

February 2019 E-News

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We're Hiring! Job Opening at ILRF

ILRF is recruiting for a position to be part of our team in Washington, D.C. The [Cotton Campaign Coordinator](#) will play a critical role in facilitating a global coalition of human rights, labor, investor and business organizations dedicated to eradicating child labor and forced labor in cotton production. Please share this announcement with qualified candidates who would be excited to bring their skills in coalition building, strategic planning, writing, and fundraising to the Cotton Campaign, which is housed at ILRF.



Continued Anti-Union Violence on Fyffes' Farms

Fyffes, the billion dollar fruit company that owns melon plantations in Honduras and employs up to 8,000 seasonal, mostly female workers continues to threaten and intimidate workers who are organizing with STAS, an independent Honduran union. As part of an aggressive anti-union campaign, workers are being coerced to sign blank pieces of paper to affiliate to a fake, management-run union and told if they don't sign they won't be rehired for next season and the plantations will close. Fyffes markets its melons in U.S. supermarkets under the "SOL" label. [ILRF is calling on Fyffes](#) to end the violence and respect the farmworkers' rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining. Read more in [Michelle Chen's article](#) in *In These Times*.



89 Human Rights Groups Decry Thammakaset's Spurious Cases

On February 14th, the Thai Seafood Working Group facilitated [the release of a joint letter](#) calling on the Thai government to uphold its business and human rights commitments and to protect the rights of human rights defenders. Thammakaset Farms, a Thai-owned poultry company, has filed at least 13 criminal and civil complaints against human rights defenders and former employees. While some of these cases have been dismissed, others are still ongoing, and in November 2018, a representative of Thammakaset pledged to bring forward additional complaints. These cases are emblematic of Strategic Litigation against Public Participation (SLAPP) lawsuits and pose a dangerous threat to Thailand's civil society space.



This letter follows two years of international campaigning in support of workers who were sued for speaking out about abuses. One positive shift is that on January 15th Thailand's [Supreme Court ordered](#) Thammakaset to pay 1.7 million Thai Baht in compensation to the 14 former employees that experienced extreme exploitation. This ruling is a landmark case for the rights of migrant workers in Thailand.

Cotton Campaign Meets with Senior Uzbek Officials in DC

After over ten years of campaigning against state-sponsored forced labor in Uzbekistan's cotton sector, on February 4th, the ILRF-led [Cotton Campaign hosted](#) a delegation from the Uzbek government, which included the Deputy Prime Minister. This meeting focused on the progress that the Government of Uzbekistan has made towards ending forced labor and the major challenges that remain. Cotton Campaign members also met with representatives from the US government, brands, and hosted several Uzbek and Turkmen activists.



Court Decision on Bangladesh Accord Postponed

On Monday, Bangladesh's Appellate Court issued an extension to the judgement decreeing the Accord leave the country pending a decision on April 7th, 2019. Until then, the Accord's Bangladesh office operations and implementation programs will continue as usual while the Accord's Steering Committee resumes negotiations with the government of Bangladesh and the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association. In the meantime, ILRF and allies will continue advocating in support of this life-saving program. If you haven't yet, please [send a letter in support of the Accord](#), and check out the [photos and media coverage](#) from the global week of solidarity with garment workers in Bangladesh. The demonstrations at Bangladesh's embassies and consulates also voiced outrage over the ongoing crackdown on workers' rights to freedom of assembly and expression, calling for reinstatement for the thousands of dismissed and blacklisted workers and the dropping of unsubstantiated charges against workers supporting higher wages.



ILRF Uncovers Turkmen Cotton Sold By Major Retailers

ILRF has uncovered that Walmart, Amazon, and eBay are profiting off goods made with Turkmen cotton. In May 2018, US Customs and Border Protection banned the import of any products containing cotton from Turkmenistan, a country known for using state-sponsored forced labor in its cotton sector. So how are these major US corporations getting away with selling these goods? Check out [ILRF's recent op-ed](#) published by Thomson Reuters Foundation to find out!



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