

June 2019 E-News

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Job Opening at ILRF: Legal & Policy Director

ILRF is recruiting for a [Legal & Policy Director](#) to join our team in Washington, DC to conceptualize, guide, and execute ILRF's legal and policy advocacy across programs. We are seeking candidates with experience working independently and within coalitions to advance workers' rights in corporate supply chains, trade policy, and government procurement. Knowledge of US policy-making processes and actors, intricate familiarity with trade and labor policy mechanisms, and experience leveraging those mechanisms to advance workers' rights is a must. The position requires excellence in articulating advocacy positions on complex policy issues related to social justice and workers' rights, in presentations, meetings, and in writing, and in coordinating staff project teams and coalition building.



Bangladesh Accord Continues to Operate but Its Independence May Be at Risk

As a witness signatory to the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh, ILRF is concerned about the potential negative impact on worker safety of the recently concluded Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Accord and the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers & Exporters Association, and the diverging interpretations that have emerged over the last few weeks. The MOU allows the Accord to operate legally in Bangladesh for 13 more months; however, we have serious concerns about to what extent it also preserves the Accord's independence and ability to function effectively during that period. The MOU calls for the Accord to end its Bangladesh operations in mid-2020 and to be replaced by a new entity, leaving virtually all significant decisions concerning the nature of this entity for future discussion. For further information, please read our [joint statement](#)



with the Clean Clothes Campaign, Maquila Solidarity Network, and Worker Rights Consortium.

Activism Builds Amidst Ongoing Forced Labor in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan

Last month the petition demanding the release of [Gaspar Matalaev](#), an unjustly imprisoned labor rights defender in Turkmenistan, reached [100,000 signatures](#)! Cotton Campaign members and allies gathered in front of the Embassy of Turkmenistan to deliver the petition last month, but the Embassy staff refused to meet the delegation. Making a clear statement against oppression by the Turkmen Government, 66 brands have taken a stand by signing the [Turkmen Cotton Pledge](#) and refusing to source cotton from Turkmenistan, and 80 investors with more than \$722 billion in assets under management [have signed an investor statement](#).

The Cotton Campaign's partner, Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights, released their findings from [monitoring the 2018 cotton harvest](#) in Uzbekistan. Despite reforms enacted by the Government, their monitoring still found state-sponsored forced labor in the cotton sector. Just this week, the Cotton Campaign released the [Roadmap for Reforms in Uzbekistan](#), which reflects wide ranging consultations with partners as well as with the Uzbek Government. Its purpose is to support the historic process of reform that is underway to eliminate and prevent forced labor in Uzbekistan's cotton sector.

Costco Ceases Orders Following Union-Busting on Fyffes' Honduran Plantations

Costco Wholesale told ILRF that it has not placed future orders for Honduran melons from Fyffes, after letters from ILRF and Fair World Project pointed to union busting on Fyffes' Honduran melon plantations. The anti-union behavior follows more than two decades of human and labor rights abuses on the plantations, including wage theft and exposure to toxic agrochemicals. Our real ask to COSTCO was and still is to make their future orders with Fyffes – for any produce and from any country – contingent on the rehiring of the STAS union members facing retaliation, and the negotiation of a collective bargaining agreement in good faith with STAS. Fyffes is a global company and it needs to be held accountable globally! Thus, ILRF and allies are [now urging](#) other supermarkets to make their business with Fyffes contingent on a resolution of abuses in Honduras.



MSC's New Labor Requirements Will Not Protect Seafood Workers

On June 10, leading labor, human rights and environmental organizations and members of the Thai Seafood Working Group, coordinated by ILRF, [expressed concern](#) that the Marine Stewardship Council's revised Chain of Custody Certification will not be effective in identifying, preventing, or protecting seafood workers from labor rights violations. The 13 signatories believe that the Certification will not provide buyers and retailers with assurance that child labor and forced labor are not present in their supply chains.

This statement follows two years of engagement with MSC regarding the development of this certification, during which time the Working Group and other concerned stakeholders engaged proactively and made recommendations for improving the labor requirements. MSC incorporated very few of these suggestions.



Forced Labor in Central Asia's Cotton Sector Under Scrutiny in Trafficking in Persons Report

For the fourth year in a row, the Government of Turkmenistan failed to meet the minimum standards to address human trafficking outlined in the 2019 US Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report, resulting in a Tier 3 ranking – [the lowest one possible](#). Turkmenistan continued to use state-sponsored forced labor in the 2018 cotton harvest; this included teachers, doctors, and, at times, children.

Additionally, Uzbekistan rightly remained at [the ranking of Tier 2, Watchlist](#), which is reserved for countries that do not meet minimum standards to eliminate human trafficking but are making efforts to do so. While the Uzbek Government has made significant efforts to reform the cotton industry, the US TIP report found that “government-compelled forced labor remained during the 2018 cotton harvest.” The 2019 harvest for both countries will begin in September. Read more [here](#)!



Upcoming Event: Labor Notes Asia Regional Conference

ILRF is co-sponsoring the [Labor Notes Asia Regional Conference](#), August 16-18 in Taipei, Taiwan. Across Asia, multinational corporations are pushing an agenda of outsourcing, subcontracting, and short-term contracts to minimize their responsibility for labor rights violations and to keep out independent, democratic unions. Millions of migrant workers have few legal protections and face precarious employment and unsafe positions. Despite mass dismissals, the risk of arrest, and increasing restrictions on civil



society, workers and grassroots labor organizations continue to fight back and advocate for workers' rights.

This conference will bring together labor activists in the region to share and learn organizing approaches, discuss strategies around defending workers and labor activists under threat, and strengthen cross-sector and international solidarity necessary to confront global capitalism.

DONATE NOW!

Please consider joining ILRF as a monthly donor to help sustain our ability to stand with labor rights defenders around the world.