

**THE ISSUE OF FORCED LABOR AND THE FIGHT  
AGAINST IT IN UZBEKISTAN**

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**Abstrac:** The article highlights the issue of forced labor in Uzbekistan, the recruitment of minors into forced labor, and efforts to combat it. Today, forced labor remains one of the most significant global issues, prompting comprehensive measures and reforms in Uzbekistan to address this problem. In this context, the International Labour Organization (ILO) plays a crucial role in assisting our country.

**Key words:** forced labor, minors, human rights, ILO, UN, international documents, Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Labor Code.

### **Introduction**

It is widely acknowledged that one of the most pressing global issues today is the problem of forced labor. States worldwide are taking action to eradicate this practice and elevate it to the level of state policy. Uzbekistan, since the early years of its independence, has prioritized establishing a legal democratic state aimed at ensuring human rights and freedoms. International organizations such as the International Labour Organization and the United Nations provide substantial assistance to states in combating forced labor. Forced labor is considered a barrier to human rights.

### **Methods**

Several international documents aimed at combating forced labor and its prevention have been adopted in our country, and amendments and supplements have been made to our national legal system. The Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan and other legal documents guaranteeing labor rights confirm that forced labor is prohibited by law.

For example, in Article 44 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, it is specified that coercion to work is punishable by judicial decision or by other measures provided for by law. Likewise, Article 5 of the Labor Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan sets out the principle of freedom to work and the prohibition of forced labor, indicating sufficient legal grounds for the prohibition of forced labor in our country.

Today, our country is actively combating forced labor. Ensuring the rights and freedoms of individuals has been identified as one of the top priorities of state policy. The Supreme Council of the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted the resolution "On strengthening measures to ensure guaranteed labor rights of citizens in accordance with the legislative documents of the Republic of Uzbekistan and international labor

standards" on October 4, 2017, with the aim of eliminating child labor and forced labor in this area, comprehensive organizational and operational measures have been taken in this direction, the parliamentary oversight institution was established. Complex measures to prevent forced labor, ensuring full protection of labor rights of citizens, have been taken to create sufficient normative-legal base for combating forced labor, especially in the cotton sector. This has been highly appreciated by the world community, including the International Labour Organization, the World Bank, and the European Parliament. In addition, according to Tanzila Norboyeva, Chairman of the Senate of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Uzbekistan has completely eradicated systematic child labor since 2016. In this regard, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on Uzbekistan's accession to the textile protocol.

In 1930, Uzbekistan ratified the Convention on Forced Labor adopted in Geneva. According to this Convention, the term "forced or compulsory labor" refers to any work or service exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily. It should be noted that some cases specified in legal acts are not considered forced labor. For example:

- Performing work related to military service or military duty according to the Republic of Uzbekistan Law "On General Military Duty and Military Service";
- Performing work that involves surpassing or maintaining a military state of emergency;
- Carrying out work under the legal authority supervision of state bodies responsible for enforcement of court decisions at the time of enforcement.

### **Results and Discussions**

In Uzbekistan, teachers, educators, and students have long been involuntarily involved in forced labor, especially in cotton harvesting. Indeed, this situation has placed our country in a certain position before the international community for many years. Moreover, representatives of human rights both in our country and abroad signed a petition boycotting Uzbek cotton due to the use of child labor and forced labor.

Starting from 2010, the influential Cotton Campaign international coalition also declared a boycott and stopped purchasing cotton. We haven't achieved anything through forced labor; instead, we've lost. We coerced teachers and students into forced labor. Because of this, society and our state did not grow and develop.

In 2020, the United States Trade Representative (USTR) announced Uzbekistan's eligibility for the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) in Uzbekistan, based on the analysis of the European Commission, came to the conclusion that Uzbekistan responds to participate in the "GSP+".

In addition, on May 10, 2018, the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted Resolution No. 349 "On additional measures to prevent forced labor in the Republic of Uzbekistan", which specifically designated harsh penalties for those who employ workers and employees in seasonal agricultural work, various metal

scrap and paper collection, banned. Furthermore, one of the fundamental documents regarding the issue of combating forced labor in Uzbekistan is Presidential Decree No. PF-5775 dated July 30, 2019, aimed at further enhancing the system for combating human trafficking and forced labor in the Republic of Uzbekistan. According to this decree, the "National Commission for Combating Human Trafficking and Forced Labor" was established in our country, and local commissions for combating human trafficking and forced labor were entrusted with leadership responsibilities. Another advantage of this decree is that the practical implementation of combating forced labor has been initiated from the grassroots level. Specifically, in 2021, more than 20,000 awareness-raising events were organized to increase public awareness about combating forced labor. In every district and city, more than a million banners were installed to combat forced labor, more than 10,000 flyers and 10,000 posters were distributed.

In addition, Article 51 of the Criminal Code and Article 148 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan establish liability for forced labor.

### **Conclusion**

As can be seen from the ideas mentioned above, effective and comprehensive measures have been taken in our country against forced labor. In 2021, these measures resulted in the adoption of 16 normative-legal acts aimed at combating forced labor, harmonizing labor legislation with international labor standards, including 4 laws, 2 presidential decrees, 4 resolutions of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and 6 resolutions of the Government. The implementation of these legislative documents has almost eradicated forced labor in Uzbekistan and has returned our country to its former level on the international stage. The measures taken against forced labor have demonstrated their positive results.

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