

COTTON CAMPAIGN
END FORCED LABOR IN CENTRAL ASIA

May 10, 2017

His Excellency Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov
President of the Republic of Turkmenistan
c/o H.E. Meret Orazov, Ambassador
Embassy of the Republic of Turkmenistan in the U.S.
2207 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20008

Dear President Berdimuhamedov:

We, the undersigned organizations, join [over 35,500 people from all around the world](#) in seeking justice, clemency and an immediate release of wrongfully accused Turkmen citizen Mr. Gaspar Matalaev.

Mr. Matalaev was arrested on October 4, 2016, and has reportedly been subjected to torture by electric current to force him to confess to false charges of minor fraud. Mr. Matalaev's family was promised time and again that he would be released, but this never happened. Though the charges against him are minor he is still imprisoned, despite other convicts charged with the same offenses having been released or pardoned.

Mr. Gaspar is a concerned citizen of Turkmenistan, who has been [monitoring](#) human rights violations during the cotton harvest. His work has helped draw attention to the offences against international and Turkmen laws during cotton production in Turkmenistan. We call upon your government to release Mr. Matalaev and investigate violations that he uncovered.

In April 2017, the United Nations Human Rights Committee called on your government to end the harassment, torture and detention of those "[seeking to document forced labour in the cotton harvest such as Gaspar Matalaev](#)".

As representatives of our respective organizations and leaders of the international NGO community, Mr. President, we are committed to promoting and protecting the same international conventions and standards guaranteeing international law and human rights that Turkmenistan has pledged to uphold. We call on you to release Mr. Matalaev as a matter of urgency and to work with civil society actors like him to end forced labor in your cotton industry.

Sincerely,

Alternative Turkmenistan News
Anti-Slavery International
Freedom United
International Labor Rights Forum
International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF)
Responsible Sourcing Network
Solidarity Center
The Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania

cc: The Honorable Rashid Meredov, Foreign Minister, Republic of Turkmenistan
The Honorable Rex W. Tillerson, U.S. Secretary of State
The Honorable Sebastian Kurz, Chairperson-in-Office, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
The Honorable Zeid bin Ra'ad Zeid al-Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
The Honorable Antonio Tajani, President of the European Parliament
The Honorable Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe
The Honorable Sigmar Gabriel, German Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs
The Honorable Margret Uebber, Head of Mission, German Embassy in Turkmenistan