

Remarks by Abby McGill
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Press Conference:
Cotton Campaign and Uzbekistan Government on
Labor Conditions in Uzbekistan's Cotton Sector

Tashkent, Uzbekistan
March 10, 2022

I wish I could be with you in Tashkent today, alongside such wonderful colleagues and allies that we have been working with closely for so long. I agree that this is a historic moment for the Cotton Campaign and for Uzbekistan, something we have all been working toward for a very long time. I think the success we've seen today demonstrates the effectiveness of the approach that we've taken, that has allowed us to both uncover problems where they exist - ensuring there is a voice on the ground to get a picture of what's happening - and to address those challenges together in a spirit of unity, solidarity, and cooperation.

That we have been able to eliminate forced labor in the cotton sector in Uzbekistan is historic, but is not sufficient, as my colleagues have pointed out, if we wish to ensure responsible sourcing. We at the Solidarity Center are a worker rights-based organization who believe firmly that working conditions and respect for rights can only improve when workers lead the change. There is a lot of work that can be done here to ensure that workers organizations, free trade unions, and representative organizations are allowed to operate freely in Uzbekistan, and we look forward to the opportunity to work diligently on promoting these fundamental labor rights and all fundamental labor rights in Uzbekistan, as we have worked so closely together on the rights of freedom from forced labor and child labor.

Thank you all so much, you deserve a lot of accolades for all of this change.