

INTERNATIONAL LABOR RIGHTS FORUM

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Three GSP Petitions Filed by ILRF Continue in 2008 Annual Review *Obama Administration Continues to Review Worker Rights Complaints Against the Philippines, Uzbekistan and Niger*

This week, the Obama Administration announced the outcome of the [2008 Annual Review](#) under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) programs. The report included a review of three petitions filed by the International Labor Rights Forum (ILRF) related to the eligibility of countries that have violated the rights of workers. ILRF's petitions requested the Office of the US Trade Representative (USTR) to review the eligibility of the Philippines, Uzbekistan and Niger and the 2008 Annual Review confirmed that all three reviews have continued.

Regarding **the Philippines**, ILRF [filed its petition](#) in June 2007 due to violations of freedom of association and the right to organize. These worker rights abuses often take the form of violent attacks on trade union leaders. The International Trade Union Confederation's recently released Annual Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights confirmed that the Philippines is one of the most dangerous countries in the world for union organizing and the most dangerous in Asia. The ongoing review of the Philippines' GSP status has generated a significant response from the government, given its decision in June 2009 to accept an International Labor Organization (ILO) high level mission to investigate ongoing violations of freedom of association and trade union rights. Ongoing intimidation and violence against union leaders in the Philippines continuously prevented the ILO from investigating worker rights violations. However, the threat that GSP benefits could be pulled for inaction on protecting trade union rights has effectively pushed the Philippines government to finally accept the ILO mission after two years of review. **ILRF praises the Obama administration for continuing to keep the Philippines under GSP review given ongoing labor rights concerns.**

In Uzbekistan, ILRF [filed a petition](#) in June 2007 due to the widespread and state-orchestrated use of forced labor, including forced child labor, in Uzbekistan's cotton sector. In June of this year, ILRF released a [new investigative report](#) detailing how forced labor, including the labor of young children who are removed from school in order to work in the cotton fields, continued in the most recent cotton harvest season. At the International Labor Conference in Geneva in June 2009, the Government of Uzbekistan continued to deny the existence of forced child labor and to refuse to allow International Labor Organization (ILO) observers into the country. At the same time, major retailers, like the Gap, Levi's and Wal-Mart among many others, have all joined concerned shareholders and human rights organizations like ILRF in condemning Uzbekistan due to these grave labor rights abuses. **ILRF is disappointed that the Administration has not**

removed Uzbekistan's GSP benefits despite the strong evidence of forced child labor and the Uzbek government's continued refusal to address these abuses.

In Niger, ILRF's [petition was filed](#) in July 2006 and raised concerns about the government's failure to prohibit forced and compulsory labor or to enforce its laws prohibiting the worst forms of child labor. At a recent GSP subcommittee hearing on April 24, 2009, the Government of Niger highlighted a proposed draft law on trafficking and forced labor prepared by the Ministry of Justice in 2007 as evidence that they were addressing labor rights abuses in the country. However, these laws continue to remain in limbo and more importantly, the Nigerien President Mamadou Tandja dissolved the Parliament of Niger in May 2009 after a constitutional court rejected his request to hold a referendum on extending his presidency past the two term limit. More recently, President Tandja has also dissolved the constitutional court, announced he will rule by decree and has arrested human rights campaigners. In a letter delivered last week to the USTR, ILRF expressed concern about the possibilities for implementing and enforcing necessary legislation to address forced and child labor given President Tandja's actions to undermine democracy in Niger. **ILRF supports the decision to continue the review of Niger's GSP status based on violations of worker rights and increased scrutiny of the situation in Niger given the recent political developments.**

ILRF will continue to closely track each of these three GSP cases and will continue to use worker rights conditionally under GSP and other US trade programs to ensure that workers' rights are protected in nations around the world trading with the US.

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The International Labor Rights Forum is an advocacy organization dedicated to achieving just and human treatment for workers worldwide. For more information, please visit www.LaborRights.org.

ILRF's Philippines GSP petition is available online here:
<http://www.laborrights.org/end-violence-against-trade-unions/philippines/resources/385>

ILRF's Uzbekistan GSP petition is available online here:
<http://www.laborrights.org/stop-child-labor/cotton-campaign/resources/1699>

ILRF's Niger GSP petition is available online here:
<http://www.laborrights.org/creating-a-sweatfree-world/changing-global-trade-rules/resources/1783>