



April 21, 2015

Ambassador Patricia A. Butenis
Acting Director
Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Ambassador Butenis:

We appreciate your service in the fight against human trafficking. Looking forward to the release of the State Department's annual report on Trafficking in Persons, we write today to urge the State Department to place the government of Turkmenistan in Tier 3 in the *2015 Global Trafficking in Persons Report*.

The Turkmen government does not meet the minimum standards of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, nor is it taking steps to meet those standards. During the last two cotton harvests, the Cotton Campaign has supported Turkmen civil society to document labor practices there. Our monitors documented the Turkmen government's use of forced labor to harvest cotton and officials' use of forced labor for city maintenance and domestic work in their homes.

In 2014, the Turkmen government required civil servants to participate in the cotton harvest, either by picking cotton or paying a fine, under various threats, including losing their job. Officials also required some business owners to contribute their employees or a payment, under threat of closing the business. The mass mobilization of Turkmen citizens to harvest cotton degraded public services, especially schools, which sent their teachers to pick cotton. Some officials also forced civil servants to clean and landscape public spaces and to clean the officials' homes. The Turkmen government also suppressed freedom of association and speech, obliging monitors to report on its use of forced labor from outside the country.

The Turkmen government not only fails to meet the TVPA minimum standards, it orchestrates and benefits from forced labor. The practice violates national laws, International Labor Organization (ILO) Conventions No. 105 (Abolition of Forced Labor), and in the instances of children, No. 182 (Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor). Tier 3 is thus the only appropriate placement for Turkmenistan in the 2015 TIP Report.

The TIP Report is an important means to shine light on modern-day slavery and to press governments to do more to eradicate it. We believe that ranking Turkmenistan at Tier 3 will not only reflect the reality on the ground, it will also help press the Turkmen government to take steps to address the problem.

Sincerely,

The Cotton Campaign:



Advocates for Public Interest Law

AFL-CIO



American Federation of Teachers



Anti-Slavery International



Aquinas Associates



Association for Human Rights in Central Asia



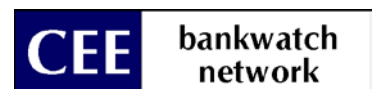
Australian Council of Trade Unions



Calvert Investments



CEE Bankwatch network



Child Labor Coalition



Daughters of Charity, St. Louise Province



Dignity Health



Eileen Fisher

EILEEN
FISHER

Environmental Justice Foundation



The Eurasian Transition Group, e.V.



Gonggam Human Rights Law Foundation



Inditex

INDITEX

International Labor Rights Forum



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns



Mercy Health



Mercy Investment Services, Inc.



National Consumers League



Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment



Open Society Foundations



Portfolio Advisory Board, Adrian Dominican Sisters



Responsible Sourcing Network



St. Joseph's Health



Solidarity Center



Textile Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia



Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania



United States Fashion Industry Association



Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights



Walden Asset Management



cc: Allan P. Mustard, United States Ambassador to Turkmenistan
Thomas E. Perez, Secretary of Labor
Nisha Desai Biswal, Assistant Secretary of State, South and Central Asian Affairs Bureau
Tom Malinowski, Assistant Secretary of State, Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Bureau

Enclosures:

1. "Monitoring the Use of Forced Labor in Turkmenistan," by Alternative Turkmenistan News