheepdog that had taken hold of a young woman’s leg.” (From an interview with a public sector worker in the town of Dashoguz)

There’s a ban on carrying people in the back of a ZIL pick-up truck, and the driver could have been fined for doing so. He probably opted against questioning the instruction from management, who put everything down to breaking “cotton records.”

People’s safety is not guaranteed on the way to the cotton fields, as the traffic police do not accompany the pickers’ transport.

Forced labor

Below are some examples of the organization of public sector employees' work in the cotton fields in Dashoguz, Lebap, and Mary regions:

"It's exhausting doing nothing. There's nothing to pick but people are sent out every day. There's lots of work at school because of these shifts. We have to spend all day cleaning, but they still send us. And what about preventive measures against coronavirus?" (From an interview with a cleaner at a school in the town of Dashoguz)

Dashoguz region

Even though the harvest campaign officially started here on September 16, public sector employees, including medical workers — orderlies, drivers, and support staff — were first taken to the fields at the start of September; i.e. when there was not yet anything to harvest. Despite the small number of open bolls, the daily norm for the pickers was set at 30 kg and nobody could meet it.

Turkmen.news published a photo of the cotton fields in early September when the cotton is ripening for harvest — its bolls open and the field becomes white. It is clear on the photo (see pages 68–69) below that people had been taken to green fields where there was nothing to pick.

Even though public sector workers in Dashoguz region were given the opportunity to send a hired worker in their place for 20 to 30 manats a day (a little below \$1.5 at the market exchange rate), many preferred to go cotton picking themselves as sending someone in their stead to the fields did not free the public sector employees from turning up that day to do their main job.

Under an instruction from the deputy governor of Dashoguz region responsible for culture, education, and health, teachers from all the region's schools had to pick cotton during the eight-day fall holiday (from October 22). The directive from the governor was strict: "Send everyone!" According to teachers from schools No. 1, 7, 14 and 17 in the city of Dashoguz, neither medical certificates nor family circumstances exempted them from work in the cotton fields.



A cotton field in Dashoguz region.
September 2020 (Photo: Turkmen.news)

Forced labor

When teachers said they had to spend vacation time on preparing teaching materials, the deputy principal of one school in Dashoguz said, “No one cares about your teaching materials. Go and pick cotton or pay up to hire a worker.” The teachers were not happy, but were afraid to express their discontent openly. Some agreed to pay to hire a worker — 240 manats (at 30 manats a day for eight days), while many preferred to save money, as they are the only breadwinners in their families, and went to work in the fields. Two hundred and forty manats can buy a family a 20 kg bag of sugar from a private trader, which matters a great deal in a time of economic crisis.

Lebap region

The leadership of Lebap region announced at a meeting on August 28 that cleaners from all organizations and institutions would be exempt from taking part in the cotton harvest because of the constant need to disinfect places of work during the pandemic. However, two weeks later a decision was taken to send support staff from schools and kindergartens cotton picking on alternate days. Some of the cleaners would go to the fields, while those left behind would do their work. The next day the roles were reversed. An employee of kindergarten No. 19 in Turkmenabat said that almost all the region’s kindergartens followed this system.

Already in early September students at the Seyidi Pedagogical Institute, and pupils at the highways, river, textile, medical, and other vocational schools were told they would have to go and pick cotton. The students are usually taken to remote areas, so the leadership of the agricultural associations has the problem of providing accommodation. On September 8–9, a commission consisting of the deputy governor of the district, the deputy heads of agricultural associations, and local police visited the villages of Koytendag district, Lebap region.

Forced labor

They recorded the empty homes of people who have gone abroad to work. Then the commission brought together these people's relatives and asked them to make the empty homes temporarily available to house city dwellers. The villagers said they were prepared to do this for payment, which did not suit the commission. The decision was taken to combine classes in school and to house the cotton pickers in the empty classrooms. It was also decided that where there were two kindergartens in a village, the children would temporarily all go to one kindergarten, while the other would be used to house the pickers from the city.

In many schools in Lebap region principals created their own system to select workers to send to the cotton fields in place of teachers. This year the principals found hired workers themselves and paid for their work with the money raised from the teachers. The system is opaque and involves large sums of money, so the teachers suspect their bosses use it to make money on the side.

How does the scheme work in practice? These are approximate calculations based on the situation in large schools in Turkmenabat (with around 100 teachers on the staff). In these schools the staff were divided into groups of 30 to 35 people, who were to go cotton picking by shift (one week — one shift). On the other hand, such a large number of teachers could not be absent from work at the same time.

Forced labor

To solve the problem the teachers had to pay to hire workers. If every day a group of 30 teachers gives the principal 20 manats each, that makes 600 in total. The principal collects 3 600 manats for a six-day working week. Considering that the harvest began at the end of August and continued until the end of November at the earliest, that makes a sum of 46 800 manats (more than \$2 000) over three months, excluding Sundays. And this is the cotton collection in just one school! In fact, the cotton harvest can continue until mid-December, and at the height of the harvest in October teachers make three “trips” a week to the fields, rather than two, so that makes an even greater sum.

“Until now, a teacher I know always sent her relative cotton picking in her place. This person is disciplined, doesn’t drink, picked a lot, and there were never any complaints about him from the teacher herself or the school administration. But this year the principal said that whoever wanted to hire workers to go in their place should not do it themselves, but should give him 20 manats a trip. But nobody knows how many teachers and support staff will have to go cotton picking. Maybe only 20 workers, or just five, will be hired with the money from 30 teachers. Where will the rest of the money go? Will the principal put it in his own pocket? Some teachers dutifully pay up, as long as they’re not hassled about it every time, though really what difference does it make who picks the cotton?” (From an account by a resident of Turkmenabat)

Forced labor

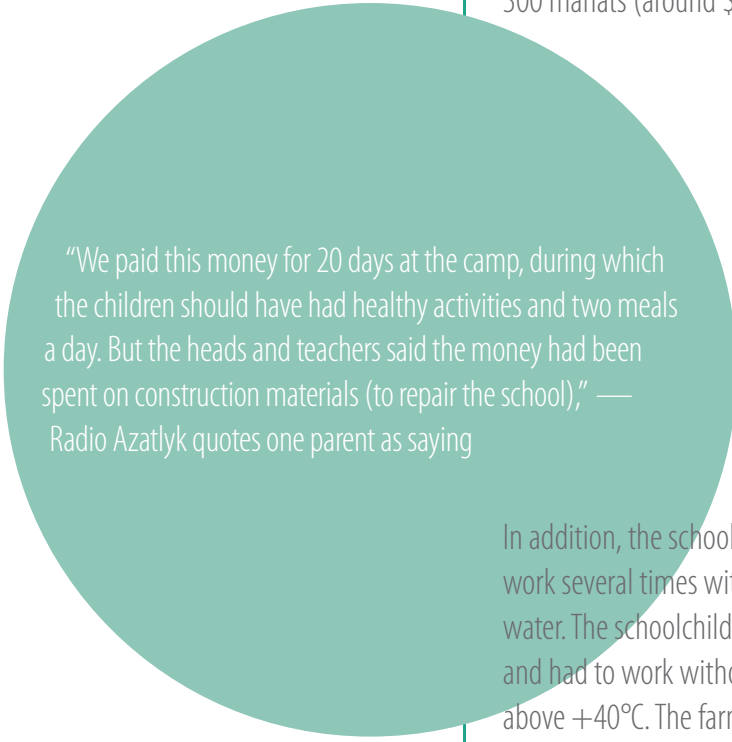
Mary region

From August 17 in Mary region hospitals, regional printing presses, public utilities, and other organizations were obliged to send five people each to the cotton harvest. As everywhere else in the country, public sector employees could send hired workers in their place (for a payment of 20 manats a day). Residents of Mary's first residential district usually assembled at 6.30 near school No.14 on Bauman Street to go to the cotton fields. Buses set off as soon as people had taken their places, but the drivers would stop en route to pick up groups of people who had been given different pick-up points in the city — near Merv Bazaar, the book shop or school No.1. They were mainly people from the third residential district and the city center. On August 26, Radio Azatlyk reported that all public sector organizations in Mary region had begun to send their workers cotton picking with an overnight stay. Now, every organization had to send seven people for a day shift and another 15 to 20 people to work and stay overnight. Hiring someone to work in the cotton fields with an overnight stay costs 30 manats a day. Taking into account that a "shift" lasts 10 to 15 days, this cost the public sector employee 300–450 manats.

Child labor in the cotton fields

The cotton harvest season begins at almost the same time as the school year in early September and lasts until November, including the fall holidays in October. Many schools practically do not function for two months, as teachers combine teaching in school with work in the cotton fields. Children work in the cotton fields too, which disrupts their education.

However, this year they began sending children to the cotton fields in summer. Radio Azatlyk reported that in June in Dargan-Ata district, Lebap region, the heads and teachers of school No. 25 took children to weed the cotton fields and to harvest potatoes as summer camp activities¹². It cost parents 300 manats (around \$85) to send a child to summer camp.



“We paid this money for 20 days at the camp, during which the children should have had healthy activities and two meals a day. But the heads and teachers said the money had been spent on construction materials (to repair the school),” — Radio Azatlyk quotes one parent as saying

In addition, the school heads took the children to do agricultural work several times without providing either food or drinking water. The schoolchildren were in the fields from 8.30 to 15.00 and had to work without sustenance. The temperature was above +40°C. The farmers took pity on the children and brought them water. The parents were afraid to complain to the school administration, fearing their children would suffer further mistreatment during the school year.

When the harvest started, there were many children between 10 and 16 years of age in the fields. Some went cotton picking in place of their parents who are public sector workers, while others were hired for money in place of adults.

Child labor in the cotton fields

A pupil in the ninth grade at secondary school in Dashoguz region told a Turkmen.news monitor why he picked cotton on Sundays:

“Mum works in the culture department and always goes herself, but she’s not well, she’s got a high temperature. Her boss told her by phone that she should send a hired worker instead. But we would have to pay him and we’re in debt. We decided at home that I would go instead of mum, since there’s no school on Sundays anyway. Last Sunday I picked 12 kg. Six out of 32 people in our class pick cotton: four boys and two girls. Two go as hired workers to help their families, while the others go instead of their parents. It’s about the same in the other classes. The class leaders and school principal understand the situation. It’s even in their interests, as they can reduce the number of pupils and divide the classes into 15 pupils each to meet the new public health requirements. Otherwise, if there is an inspection and there are too many pupils in class, they’ll have problems. But there are far fewer inspections this year. Teachers say among themselves that the staff of the district education department try to keep school visits to a minimum out of concern for their own health, so they sort out all the issues with the school principals by phone.”

It’s been established practice for many years for some teachers to send pupils from the senior grades to pick cotton in their place. They pay them 20 to 25 manats a day (just under \$1.5 according to the market rate), which on average is cheaper than paying a hired worker (usually between 20 and 30 manats). The pupils are marked as present in the class registers.

Child labor in the cotton fields

In connection with the coronavirus pandemic the authorities introduced not only a cotton obligation, but a cotton punishment too. It emerged in September that people not wearing masks on the streets of Mary were sent to work in the cotton fields. And in October it was reported that not only adults but teenagers too were sent to the fields for failing to follow the rules on mask-wearing.

As an alternative the police suggested that the children pay a fine of 50 manats (\$2.2 at the market rate), but this is too large a sum for most families so the teenagers often agreed to pay off their fine by working in the fields. The harvest norm for those working off their fine is 40 kilos. After they had met this target, adults and teenagers were allowed to go.



Public sector workers waiting for transport to the cotton fields.
October 2020 (Photo: Turkmen.news)



Instead of buses people were transported in the back of a truck.
October 2020 (Photo: Turkmen.news)

Conscripts used as forced labor

In Turkmenistan large numbers of conscripts are involved in different types of forced labor, including cotton picking. In 2020 Turkmen.news observers reported similar cases in Dashoguz and Mary regions. Soldiers are usually sent to pick cotton when the combine harvesters are already in the fields. The soldiers are not paid anything for picking and delivering the cotton. The farmers reach agreement with the commanders of military units on how many soldiers will be required to pick on days that the combine is working. In this case, the farmer pays the unit commander directly. In some instances commanders send the soldiers to work in their relatives' fields. No one brings food to the fields for the soldiers. In the morning they eat breakfast at the military unit, they take a packed lunch, and then eat dinner back at the military unit.

On September 3, turkmen.news reported that a tragic accident had happened the day before in Serhetabat in the south of Turkmenistan. A military truck carrying dozens of conscripts overturned in a hilly area. Eleven people died at the scene and another three died later from their injuries. So at the time of publication 14 soldiers had died and another 14 were in a grave condition in hospital in Serhetabat. The authorities immediately switched off cell phone and Internet communications in Serhetabat. Sources report that the truck overturned near the seventh border post, which was dubbed the pistachio post back in Soviet times. All the servicemen were from the Tagtabazar border detachment. It looks as though the accident happened on the way home as the clothes and hands of the dead were sticky with pistachio resin.

Conscripts used as forced labor

Most of the conscripts in the truck had been called up from Dashoguz and Ashgabat. After the accident a large number of special vehicles drove into the old stadium in Serhetabat which had been cordoned off. It's not known what actually happened there, as the injured had been taken to the local hospital. Serhetabat residents also saw a military helicopter land on the stadium pitch and stretchers being taken on board, but no one could say for sure whether they were carrying the injured or the dead.

The town was overrun with police and military.

It was impossible to get close to the stadium and they kept a close watch on anyone who appeared nearby carrying a cell phone. Telephones were taken from all the patients at the local hospital where the injured were being treated to stop photos or videos appearing on social media. There were no more reports from the region.

Turkmen authorities' response to criticism

The Turkmen authorities deny that forced labor is used in the country, even though human rights activists have documentary evidence to contradict their assertions. The use of forced labor in the cotton fields is one of the reasons why over the past five years Turkmenistan has remained in the lowest, third, tier in the U.S. State Department's annual Trafficking in Persons report¹³.

At the start of 2021, 117 global companies had signed the Cotton Pledge not to knowingly use cotton or textiles from Turkmenistan in their products¹⁴.

Instead of reforming the whole sector, increasing purchase prices for cotton, and ending the flawed practice of using forced labor, the authorities of Turkmenistan prefer to turn a blind eye to the problem, while it becomes ever harder for local observers to work in those conditions.

In order to protect themselves from criticism in the independent media for using forced labor in the cotton fields, the local authorities in Turkmenabat made kindergarten employees sign declarations in advance (in August) of their desire to take part in the cotton harvest.

The declaration reads:

"I (surname, first name, patronymic), an employee at kindergarten No. ____, full of admiration for our deeply respected president who spares no effort in working for the good of our wonderful homeland — independent, neutral Turkmenistan, also want to make my contribution to the prosperity of the country and am ready to take part in the cotton harvest of my own accord. Date. Signature."

To avoid a copy of the declaration appearing on social networks, employees had to write them by hand in the principal's office.

The authorities gave their own response to allegations from the Turkmen Initiative for Human Rights on September 28 of corruption at the cotton reception points in Lebap region (see the section Overall Situation in the Cotton Fields in 2020). After the publication, the Sayat district leadership held a meeting with the heads of agricultural associations, and representatives of the police, Ministry of Internal Affairs and prosecutor's office. The heads of agricultural associations and their deputies were warned they would be sacked if more "negative information" appeared in the foreign media. From September 29 employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs were on duty at the cotton reception point, while the previous weigh-in operators had been dismissed from their jobs. A sample was taken from every delivery of cotton to determine the percentage of humidity and impurities. The volume of cotton accredited to the farmers depended on the test results.

The meeting on September 28 also discussed the participation of village school pupils in the harvest as they go to the fields after lessons. An instruction was given to warn parents and pupils that if anyone asked why they were in the fields, they should reply that they were working of their own accord and with the permission of their parents.

Recommendations

Recommendations to the government of Turkmenistan

- Grant UN Special Rapporteurs make use of other UN mechanisms, and access to Turkmenistan, allow international NGOs and trade unions to visit the country.
- Ensure that national legislation and international legal norms banning the use of forced and child labor are observed; ban state officials at all levels from using coercion as a means of mobilizing labor for the cotton fields.
- Eradicate the practice of extorting money from public sector employees to support the cotton harvest.
- Conduct a thorough independent investigation into incidents of the use of child labor in weeding and harvesting cotton.
- Conduct an independent investigation into instances of the use of forced labor by public sector employees and students in the cotton fields.
- Devise a strategy to mechanize the cotton harvest which would help to solve the problem of the high seasonal demand for manual labor for the cotton harvest.
- Stop persecuting independent activists and journalists in the country and give them the opportunity to document and publish information about the use of the forced labor of children and adults in the cotton fields of Turkmenistan.
- Stop the practice of setting unrealistic plans (government orders) for cotton.
- Allow farmers to make their own decisions about what crops to sow.

Recommendations to the Ombudsman of Turkmenistan

- Develop own a system of independent monitoring of forced labor during the cotton harvest and present the findings in the Ombudsman's annual report.
- Set up a hotline where Turkmenistan's citizens can report instances of illegal coercion to work in the cotton fields.

Recommendations to the governments of foreign countries

- Introduce a ban on the import of Turkmen cotton or goods produced from Turkmen cotton, as has been done in the USA, in order to prevent such goods reaching the market.
- Introduce tracing mechanisms and transparent customs data to enable the monitoring of imports into markets of Turkmen cotton or goods produced with Turkmen cotton.
- Introduce mandatory human rights due diligence and transparency laws, which mandate all forms of business enterprises (including textile companies, cotton traders, financial institutions etc.) to undertake human rights due diligence in their supply chains, and to map and disclose all tiers of their supply chains.
- Ensure trade and development policy does not inadvertently support or enable the continuation of the state-imposed forced labour system.
- Leverage human rights mechanisms, such as sanctions, to pressure the Turkmen government to end the state-imposed forced labour system.
- Use diplomatic channels, such as engagement with Turkmen embassies, to place pressure on the Turkmen government to end the state-imposed forced labour system.

Recommendations to the business community

- Publically refuse to purchase cotton produced in Turkmenistan (join the Cotton Pledge) and textiles from Turkmenistan until the country's authorities stop the practice of using forced labor.
- Raise the issue of forced labor in the cotton fields of Turkmenistan at bilateral and multilateral business meetings (for example, the US-Turkmenistan Business Council).
- Urgently advance traceability and verification procedures in textile supply chains to accurately identify where Turkmen cotton may be entering supply chains, including as raw cotton, yarn and fabrics.
- Work with suppliers based in third-countries (for example, Turkey) to put the issue of Turkmen cotton on their agenda, and redirect sourcing.
- Inform consumers about the labour abuses in Turkmenistan that might affect the products they wear and use every day. Insist on independent monitoring to discover forced and child labor in the cotton fields.

Recommendations to the UN and ILO

- Engage with the Government of Turkmenistan on the issue of state-imposed forced labour in the cotton sector.
- Call for urgent measures to end this practice.



A cotton field in Lebap region.
September 2020 (Photo: Turkmen.news)

Links




| | |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Page 4 | ¹ tdh.gov.tm/news/articles.aspx&article20400&cat14 |
| Page 5 | ² tdh.gov.tm/news/articles.aspx&article25029&cat14 |
| Page 6 | ³ minjust.gov.tm/mcenter-single-ru/28 |
| Page 13 | ⁴ www.hronikatm.com/2020/09/forced-labor/ |
| Page 14 | ⁵ turkmenistan.gov.tm/?id=20653 |
| Page 21 | ⁶ www.hronikatm.com/2020/09/1-tm-tonne-800-kg/ ⁷ rus.azathabar.com/a/30878409.html |
| Page 25 | ⁸ turkmen.news/news/hyakim-karakumskogo-etrapa-unichtozhil-posevy-selchan/ |
| Page 28 | ⁹ turkmen.news/news/turkmenabad-medikov-osvobodili-ot-hlopka-nagruzka-padaet-na-uchitelej/ |
| Page 30 | ¹⁰ turkmen.news/news/turkmenabad-medikov-osvobodili-ot-hlopka-nagruzka-padaet-na-uchitelej/ |
| Page 32 | ¹¹ turkmen.news/news/cotton2020-forced-labor-turkmenistan/ |
| Page 40 | ¹² rus.azathabar.com/a/30667090.html |
| Page 47 | ¹³ turkmen.news/news/forced-labor-in-turkmenistan-cotton/ ¹⁴ www.sourcingnetwork.org/turkmen-cotton-pledge |



turkmen.news

Turkmen.news

Jan Steenlaan 5C
3723BS Bilthoven
The Netherlands

   +31684654547

info@turkmen.news

turkmen.news



Turkmen Initiative for Human Rights
Chronicles of Turkmenistan

Währinger Straße 59
A-1090 Vienna
Austria

turkmen.initiative@gmail.com
hronikatm@gmail.com

hronikatm.com