**UZBEKISTAN**

**Submission for the adoption of the List of Issues in relation to the fifth periodic report of Uzbekistan to the ICCPR**

Presented by:

Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights (UGF) with the support of the Centre for Civil and Political Rights (CCPR)

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1. **Introduction**

The fourth periodic report of Uzbekistan was reviewed by the Human Rights Committee in 2015. In its Concluding Observations (CCPR/C/UZB/CO/4) the Committee recommended, among other issues, that “*The State party should put an end to forced labour in the cotton and silk sector’s, inter alia, by enforcing effectively the legal framework prohibiting child and forced labour, including by rigorously prosecuting those responsible for violations and by improving the working and living conditions in those sectors. The State party should also review its laws and practices to ensure financial transparency and address corruption in the cotton industry and take all measures necessary to prevent deaths in connection with cotton harvesting, investigate thoroughly such cases when they occur and provide effective remedies, including adequate compensation, to victims’ families.”*This recommendation was selected for the follow-up procedure, in which the State was requested to submit information on implementation of this recommendations by 2016.

The follow-up evaluation was carried out by the Human Rights Committee in 2017, focusing among other issues on forced labour. Regarding the recommendation to put an end to forced labour in the cotton and silk sectors by enforcing the legal framework effectively, prosecuting those responsible and improving the working and living conditions in those sectors, the Committee considered that some measures were taken, but many questions of the Committee remained unaddressed, resulting in a B-grade. The State did not provide information concerning the recommendation of addressing corruption in the cotton industry and preventing deaths, investigating these cases and providing remedies, resulting in a C-grade.

This report provides updates on the implementation of the above-mentioned recommendation as well as information on the widespread use of legislation to combat "religious extremism" to impede journalism and the violations of the freedom of movement and discrimination through the Propiska (Residence Registration System)**.** The report includes suggested questions for the List of Issues to be adopted in July 2019.

1. **Forced labour**
2. **Forced Labour in the Cotton Sector**

Since 2017, the Uzbek government has taken some important steps to address child and forced labour in the cotton sector which have led to significant improvements. Wage increases have attracted more voluntary labour, but the key root causes of forced labour have remained largely unaddressed. Combined with a lack of a fair recruitment system for voluntary labour, this results in officials at both the local and national level forcing citizens into the fields and extorting companies and organizations to provide resources and labour to cover shortfalls and ensuring that the state set quota is fulfilled.

[Monitoring findings of the 2018 cotton harvest](http://uzbekgermanforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Cotton_Harvest_2018_Klein_Mail.pdf) by Uzbek-German Forum (UGF) showcase the underlying structural issues which perpetuate forced labour in Uzbekistan and lead us to conclude that the problem remains systemic. The key drivers of forced labour are:

* the state-set quota system;
* the uneven application of the law prohibiting forced labour and lack of transparency in its application;
* a dramatic drop in earning potential in the second half of the harvest resulting in a lack of voluntary pickers;
* and a lack of sufficient numbers of pickers in lower population regions to meet the state set quotas.

UGF obtained copies of several documents from government agencies and businesses ordering their employees to participate in the harvest. These documents prove that more than 18,000 employees were ordered to pick cotton. But these represent just a small fraction of the organizations and enterprises that required their employees to pick cotton or pay for replacement workers. UGF interviews, field observations, and dozens of complaints reported in the Uzbek media by employees, indicate that hundreds of businesses and organizations across the country forcibly sent their employees to pick cotton.

As in previous years, the government continued to assign cotton production quotas to regions and districts and impose responsibility on officials to fulfil these quotas. While significant increases in payment for cotton picking did increase voluntary participation in the harvest, especially in the early stages when cotton is most abundant and pickers can earn the most, this was not sufficient to cover labour shortfalls in low population districts or later in the season when working conditions worsened and pickers could earn much less. As a result, officials turned to public sector institutions as well as banks, enterprises, and businesses to send their employees to the fields or pay for pickers, to cover costs for these pickers, and, in some regions, to deliver cotton quotas. Identifying forced labour as the result of structural problems and policies under central control and not just as the result of poor management practices by individual local officials, is important in order to identify appropriate reforms to address the underlying causes of the problem.

Numerous major government organizations, including at least seven key national enterprises, utility companies, banks, factories, law enforcement and government agencies required their employees to pick cotton or pay for replacement pickers from the beginning of the harvest. There was also mass extortion of businesses and merchants by state authorities to supply employees to pick cotton and pay their expenses, or to hire replacement workers.

For the first time, the government did not mobilize university students to pick cotton, an important improvement. However, although health and education employees were not mobilized en masse from the beginning of the harvest as in previous years, in some regions local officials began forcing these employees into the fields by mid-October, once the supply of voluntary labour dropped off.

There was some central direction of forced labour. Large numbers of people were sent from high population regions to lower population regions to pick cotton from the beginning of the harvest in early September, an effort which required central coordination. These pickers included voluntary picking groups as well as thousands of employees of national enterprises, state utility companies, and public sector institutions or replacement workers hired by them. In addition, law enforcement, military, and emergency service agencies sent employees and recruits to pick cotton which could not have occurred without central knowledge or approval.

Although the climate for civil society activism around forced labour in Uzbekistan has undoubtedly improved in recent years, tolerance of human rights activity by the authorities remained inconsistent. During the 2018 harvest, law enforcement and local government officials on several occasions detained, harassed or interfered with independent civil society monitors, including UGF monitors and monitors conducting ILO awareness raising activity. Criminal charges for illegal border crossing remained pending against Dmitry Tikhonov, an Angren-based human rights defender who documented forced labour for UGF and was forced to flee Uzbekistan in 2015 following an apparent arson attack on his home office.

Despite instructing regional and local officials not to use forced labour, the government used the state administrative apparatus to pressure them to fulfil quotas, including public statements of discontent from the president and prime minister. More than 100 officials were dismissed, fined, or disciplined for shortcomings in the harvest, receiving widespread attention in the Uzbek media. However, by highlighting penalties for inadequately managing the harvest, these cases undermined messages on the prohibition of forced labour. Although the government did take steps to hold officials accountable for the use of forced labour, reporting that it disciplined some 200 hokims, officials, and managers for forced labour violations, it has refused to make details about these cases, including names, positions, violations, or penalties, publicly available. In its report on the 2018 harvest, the ILO listed the titles of officials who were disciplined for forced labour violations, and these included the directors of medical, education, and veterinary institutions, managers of companies and petrol filling stations, and other organizations that have nothing to do with the cotton sector. The investigations that led to disciplining these individuals apparently did not investigate up the chain of command to determine on whose orders they ordered their employees to pick cotton. When faced with the choice between not fulfilling the quota or using forced labour, officials resorted to forced labour in the face of threats of penalties such as dismissal from their jobs. UGF is not aware of any compensation paid to victims of forced labour by the Uzbek government or regional administrations.

Many pickers complained of poor working and living conditions, especially cold, crowded housing and insufficient hygiene facilities for pickers working with an overnight stay. Women expressed concern about the perceived threat of sexual harassment due to the absence of separate sleeping and hygiene facilities and found it intimidating to live in such close proximity and without privacy with hundreds of men they did not know.

Insufficient funding to cover the costs of cotton picking combined with a lack of protection of workers’ rights affected both voluntary and involuntary pickers. UGF monitors were told that they did not receive the conditions or benefits they were promised for picking cotton. Many pickers reported to UGF that they had had to pay for their own transport and food, and had to live in abandoned buildings with broken windows. Most pickers, both voluntary and involuntary, did not receive contracts guaranteeing payment fees and working conditions. Employees of state-owned and private enterprises were however required to sign documents stating that their participation in the cotton harvest was “voluntary”.

These examples highlight the vulnerability of employees and their inability to refuse to pick cotton for fear of losing their jobs. Employees have little protection from such demands or from reprisals for refusing. There are no independent trade unions in Uzbekistan; all unions currently in existence are affiliates of the Federation of Trade Unions of Uzbekistan (FTUU), which is widely perceived to lack independence and serve the interests of the management and government, not workers. Indeed, the International Federation of Trade Unions (ITUC) came to the conclusion that the “FTUU is not an independent organization.” Two employees told UGF that their unions not only assist management but also sometimes organize and supervise forced labour, including cotton picking, on behalf of the management and government.

1. **Forced Labour in the Silk Sector**

UGF has monitored forced labour in the silk sector since 2015 and published a report on the issue in 2015:

<http://uzbekgermanforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Silk-Loop-for-Uzbek-Farmers.pdf>

The findings show that in the silk sector too, the state-set quota system drives forced labour which mainly falls on farmers, public organizations and exploits the vulnerability of the rural poor. The silk sector is entirely controlled by the government and cocoons must be sold to the government at the official procurement price, leaving producers little or no profit, and in many cases in debt. The central government establishes cocoon production policies, prices, and annual silk production targets, and, as in the cotton sector, requires regional- and district-level officials to ensure targets are met. Local officials use coercion, including threatening farmers that they will lose their land, to force farmers and public-sector institutions to fulfil annual silk quotas. Farmers, in turn, oblige family members, including children, or pay local labourers to assist in the cultivation of silkworm cocoons to meet required production quotas and avoid penalties. The system relies on and exploits rural poverty as many farmers can only meet their production targets with the help of local workers who agree to assist in the arduous job of cocoon production in return for desperately needed items such as firewood and food. Directors of public institutions require their staff to cultivate silkworm cocoons or make payments to contribute to the institution’s quota and avoid fines and other repercussions.

Although the government promises to pay producers a government-set price for silk cocoons, in practice, the government usually only pays producers a small advance on the value expected from the producers’ quota of cocoons. We found that in many cases the government underpays or fails to pay producers upon delivery of cocoons. Silk production is expensive, labour intensive, and not commercially viable for farmers and other producers. All farmers interviewed by UGF said that the government forces them to cultivate silk cocoons, in violation of national and international laws prohibiting forced labour, and that they cannot refuse the government’s orders. UGF estimates that approximately 100,000 farmers and rural residents are affected by forced labour in the silk sector each year, a number that is certain to rise as the government intends to increase silk production by 50% by 2021. In monitoring of silk cocoon production and harvesting conducted in 2018, UGF found that local officials in two regions took schoolchildren out of class to help local farmers harvest cocoons, threatening they would not pass their exams if they refused.

1. **Forced Labour in Other Sectors**

In February 2019, UGF released a [joint report](http://uzbekgermanforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Uzbekistan.Forced-Labor-in-Public-Sector-Report.English.1.2019.pdf) with Solidarity Center based on interviews with public employees and others affected by forced labour, conducted by UGF monitors in nine regions in Uzbekistan over two months in spring 2018. Findings showed that teachers, health care workers and employees of state agencies are routinely sent to clean streets, plant flowers, do construction work, dredge ditches and perform public maintenance for hours or days every week, at no extra pay and to the detriment of public services. They perform this work involuntarily, under threat of job loss, pay cuts or disciplinary measures if they refuse.

Interviewees described a consistent pattern of local officials ordering them to undertake forced labour tasks including community maintenance and beautification, street cleaning, wheat harvesting and collection of scrap metal and paper. The report also showed that local officials are forcing public employees to fulfil a community maintenance program called Obod Kishlok [Well-Maintained Village] announced by the president in March 2018. Under the programme, public-sector employees bear full responsibility for repairing, painting and gardening at private houses, including buying supplies and doing work.

Public-sector employees often pay for costs associated with forced labour, including for food and transportation to forced labour assignments as well as for construction supplies, tools, flowers and seedlings to plant. In addition to forced labour, officials also extort or withhold money from public-sector employees for mandatory subscriptions, events and to subsidize public work. Several children and farmers reported that children were also taken out of class to harvest silk cocoons under threat of penalty. The report shows that local officials appear to view public-sector employees as a constant source of labour and funds to fulfil local needs or centrally imposed mandates. The other side of the picture is the absolutely devastating toll forced labour takes on essential public services, particularly health care and education, when trained specialists, among the lowest-paid professionals in the country, are taken out of work for hours, days or even weeks to perform manual labour at the whim of officials. One nurse who spoke to UGF monitors said that she had begun to keep track of the work she did at the hospital and calculated that it amounted to only 109 days per year, spending the remainder of the time performing tasks including public maintenance, street cleaning and cotton picking, ordered by local officials.

In a particularly tragic and well publicised case, 23-year-old teacher Diana Enikeeva was struck and killed by a truck while she and other teachers were cleaning the highway in Kattakurgan district in Samarkand region in preparation for a visit by Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. After massive public outcry, the Uzbek government issued a [decree](http://lex.uz/ru/docs/3730231) on May 10, 2018, prohibiting the ordering of state employees to do “public” work such as street cleaning and cotton picking. However, despite the government’s rhetorical commitment to ending forced labour, other statements and actions suggest that officials, even at the highest levels, fail to understand the enormous scope of the problem and continue to enact policies that promote forced labour.

It is clear that declarations and attention to a single supply chain are not enough. Authorities must urgently address systemic root causes of forced labour that allow it to continue. These include the lack of independent and representative labour unions, absence of effective complaint and accountability mechanisms, rampant corruption, lack of accountability of local authorities, centrally imposed mandates and a punitive and exploitative agricultural system.

**Suggested questions for the List of Issues:**

* Please indicate the measures taken to eradicate forced labour of children and adults in hazardous working conditions in the cotton, silk and other sectors. Please provide information on any measures taken to reduce the risk of forced labour of adults and students above 16 years of age in the cotton harvest. Please provide information on the measures taken to address the root causes of forced labour, including the cotton production quotas.
* Please respond to reports that public and private-sector workers, pensioners, mothers and other persons receiving public welfare benefits, continue to be involved in forced labour in the cotton sector under threat of penalties, including expulsion from school or university, dismissal from work or the loss of salary, pension and welfare benefits, as well as verbal and physical abuse.
* Please provide information on the impact of the two plans of action adopted in 2016 on improving the working and employment conditions and social protection of rural workers for the period 2016-2018, and for the implementation of the ILO conventions concerning the prohibition against forced and child labour in 2016 on ending the forced labour in the cotton industry.
* Please provide information on the measures taken to improve living and working conditions of workers in the cotton and silk sectors.
* Please provide information on the existence of independent trade unions who represent the interests of the workers, including temporary agricultural workers, such as cotton pickers, allowing them to submit complaints.
* Please provide information about the actions taken to discipline managers and local officials for forced labour violations in the 2018 harvest. Were investigations taken up the chain of command to determine on whose orders these officials were acting and why officials in non-cotton related sectors ordered their employees to pick cotton? Were any actions taken to hold officials up the chain of command to account?
* Please respond to reports that independent government critics, human rights defenders and other civil society activists continue to be harassed and subjected to surveillance, arbitrary arrests and detentions, torture and ill-treatment by law enforcement officers, and prosecutions on false charges such as fraud, tax evasion, drug dealing, defamation and religious extremism followed by convictions to long prison terms, in retaliation for their work. Please indicate what protective measures have been taken to prevent such violations and to bring perpetrators to justice.
1. **Financial Transparency and Corruption**

Mandatory cotton quotas on districts, farmers, and organizations contributed to corruption in the cotton system and distortions about the amount of cotton harvested. For example, cotton gins accept bribes to provide confirmation of delivery of the required quota of cotton; farmers resort to paying inflated prices for excess cotton harvested by other farmers in order to meet their quota; or cotton is often weighed when it has already been stored so as to increase its weight through moisture. However, the most serious forms of corruption affecting victims of forced labour is in the systematic extortion of employees of organizations, both state-owned and private, and traders to pay for replacement pickers when they themselves choose not to pick cotton.

There is also evidence of unscrupulous recruitment practices whereby picking groups are “sold” by district officials to local officials in less populous regions who lack sufficient numbers of pickers to meet their quotas. In the later stages of the cotton harvest when districts and institutions and organizations are struggling to meet their quotas, pressure is put on teachers to require the parents of children to bring cotton to school.

Farmers are particularly vulnerable to corrupt practises and are threatened with confiscation of their land for not meeting quotas. There have been several suicides of farmers over the last few years, all of them related to the cotton sector.

**Suggested questions for the List of Issues:**

* Please provide information on measures taken to ensure financial transparency and address corruption in the cotton industry and to prevent deaths in connection with cotton harvesting.
1. **Accountability for Perpetrators and Compensation of Victims of Forced Labour**

Despite mixed messages from the highest levels of government, measures taken to remediate cases of forced labour or hold officials accountable happen, albeit in a sporadic and arbitrary manner. The government lacks a strong, independent labour inspectorate or other mechanisms to investigate cases in a timely manner and provide proportionate remedies, though there is some evidence this may be changing.

Through the assistance of the International Labour Organization (ILO), hundreds of labour inspectors and law enforcement officials were trained in labour inspection, forced labour and prosecution in 2018. To date, investigations have generally targeted low-level officials rather than going up the chain of command, and have failed to investigate root causes.

The government did hold some officials accountable for using forced labor in 2018. The Ministry of Labor announced that more than 200 officials were punished for violations related to forced labor, but did not publicize the list of names, titles, violations, or sanctions. The ILO similarly reported that 185 hokims, officials, and managers were disciplined for forced labor violations with dismissals, demotions, and fines but said that privacy concerns prevented details of these cases from being reported publicly.

This lack of detail means that assurances of accountability go unchecked by independent sources. For a government intent on stamping out forced labor, it is unclear what interest is served by keeping information about these cases shrouded in secrecy. With narrow exceptions, the luxury of anonymity is generally not granted to perpetrators of crimes, given a compelling public interest in transparency of justice. This interest is all the more compelling when the perpetrators are officials in positions of power and public trust who are alleged to have perpetrated violations against their own constituents.

At the same time the government disciplined some officials for forced labor violations, it also dismissed more than 100 officials for deficiencies in organizing the harvest, a term that includes failure to fulfill cotton quotas, reinforcing the risks to officials who do not meet their quotas. The Uzbek media reported extensively on these cases, often including the names and titles of the fired officials as well as statements made by the president and prime minister excoriating officials for harvest failures.

**Suggested questions for the List of Issues:**

* Please provide information on the investigations conducted into cases of forced labour and the remedies provided to victims’ families, including adequate compensation.
* Please provide updated statistics on the number of cases of forced labour, the investigations and prosecutions initiated and actual criminal convictions, as well as the remedies awarded to victims.
* Please provide information on the plans to establish an independent labour inspectorate, able to investigate cases and provide remedies.
1. **Freedom of Speech: Widespread use of legislation to combat "religious extremism" to impede journalism**

Case of Mahmud Rajabov

On March 26, 2019, 55-year-old journalist and poet Mahmud Rajabov arrived in Tashkent on a flight from Istanbul. At customs, his smartphone was seized along with 26 books by opposition politician, Muhammad Salih and a book written by journalist Muhammad Bekjan in which he describes the years he spent in prison. Rajabov says he brought these books from Turkey, which are prohibited in Uzbekistan, at the request of relatives and fans of Muhammad Salih in Uzbekistan.

On March 29, the Committee on Religious Affairs under the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan issued an Expert Opinion which states that Rajabov’s smartphone contained a number of religious materials which are prohibited from being imported, manufactured or distributed in Uzbekistan. Among the prohibited materials is the book, “Bu Kunlar” [“These Days” – Ed. ] by the Uzbek writer Nurullo Otakhanov and a sermon by Obid Nazarov, an Uzbek imam who lives in Sweden. These materials are easily accessible on the Internet.

On May 10, 2019, police raided Rajabov’s home in the Gurlan district of the Khorezm region and confiscated further materials including his laptop. Rajabov was alone at home when the police arrived and was not allowed to call his wife who was nearby. Police refused to allow him to read the decision to conduct the search. Rajabov reported that none of the police officers introduced themselves and said that they brought “impartial witnesses from Urgench” with them. Rajabov has since been admitted to hospital suffering from heart problems caused by stress following the search which he described as intimidating. Distribution of extremist religious materials is a criminal offence and carries significant penalties including up to five years imprisonment.

On 14 May 2019, the Ministry of Internal Affairs issued an [official statement](https://iiv.uz/uz/lists/view/6580?fbclid=IwAR37dM4OwcUObuWZCRI-0DG_uHvajgF7meJcs17d_WSTa2Xm3leISH3yLs4) saying that they opened a criminal case against Rajabov on 30 April 2019. He is charged with the crime of smuggling of religious extremism materials under article 246 of the Uzbek criminal code, punishable with 5-10 years in prison.

**Suggested questions for the List of Issues:**

* Please respond to reports that independent journalists, government critics and dissidents, human rights defenders and other activists continue to face harassment, persecution or undue interference in the exercise of their professional activities or of their right to freedom of opinion and expression.
* Please report on the number of investigations, prosecutions and sanctions of these cases and whether victims are provided with effective remedies.
* Please report on the measures taken to refrain from any action that may restrict the freedom of religion beyond the narrow restrictions permitted in article 18 of the Covenant.
1. **Violations of Freedom of Movement and Discrimination: Propiska (Residence Registration System)**

In the Concluding Observations of Uzbekistan adopted in 2015, the Human Rights Committee was concerned about the restrictions to the freedom of movement: it recommended that the State abolish the exit visa system and bring the compulsory address/residence registration system (*propiska*) into compliance with the ICCPR. No such measures have yet been taken.

Uzbekistan violates the right to freedom of movement through its Soviet-era *propiska* system by which citizens, residents, and visitors must register their permanent or temporary residence. All residents of Uzbekistan must have a *propiska* —an official registration of their permanent place of residence with the Interior Ministry’s Office of Visas and Registration (OVIR). All residents and visitors must receive a temporary *propiska* for a stay of longer than five days in Tashkent and the Tashkent region.

The absence of *propiska* is considered a violation of the “rules of the passport system” under Article 223 of the Administrative Code of Uzbekistan and incurs a fine of up to three minimum wages.

Despite the government’s assertions that the *propiska* system is simply one of registration (informing the authorities), Uzbek-German Forum’s (UGF) research indicates that it in fact operates as a permit system in which the state exerts control over people’s place of residence and imposes significant burdens on attempts to change residence. It is especially difficult to obtain valid residency permits in Tashkent and the Tashkent region as well as several other major cities, restricting the ability of citizens to find employment as most jobs are concentrated in urban areas. Each year, tens of thousands of unemployed rural residents travel to Tashkent and other major cities in search of work.

The majority of people from rural areas working in non-governmental sectors and informal labor markets (*mardikor*s) do not have the opportunity or the right to obtain a residence permit in Tashkent. Tight regulations and exercise of control over residency have also created a system whereby many citizens of rural areas are forced to live and work in urban areas without registration, leaving them vulnerable to extortion, exploitation, and legal consequences. The system also deprives the state of income in the form of taxes and payments. *Propiska* has made bribery of police and other officials an inexorable part of the system and of daily life for ordinary citizens. Many employers and local police profit from the vulnerability of tens of thousands of unregistered internal economic migrants, allowing them to offer low salaries and poor working conditions and extract bribes. In order to circumvent the *propiska* regime, they pay inspectors and consequently live under their “protection”.

Restrictions on obtaining a residence permit discriminate against citizens who were born and live outside the city of Tashkent and the Tashkent region, leaving them fewer opportunities to find decent work and the freedom to choose where they live.

The list of citizens eligible for permanent registration in the city of Tashkent and the Tashkent region is limited by a law “On the list of categories of persons - citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan who are subject to permanent registration in the city of Tashkent and the Tashkent region”.

Only direct relatives in the first and second degrees of kinship who already possess *propiska* can receive a permanent residence permit in the city of Tashkent and the Tashkent region. Spouses can obtain *propiska* after they have lived together for at least one year. In the case of divorce within one year, the spouse loses his or her permanent residence in Tashkent and the Tashkent region.

In January 2019, a presidential decree lifted the ban on hiring citizens without temporary or permanent residence. However, this measure did not result in any tangible improvement to those seeking to obtain *propiska*, since having a job does not automatically mean obtaining a residence permit, that is, permission to live in the city of Tashkent and the Tashkent region.

Only employees of 65 state-owned organizations, government agencies and ministries can obtain a residence permit in Tashkent and the Tashkent region, provided their directors issue a letter guaranteeing their “trustworthiness”. In the event of the dismissal of an employee, he or she loses their *propiska*, i.e., permission to live in Tashkent and the Tashkent region, and must return to his or her former place of residence or to another region, meaning they cannot search for alternative employment.

There are internal rules that limit the right of citizens to receive a permanent residence permit. For example, after one year “probation”, spouses cannot transfer ownership of their property to their husband or wife. Notary offices have internal instructions not to permit transfer of ownership if the spouses have not lived in marriage for more than three years. In addition, Uzbek citizens who have received a residence permit in the city of Tashkent through family ties, cannot buy property in Tashkent and the Tashkent region for three years.

*Propiska*, or the existing system of compulsory registration, restricts the right of citizens of Uzbekistan to purchase real estate and discriminates on a territorial basis. Until recently, residents of Uzbekistan who did not have *propiska* in the city of Tashkent and the Tashkent region did not have the right to buy property in Tashkent. In July 2017, these restrictions were partially lifted. Citizens were allowed to buy real estate in Tashkent, but this is restricted to new buildings only, which are much more expensive. Uzbeks without *propiska* in Tashkent are still prohibited from buying older, cheaper properties. As a consequence, unregistered persons are forced to rent accommodation from unscrupulous landlords and pay bribes to officials. In addition, unregistered citizens are fearful of random checks by the police which can result in substantial fines, deportation back to their official place of residence or eviction from their rental accommodation, forcing them to avoid public places including public transport.

**Suggested questions for the List of Issues:**

* Please report on measures taken to abolish the exit visa system and bring the compulsory residence registration system (propiska) in line with the Covenant.
* Please provide information on the measures taken to address the frequent practice of bribery of (police) officials to circumvent the propiska regime.
* Please provide information on the measures taken to address the discrimination of citizens born outside of Tashkent (region) regarding the restrictions on obtaining a residence permit, since they have fewer opportunities to find work and the freedom to choose where they live.
* Please respond to reports that many citizens without propiska in Tahskent are forced to rent accommodation from unscrupulous landlors and pay bribes to officials since they are only allowed to buy new real estate, which is more expensive.