

**Public Hearing to Collect Information to
Assist in the Development of the List of Goods from
Countries Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor**

Wednesday, May 28, 2008

**Questions for Brian Campbell, Staff Attorney
International Labor Rights Forum**

Liberia

1. Your testimony notes that in 2005, ILRF identified forced labor in the Liberia's rubber sector through evidence gathered in partnership with other NGOs, research groups, and the trade union working on the plantation. Could you provide more specifics on how this information was gathered?

The ILRF works closely with several allies in Liberia who have staff and representatives on and around the Firestone plantation. While each organization provides different services, each works closely with the workers whose children were forced to work to meet daily production quotas. For example, Green Advocates, one such organization, provides legal services for the workers. The Firestone Agricultural Workers' Union of Liberia (FAWUL) is the recognized bargaining representative of the Firestone Plantation workers and is responsible for representing the workers. IRAdvocates, a U.S.-based human rights NGO, represents the families of children who were forced to work on the plantation and have conducted several interviews with the children victimized by child labor. More information on the labor conditions on the Firestone plantation, including the declarations of several children forced to work on the plantation, is available at IR Advocates web-site, <http://www.iradvocates.org/bfcase.html>.

Much of the work to date on eradicating forced labor, and seeking justice for the victims, grew out of the report, "Firestone: The Mark of Slavery," produced by the Save My Future Foundation (SAMFU) located in Monrovia, Liberia written in March 2005. The report is available online at <http://www.samfu.org/do%20files/A%20Publication%20of%20SAMFU%20on%20The%20World's%20Largest%20Rubber%20Plantation.pdf>.

Each of these organizations spends significant amount of time with the families of victims in Liberia.

2. Could you provide citations for the United Nations reports you mention as primary sources upon which you base a claim that forced labor is widespread in the rubber sector?

"Human Rights in Liberia's Rubber Plantations: Tapping into the Future," United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). UNMIL Headquarters, Monrovia Liberia: May 2006. Available online at <http://www.laborrights.org/files/UN%20Liberia%20Rubber%20Report-%20May%202006.pdf>.

Joint Government of Liberia – United Nations Rubber Plantations Task Force Report.
Monrovia, Liberia: May 2006. Available online:
http://www.laborrights.org/files/Rubber_TF_Report.pdf.

3. Do you have knowledge as to whether the forced labor involves adults, children, or both? Upon what sources do you rely for this information?

Each of the above reports describes in detail the forced labor performed by children. Regarding adult forced labor, the IR Advocates describes the conditions of work under which adults labor on the plantation. On their website, you will find a description of the labor performed by the adults as well as an explanation as to why it is forced labor. However, in *John Roe I v. Bridgestone Corporation*, CASE NO. 1:06-cv-0627-DFH-JMS, a suit filed in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana, the judge ruled that the facts alleged by the adult laborers did not reach the level of forced labor under international law. However, of immense significance, the judge ruled that the children had stated a claim for forced labor under international law. The case remains pending in the U.S. District Court.

4. If there are children, please clarify what tasks children perform in the production of rubber.

Please see the complaint filed on behalf of the children working on the Firestone Plantation in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana, and available on the IR Advocates website, for a complete description of the work performed by the children. The complaint is available at <http://www.iradvocates.org/Firestone%20Complaint%20Final1105.pdf>

Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire

5. Your testimony notes that research consultants hired by ILRF conducted field research in the cocoa sector in Côte d'Ivoire in 2002 and later.
 - When was follow-up research conducted?
 - With all due precautions taken to protect the safety of the research consultants, may we receive a copy of the initial report, as well as any subsequent reports that resulted from this research?
6. Did ILRF find evidence indicating that forced labor of adults exists in the cocoa sector in Cote d'Ivoire? Could you please describe this evidence, it indicates such practices represent more than isolated incidents?
7. You indicated that "recent investigative reports by credible independent journalists have verified recent ILRF field findings that no systematic program efforts, or even relevant or scaleable pilot projects, have yet been undertaken in

Ivory Coast that would have a significant impact on the problem in this industry.” Could you please provide citations or copies of these investigative reports?

8. In its recent field research, which projects did ILRF visit in Cote d’Ivoire to make its determination that no relevant, scalable or systematic projects have been undertaken? Based upon what evidence ILRF reach this conclusion?

Uzbekistan

9. Will you please describe in more detail the types of hazardous work conditions and activities children working in cotton production are exposed to and involved in?

Please see the voluminous filings presented by the ILRF to the DOL in March 2008. Please also see one additional report entitled “Forced Child Labor in Uzbekistan’s 2007 Cotton Harvest: A Survey Report” written by a group of human rights defenders and journalists of Uzbekistan, created in April 2008, further documenting the use of forced and child labor in Uzbekistan.

10. We note that your testimony cites various statistics regarding the number of children working in cotton. Specifically, the testimony notes that “one million children, a third of them under 15 years of age, are recruited to pick cotton each year”.
 - Could you please provide copies or direct us to the research upon which this statement is based?
 - How was the “one million” extrapolation made? If not mentioned in the research, could you please describe the methodology behind the estimate?
 - As 16 years is the minimum age for employment in Uzbekistan, are you able to provide estimates of the number of children 15 years and under specifically working in hazardous conditions?

Please see the attached report, “Forced Child Labor in Uzbekistan’s 2007 Cotton Harvest: A Survey Report” written by a group of human rights defenders and journalists of Uzbekistan for more information on the number of children forced to work in the cotton fields.

11. Your testimony notes research conducted by ILRF in the Ferghana region.
 - How many individuals were interviewed?
 - Who were your key informants?

At this time, the ILRF will not disclose the names or anyother identifying information of their informants in order to protect them from retaliation.

Further, ILRF's allies in Uzbekistan are currently finalizing their reports, which includes research methods information. Unfortunately, the report will not be prepared by the June 11, 2008 deadline for filing.

12. Your testimony states that the money children receive for working during the cotton harvest is often taken by the Government as payment for food and housing costs incurred during the harvest period. You indicate that you believe this creates a situation of "debt bondage."
- Can you provide greater detail about how this constitutes debt bondage?
 - Are some/much children are unable to meet their financial obligations and remain in debt to the state after the harvest period?
 - How many children are trapped in debt bondage situations, what are their ages, and do the children's financial obligations transfer to their parents?
 - Are practices leading to debt bondage and forced child labor systematically applied by the central government throughout all cotton producing regions - or are these practices designed and implemented by local government officials or business agents?

For a full description of the debt faced by farmers and their children, please see the reports filed with our submission in March 2008: *The Curse of Cotton*, *The Children Behind our Cotton*, and *Forced Child Labor in Uzbekistan's 2007 Cotton Harvest: A Survey Report* attached hereto.

One final note of clarification:

We would also like to take this opportunity to address an additional point, not included in USDOL's list of questions, but raised by Meg Roeggensack of Free the Slaves at the May 28 hearing at the USDOL. As Ms. Roeggensack's comment is now a matter of public record, we feel compelled to clarify the record on this point.

We are troubled by Ms. Roeggensack's suggestion that endemic and widespread forced labor in Uzbekistan is a result of 'labor shortages' in that country. That an organization that claims affiliation to Anti-Slavery International, and should be well-versed in the history of slavery in North America and repeated justifications of the continued practice of slavery on the basis of claims of a 'labor shortage' (arguments used in the Caribbean as well) would resort to such a justification under any circumstances is troubling. In this particular circumstance it is entirely inaccurate. The fact is that many able-bodied adults in Uzbekistan flee the country, each harvest season, preferring to provide their labor in cotton fields in next-door Kyrgystan or Kazakhstan; this has been well-documented by the Environmental Justice Foundation and regional journalists. They prefer to labor in cotton in neighboring countries because, meager though the pay for labor may be, it is preferable to laboring for no compensation at all. We would suggest that the fact that able-bodied adults who are capable and willing to labor in cotton harvests for pay choose to escape Uzbekistan's compulsory labor system, if they are at all able to do so, cannot be characterized as a 'labor shortage.'

