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October 7, 2023

Today, on [International Cotton Day](#), we reflect on the cotton industry and more specifically, recognize its deep ties to Uyghur forced labour and the Uyghur genocide. Likely, there is not a single household in which you wouldn't find cotton-based linens or clothing. Many of these products originate in China, the [leading](#) cotton producing country worldwide. What you might not know, is that most of these made-in-China products are comprised of cotton picked and processed by millions of Uyghur adults and children enslaved by the Chinese government.

Any cotton product originating from China has a very high [percentage](#) of being grown, cultivated, harvested and processed in East Turkestan. A U.S. Department of State 'Xinjiang Supply Chain Business [Advisory](#)' issued on September 26, 2023, lists cotton as a good produced in disproportionately high volumes in East Turkestan that is a central element in global supply chains. The Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA) designates cotton as a high-priority sector for enforcement, on the basis of forced labour risk factors and/or links to ownership or subsidies to the Chinese government which perpetuate forced labour and mass detention of Uyghurs in the East Turkestan region.

The Canadian government must do more to address the complicity of Canadian businesses, investments and individuals in China's ongoing genocide. Canadian ties to Uyghur forced labour through the cotton industry are unequivocal. Despite Global Affairs Canada's January 2021 [advisory](#) urging companies to exercise due diligence with entities related to the Uyghur region for potential tainted supply chains and the Government of Canada's [pledge](#) to eradicate forced labour from Canadian supply chains in the 2023 federal budget, the Canadian Customs and Border Service Agency has yet to seize any shipments from the Uyghur region carrying products tainted with Uyghur forced labour.

URAP is actively pursuing all possible venues to address Canadian supply chains tainted with the Uyghur forced slave labour. In April 2022, a URAP-led coalition of 28 organizations, filed a complaint to the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise (CORE), alleging that 14 Canadian companies had operations or supply chains in the Uyghur region, and were using or benefitting from the use of Uyghur forced labour. Most of these companies are textile retailers profiting from the Uyghur slave labour. CORE has launched investigations into 8 of the companies listed in the complaint. In addition, URAP is committed to working alongside our partners on the Coalition Against Forced Labour in



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Trade to introduce and enforce import bans against goods made using forced labour globally.

URAP urges the Government of Canada to make the introduction of UFLPA-compatible legislation a high priority. Canada has failed to introduce enforceable measures or policies to remove products tainted using Uyghur forced labour from its consumer market. Crucially, Canada's enforcement gaps leave the possibility of blocked goods from US ports, in accordance with the UFLPA, freely entering Canadian borders. This problematic reality is echoed by URAP Executive Director Mehmet Tohti, "Canada should not be used backdoor by China to ship out its tainted products that were already banned by the US". This inaction is both unacceptable and a sign of moral corruption.