

Chapter

State Organized Recruitment for the Russian Enterprises: Is It a Pass to a Better Life or to Slavery?

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Abstract

This chapter is devoted to the practice of organized recruitment of migrant labourers from Uzbekistan to Russia since late 2020. It examines the situation of the law as “on paper” and its operation in real life when many migrant workers fall into a situation of slavery or close to it (human trafficking). It discusses organized recruitment from a historical perspective from the USSR to modern times and provides the brief analysis of the migration policy and legislation in Russia and in Uzbekistan on the protection of migrant labourers. Based on the materials of more than 1000 appeals by Uzbek migrants to human rights organizations about violations of their rights, the chapter shows how organized recruitment really works, turning many migrants into slaves and why the organization state recruitment policy in Uzbekistan turns into the slavery for the migrant labourers from Uzbekistan.

Keywords: Uzbekistan, Russia migrant labourers, trafficking and slavery, migration policy, organized recruitment

1. Introduction

Uzbekistan is a rapidly growing country with a young population, with an average age of 29.1 years [1]. The population of Uzbekistan since the year of independence has almost doubled from 20.4 in 1991 to 35.6 million people as of July 1, 2022, and the number of people in need of employment is 1.4 million people (as of 01.04.2022), although about 2.4 million people work abroad, 568.5 thousand (24.1%) of which are women [2]. Of the migrant labourers, 1.5 million (61%) are working in Russia, 366.3 thousand in Kazakhstan, 144.7 thousand in Turkey, 47.4 thousand in South Korea, and 348.1 in the other countries. From January to May 2022, remittances of individuals from abroad amounted to \$4.19 billion, which is 61% more compared to the same period in 2021. The main destination country for migrants from Uzbekistan is Russia and, according to estimates by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, remittances from Russia are the most important source of foreign currency revenues and income for the country (11.4% of GDP). Monthly remittances per migrant worker amounted to \$453 [2].

Russia is attracting up to 64.4% of Uzbekistan migrant labourers and many of them experience frequent violations of their human rights because of their irregular status or

often fall victim to human trafficking (HT) or even slavery. These issues arise despite the visa-free regime, and are usually due to overstays, the lack of appropriate registration, or the absence of a work permit (patents) [3]. Unfortunately, legally working migrants often experience similar violations of their human rights as illegally working migrants, especially by police authorities. The various administrative barriers represent an enormous challenge for migrant labourers from non-Eurasian Union CIS countries, like Uzbekistan in Russia. They need to pass tests on the history, legislation, and language of Russia; the obligation to register anew upon every entry. By failing to register migrants and pay the resulting taxes to the state budget, unscrupulous employers also push migrants out of legality. The problem of forged documents is also relevant [4].

Substantial financial expenses incurred by migrants push some of them into debt bondage. In 2018, about 21% of migrants in seven border regions of Russia worked without a patent and over 15% paid bribes to obtain one [4]. The main obstacles in obtaining the necessary patents included the lack of financial resources, the employer's passive attitude, and the overly complicated and lengthy administrative procedure. The number of victims is estimated to range from 0.6 to 1.5 million [5, 6]. Uzbekistan government's attempts to establish regulated labour recruitment schemes, which address the residence and work permit requirements already at the pre-departure stage, have not paid off to date. Whereas Uzbekistan concluded agreements on recruitment schemes with Russia in 2017. Nevertheless, the lack of a centralized admission and registration system for migrant workers, persistent mass violation of migrants' rights and their exploitation, as well as corruption in government agencies make these schemes unattractive [4].

According to various sources, the policy of entry bans for migrants in Russia has increased the number of actual and potential Trafficking in Human Beings (THB) victims in Central Asian countries. The well-organized criminal networks facilitate human trafficking through high-level corruption and money laundering that take place both in receiving and sending institutions of Russia and Uzbekistan [7].

This chapter is devoted to the practice of organized recruitment of labour migrants from the republics of Central Asia (in our case, from Uzbekistan) to Russia from the end of 2020. The article examines the situation of the law as "on paper" and its operation in real life when many migrant workers fall into a situation of slavery or close to it (human trafficking). The article consists of an introduction, five chapters, and a conclusion. The first chapter considers the history of the existence of organized recruitment in the USSR when Uzbekistan was part of it. The second chapter is devoted to modern migration processes. The third chapter provides a brief analysis of the migration policy and legislation in Russia especially on the protection of migrant labourers from trafficking and slavery. The fourth chapter discusses the legislation and migration policy of Uzbekistan to protect its own migrant workers. The fifth chapter presents the "ideal layout of the organized recruitment process on paper." And the last sixth chapter, on the materials of more than 1000 appeals by Uzbek migrants to human rights organizations about violations of their rights, shows how organized recruitment really works, turning many migrants into slaves. The conclusions briefly discuss reasons why the organization's state recruitment policy in Uzbekistan turns their labourers into slaves.

2. Organized recruitments in the USSR and nowadays

The history of international experience in the organized recruitment of migrant workers shows that many European States (e.g. Germany, Denmark) have used this

policy extensively since the 1950s to develop certain types of economies with heavy physical labour, hazardous for health, and not attractive to the local population [8].

The emergence and functioning of an organized recruitment system in the USSR as a closed migration system was characterized by internal migrations. This method of state management of labour resources, their movement and redistribution in the conditions of a planned, tightly controlled economy was used to develop new industries or regions (Far North and Far East), large state projects (BAM, Kazakhstan Tselina, Nechernozemnaya Zone development, etc.). In the 1930s and 1960s, in the USSR, it was carried out mainly through the party and Komsomol district committees (on Komsomol assignment), and in some cases through mobilization, that is, by attracting the rural population to cities to work at enterprises. They were provided with tax benefits, lump sum cash payments, and material allowance [9].

In the absence of passports for the rural population and strict migration control until the 1960s, organizational recruitment in the USSR performed both economic (industrial) and social functions. It was, on the one hand, a way to satisfy the demand of employers for labour, and on the other hand, served as a means of ensuring certain personal interests of workers (change of employment, higher wages, etc.), from the 1930s until the collapse of the USSR. Specialists with higher education were usually sent to national republics for the development of the economy of the outskirts. During the organizational recruitment, many enterprises, especially the administration of new buildings, did not fulfill their obligations to the recruited collective farmers, did not dole out money, often did not provide them with medical care, did not pay them benefits during the next period, and did not accommodate them properly upon arrival at the place. The cost of recruiting escapees was high, especially from remote districts and regions [10].

The system of organized recruitment of workers was characterized by a high level of turnover of personnel and fraud of recruiters. The predominant number of people who resigned and left the enterprise arbitrarily during the first year was mostly employees recruited through the system of organizational recruitment from amongst the rural population. During the 1950s, 4.6 million workers were recruited through the organized recruitment system [11].

Despite this, the system of organized recruitment of workers contributed to solving the problem of lack of workers in the Soviet industry in the first post-war years. The change in the economic situation in the country in the 1950s led to a decrease in the need of the economy for unskilled labour and, therefore, to a decrease in the number of workers recruited through organized recruitment [12]. In many regions of Russia, demographic resources were either exhausted or close to exhaustion by 1960. Organized movements played an important role in this process [13].

Of particular note is the system and consequences of organized recruitment in Moscow. The demand for labour resources was so large that almost all sectors of the capital's economy felt a shortage of workers, and the authorities met this demand by hiring workers and employees who arrived under organized recruitment claims (so-called "limits") of ministries and departments on conditions of temporary registration in addition to invited specialists of high qualifications [14].

Unlike an indigenous Muscovite, the so-called "limiter" (temporary residence worker) lacked some of the rights accustomed to a Soviet citizen. The limiter with a temporary residence permit could not make purchases on credit, could not queue for housing, could not leave his enterprise, being unable to find a more suitable job. Employees attracted to Moscow under the limit were significantly underpaid. Life in the hostels was so unbearable that many limiters could not stand it and left the

capital. Limiters were given a hostel and, after 5 years of work, they were granted permanent Moscow registration and the right to receive a separate apartment in the capital. Enterprises built their dormitories and houses for limiters [14].

Limiters, having worked in Moscow for 5 years, often moved to more promising job positions in other industries, and at enterprises that were able to give them proper registration and housing. That led to a shortage of personnel, and it became necessary to hire more and more new workers. "About 50% of the total number of workers recruited for Moscow enterprises left the enterprises to which they were accepted." [15] Gradually, the process became unmanageable. In Moscow, during the 1970s and the 1980s, they recruited more than 50 thousand limiters per year [16].

This contributed to the fact that due to non-resident workers the population of the capital increased to 8 million people by 1979, which was the level planned to reach by the General Plan for the Development of Moscow only by 1990 [17]. In Moscow, the shortage of personnel was structural. This meant that the lack of labour resources was not overall, but there were not enough workers in particular professions, especially those engaged in heavy physical labour. Limiters made it possible for the administration of Moscow enterprises to do without rationalizing production, and without automating labour processes, which led to the uncontrolled growth of Moscow's population, increasing the social tension [12].

Basically, organized recruitment in the USSR was carried out on the territory of Russia and inside Russia. The population of the national republics practically were not able to move anywhere else due to registration control. And qualified Russian specialists were sent there for the development of the economy of the republics. The modern situation somewhat resembles the situation in the USSR, with the difference that now the incoming workers are foreigners, not "insiders," and no one promises them the prospects of social elevators except better wages. Until recently, the perspective to gain Russian citizenship has been considered an attractive factor in migration.

3. Labour migration from Uzbekistan during the period of independence

After the collapse of the USSR, forced migrations of the 1990s to Russia and abroad were replaced by labour ones. Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was designed in 1991 to preserve, in one form or another, the system of economic, cultural, and historical ties within the former Soviet space and member states like Uzbekistan enjoyed a visa-free regime. Demographic projections for Russia and the countries of its southern underbelly differ widely. Whereas Russia's labour force is expected to shrink by 1 million people per year from 2025 onwards [18], the forecast for Central Asia is very optimistic through 2050. Labour migration from Uzbekistan is projected to rise by 6.4 million. This is a good source of replacement labour for Russia [5].

Uzbekistan's economic development is much lower than in Russia, which is expressed in GDP per capita by the ratio of Russia—\$12,172.8 GDP per capita in 2021, whilst in Uzbekistan only \$1983.1GDP per capita. This makes Russia very attractive to migrant labourers from Uzbekistan. Citizens of Uzbekistan began to actively participate in labour seasonal migration at the beginning of the 2010s and their number increased to 1.8 million people by 2016 [19].

The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), as close cooperation for the free movement of goods, capital, technologies, and labour within the five-member bloc, came

into effect on 1 January 2015. Uzbekistan is not a member. This situation did complicate the migration of labourers since 1 January 2015 and create greater vulnerability to exploitation of migrant labourers in the Russian labour market [20]. According to the “stairs of inequality” on levels of payment that is based on racial characteristics of ethnicity, Uzbek workers are at the lowest position together with Tajikistan migrants. The hardest and lowest-paying jobs are in construction, where many Uzbekistan migrants are employed, often in slave-like conditions [21]. According to one survey, 55% of migrants cited informal connections—relatives and friends—as their main channel for finding work [22]. Most Central Asian migrants stayed in Russia in time of COVID-19: only 73,000 migrants out of more than 1 million working in Russia returned to Uzbekistan [23].

During the COVID-19 pandemic, to comply with sanitary and epidemiological standards, those wishing to come to Russia underwent a medical examination, PCR testing, and vaccination, and the patent was not tied to a specific employer. But the quota for workers from Uzbekistan was 10 thousand only in 2021. All construction companies need builders. The construction companies PIK-Industry and TechStroy planned to recruit about 4 thousand people to work in Moscow and Moscow region. In total, the region needs about 14 thousand Russian-speaking men from 21 to 50 years old with work experience of at least 2 years for a salary of 60–100 thousand. Dormitory, working clothes, and meals in the first month are provided by the employer [24]. The Russian government has already approved programs for the implementation of large-scale infrastructure projects. Millions of Uzbeks will be able not only to get a job there, but also to master new experience, according to the leadership of AELM. Reliance on organized recruitment 2022 [25].

In October 2021, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Construction, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation announced the start of testing a new mechanism for the admission of foreign labour to the country. The Ministry of Labour of the Russian Federation proposed to remove the limit on the number of migrants of 10 thousand people from Uzbekistan and expand the range of participants from companies in the construction sector and agro-industrial complex to other industries [26]. It is proposed to link a foreign citizen to a specific employer who issues a work permit to the arriving employee, which, as we will see later, often turns into a violation by employers of criminal law on combating human trafficking and slavery. This happens as many migrants, when finding themselves in terrible living and working conditions, run away from their employers. Chairman of the inter-regional trade union “Novoprof” Ivan Milykh believes that the targeted recruitment of foreign migrant labourers carries certain risks. Workers may find themselves in a situation where all current expenses of the employer will be deducted from the promised salary, which is why migrants are actually tied to their working places [27].

In 2021, 108.5 thousand people went to work abroad as part of an organized recruitment from Uzbekistan. Of these, 100.1 thousand went to Russia (out of more than a million participating in migration to Russia), 6.9 thousand to Kazakhstan, 1.5 thousand to South Korea [28]. In addition, new destinations for official labour migration became Serbia—for 410 people, as well as Germany—for 31 people. The Institute of Forecasting and Macroeconomic Research presented an assessment of new directions for labour migrants from Uzbekistan. They called Poland, Bulgaria, Lithuania, and the Czech Republic attractive directions for the development of migration from Uzbekistan [29].

4. Legislation and migration policy of Russia to protect migrant workers from human trafficking and slavery

The problems of THB for international and internal migrants in Russia have structural dimensions and are imbedded in Russian migration policy. The visa-free regime within post-Soviet space for the majority of the population from the fSU is accompanied by often impossibilities in getting legal registration and permission to participate in the labour market. The protection of crime victims is not developed in migration policy as well as activities in the fight against THB [7].

In 2000, Russia signed two treaties and ratified both in 2004: (1) the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, including the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, also known as the *Palermo Protocol*, and (2) the Protocol against Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air. In 2004, two anti-trafficking articles, namely 127.1 (Human Trafficking) and 127.2 (Use of Slave Labour), were introduced into the Russian Criminal Code (CC) by the Federal law 162-FZ3 [30] and covered by 18 more CC articles. Nevertheless, Russian legislation does not include a definition of a “trafficking victim.” Instead, the Russian definition of trafficking focuses mainly on the trafficking process and types of exploitation (slavery, sexual, and similar to slavery) [31] of trafficking in article 127.1 and 127.2.

According to the Article 127.1 of the Russian Criminal Code “Human trafficking” (CC) *is defined as selling or purchasing a human being, other transactions with regards to a human being, as well as recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt previously committed for the purpose of exploitation. The human exploitation is understood as use of other persons’ engagement in prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation, slave labour (services), practice similar to slavery.* The goal of exploitation can be reached both when the victim is used in the perpetrator’s interests and in the interests of the third persons [31]. Under article 127.2 of the Russian Criminal Code, slave labour is understood as “labour of a person with regards to whom powers inherent to ownership right are exercised, while this person cannot refuse to perform work (services) for reasons beyond his or her influence.” This act is characterized by three aspects:

1. use of human labour;
2. exercise of ownership rights with regards to this person, i.e. the rights to possess, use, and dispose;
3. lack of possibility for the person to refuse to perform work (service).

Between 2003 and 2012, numerous additions were made to the anti-trafficking law; 18 additional articles, covering sex and trafficking-related crimes, have been included in the Russian Criminal Code. According to Article 52 of the Russian Constitution, the rights of crime victims are protected by different laws. In reality, however, the state mechanism works poorly: there is no funding for victim protection and both victims and witnesses often do not want to testify in the court of law, fearing revenge by their perpetrators. Absence of registration because of different reasons put person on the margin of the society and creates the vulnerability assistance [7].

The new Migration Policy Concepts of Russia of 2018 emphasize the fight against irregular migration, the enforcement of the migration legislation and special control operations remain the key priority in the Concept [32]. It is worth noting that Russia

is taking steps to improve the situation. Since November 2019, it has been trying to ease the residence permit process for some categories of migrants. Nevertheless, Russia remains one of the main countries of destination, transit, and origin of THB victims, including situation with slavery in the CIS. The UNODC 2014–2017 data shows that the highest number of victims of THB in Russia, with sexual exploitation being the main form. The exception in this regard is Uzbekistan. The largest number of THB victims amongst migrants originate from Uzbekistan (3.632 people), with being men [33].

5. Legislation and migration policy of Uzbekistan to protect migrant workers from human trafficking and slavery

Over the years of independence, the number of migrant workers from the country has steadily increased, as well as the geography of their trips. Measures were also being taken to improve legislation to combat illegal migration. Uzbekistan is the main supplier of labour to Russia and ranks first in cases of people trafficking, mainly men. Article 135 of Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan (1996) [34] has included the provision “recruitment and export for the purpose of exploitation” in 2003. The Convention against Labour Slavery was signed by Uzbekistan in 2003, but was ratified only in 2021. Readmission agreements have been concluded with the Russian Federation and the Republic of Kazakhstan, and draft readmission agreements with the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Armenia, and the Republic of Moldova are under development.

To improve and collate the legal regulations of labour migration processes, on April 5, 2017 the Government of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Uzbekistan signed and ratified the same year the Agreement on the Organized Recruitment and Recruitment of Citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Temporary Labour Activities in the Territory of the Russian Federation (hereinafter the Agreement). *The purpose of the Agreement is to ensure the protection of the social, economic, and other rights of migrant workers from Uzbekistan engaged in temporary working activities in the territory of the Russian Federation* [35]. Recruitment is carried out by the Agency for External Labour Migration (hereinafter the Agency or AELM) under the Ministry of Labour.

The new president Shavkat Mirziyoev made supporting migrants one of the priorities of the state’s social policy in the field of organized recruitment of migrants [36]. In 2022, the AELM plans to organize the employment of 60 thousand Uzbeks abroad, a significant part of which will go to Russia.

The same year the Republic of Uzbekistan began comprehensive reforms by adopting a Strategy of Action on the Five Priority Development Areas of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2017–2021. The main areas were educational and qualification programs, reintegration of returnees, and organized recruitment of migrant workers [37]. The agency provides assistance to migrants in finding employment, and also helps them solve emerging problems directly during their work in the Russian Federation. For this, representative offices were opened in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Samara, Ufa, Novosibirsk, Yekaterinburg, Tula, Voronezh, Volgograd, Nizhny Novgorod, Irkutsk and Amur regions, Krasnodar, Krasnoyarsk and Perm territories, Khanty-Mansi Autonomous region. For example, with the intervention of the Russian representative offices of the Agency for the 7 months of 2022, with the help of the NGO “Tong Jahoni” the payroll arrears had been paid to migrants in the amount of 570 thousand dollars. “Reliance on organized recruitment 2022 [36].

In order to prevent people trafficking, Uzbekistan was also actively working on migration policies. In July 2019, a Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, “*Additional measures to further improve the system of combating trafficking in persons and forced labour,*” entered into force. It transformed the Interdepartmental Commission of the Republic for Combating Human Trafficking into a National Commission under the guidance of the President of the Senate. Regional commissions were created in each of the Country's regions and a national *rapporteur* was eventually appointed [38].

In August 2020, the country's 2008 law on human trafficking [39] was amended as new concepts. The law provides a specific definition of the status of the National and Territorial Commissions for combating human trafficking and forced labour, as well as the powers of the Council of Ministers. The relevant government agencies include the General Prosecutor's Office and the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations. The Ministry of Internal Affairs will create a unified database for human trafficking crimes, with information on traffickers, victims, and the various types of exploitation [38]. If a person receives the status of alleged victim of trafficking they are entitled to rehabilitation and social integration programs. Uzbekistan has some rehabilitation centers for assistance and protection of THB victims [4].

In the context of international cooperation, the Sub-Commission and Winrock International, as part of the USAID project “Safe Migration in Central Asia,” launched a virtual online consultant on migration and human trafficking in the form of Telegram-bot @ salom_migrant_bot in 2021. There migrants can learn about the rules of work and residence abroad. It is possible to send an online appeal to the “hotline” on human trafficking, and from there appeals are sent to the Sub-Commission on Combating Human Trafficking of Uzbekistan [40].

In May 2022, the Minister of Employment and Labour Relations of Uzbekistan Nozim Khusanov announced that Uzbekistan and Russia plan to conclude an agreement, including significantly reducing the cost of a work permit for Uzbek migrants.

6. Organized recruitment system and how it should ideally work

Uzbek officials believe that the organized recruitment has many advantages [41]:

Firstly, most of the documents necessary for issuing a patent for the right to work in Russia, including a medical examination and fingerprinting, are issued in Uzbekistan. As noted above, at the request of chapter 6 of the Regulations, this should be done at the expense of Russian employers.

Secondly, the process from the moment of selection of an employee to the beginning of his work on the basis of a patent in the Russian Federation should reduce the time and costs for migrants, taking a maximum of 18 days. In Uzbekistan, it is planned to conduct fingerprinting, medical examination (TB analysis is done for 4 days), testing in the Russian language (certificate is made for 7 days), and remote registration of the taxpayer ID number (done for 5 working days) in branches of the Passport and Visa Service of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia in Uzbekistan. Then in Russia the migrant will only have to register at the place of residence and receive a ready-made patent, all the procedures for which have already been completed in Uzbekistan.

Table 1 below shows how Russian officials see an organized recruitment of Uzbek citizens for temporary work in Russia [41] using the example of the **Organized Recruitment of Foreign Citizens Program from Uzbekistan in the Leningrad**

region. The Leningrad region is one of three participants in a pilot project to attract Uzbek citizens to work in the Russian Federation. Companies wishing to attract migrants need to conclude an agreement with the AELM of Uzbekistan [42]. Potential

<i>Employer steps</i>	<i>Steps of the migrant</i>	<i>Steps of the Agency and/or Private Agencies on Recruitment (Chastnoe Agetstvo Zaniatosti or ChAZ)</i>
<p>1- Registration on the Unified Digital Platform Work in Russia - trudvsem.ru consent to participate in organized recruitment.</p> <p>2- All vacancies are posted on the portal.</p>	<p>Agreement with AELM or (ChAZ).</p>	<p>←→ AELM or (ChAZ) contract with a migrant.</p>
<p>3- Conclude an agreement with the sending organization of Uzbekistan (with AELM under the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations of Uzbekistan or with ChAZ). In cooperation with AELM, the employer enters into one agreement. When working with ChAZ, he concludes two agreements: with ChAZ and AELM (in real life, an employer representative comes to conclude an agreement and agrees with AELM for each migrant).</p>	<p>The employee, together with AELM or ChAZ, looks through the vacancies.</p> <p>←→</p>	<p>1. Conclude a contract with the receiving party (AVTM + ChAZ).</p> <p>2. The agency (ChAZ) conducts an interview with an employee for compliance with the selected specialty.</p>
<p>4. The employer conducts a remote interview with a potential employee according to the criteria, including knowledge of the language. ←→</p>	<p>Employee remotely (personally frequently) participates in the interview.</p>	<p>←→ 3. Agency (ChAZ) organizes interview with employee and employer.</p>
<p>5. Pre-departure inspections of law enforcement agencies of Russia.</p>	<p>Worker ←→ Gets authorization documents.</p>	<p>Preliminary inspections of law enforcement and health authorities in Uzbekistan.</p>
<p>←→</p> <p>6. Employer by letter of guarantee confirms readiness to employ a migrant.</p>	<p>←→ Preparations for <i>departure</i>.</p>	<p>Approval of candidates with the employer, receipt of guarantee letters from the employer confirming readiness to employ candidates (in reality, the employer just “buys” the migrants).</p>
<p>7. The employer prepares a place of residence—a hostel of the enterprise, a rented hostel, another room that meets sanitary and hygienic standards.</p>	<p>←→ Preparations for departure and receipt of all documents from the Agency, trainings.</p>	<p>If necessary, the Agency provides migrant training for migration orientation.</p>

<i>Employer steps</i>	<i>Steps of the migrant</i>	<i>Steps of the Agency and/ or Private Agencies on Recruitment (Chastnoe Aгенstvo Zamiatosti or ChAZ)</i>
8. Employee Appointment and Placement. 9. Assistance in obtaining a job patent housing address registration, passing all necessary procedures for obtaining a job patent (medical examination, registration of voluntary health insurance policies, passing a comprehensive exam in Russian, etc.) + 1-month payment.	Employee travels to Russia.	Agency organizes the departure by buying cheap tickets.
10. After obtaining the patent signing of the contract with the worker—the guaranteed compensation is not lower than the minimum level of compensation (minimum wage rate) of Russia: 15,950 rubles. Safe working conditions and occupational safety.	Receipt of documents and patent by the employee and signing of the contract (if this happens).	The agency helps in the adaptation of the employee.
11. The employer provides jobs to migrants	The work begins.	The agency continues to accompany the employer and migrant labourers until the end of the probationary period.

Table 1.
Scheme of the mechanism for the organization of search, selection, pre-departure training and sending of migrant labourers at the request of employers to Russia (using the example of the Leningrad region).

workers will be given tests for HIV and tuberculosis, get vaccinated, and provided with an exam in the Russian language. All this should be financed by the employer, as well as pay for the flight and patent costs. This is stated in chapter 6 of the Regulations on the Procedure for the Organized Recruitment of Citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Temporary Work Abroad (hereinafter referred to as the Regulations). However, in real life, employers use many ways to shift these costs to a migrant or through his salary to regain this money. The cost of attracting one employee is estimated at 45–50 thousand rubles (about 500 USD).

It should be noted that the recommendations to scheme 1 state that “in the case of death or injury to the health of a migrant worker due to an industrial accident or occupational illness caused by the employer, the employer shall reimburse the costs of returning the migrant worker or transporting the body to the Republic of Uzbekistan.” Compensation, corresponding guarantees shall be provided according to the procedure established by the legislation of the Russian Federation. These are the

requirements of Chapter 4 of “Regulations on the procedure for organized recruitment.” [42] In fact, this requirement is implemented by means of the forced purchase by a migrant of an insurance in the company of ASK “UzAgroSugar,” which covers the shipment of cargo 200 (it means return of the body of dead person) or the emergency return of the patient to Uzbekistan. At the same time as signing an employment contract, employees are forced to sign a voluntary termination of employment letter without a date—this is a way for the operator to evade responsibility for industrial injuries, non-payment of labour, and other violations.

7. How the organized migrant recruitment scheme works in real life

This scheme may not reflect certain aspects of reality. Based on the official statistics of AELM Uz and the human rights work of NGO “TONG JAHONI,” we will consider situation with Uzbek migrants’ complaints.

Figure 1. The number of appeals to NGO “TONG JAHONI” from 01.12.2020 to 01.11.2021 behind free legal aid, on nationality of addressed, shows that the main violations are made concerning migrants of the countries of Central Asia. **Figure 1** shows that all three Central Asian countries are the leaders of appeals about violations of the rights of migrants. The number of appeals by citizens of these countries is over 20 times more frequent than from other countries. And it does not matter whether the migrant comes from country of the Eurasian union or the CIS. Migrants used Mobil phone calls, SMS, WhatsApp, Viber, Facebook messenger, comments to YouTube video, Telegram and personal visits to NGO to talk about their problems with NGO’s workers.

Figure 1 shows the huge number of complaints by migrant workers from Uzbekistan regarding violations of their rights.

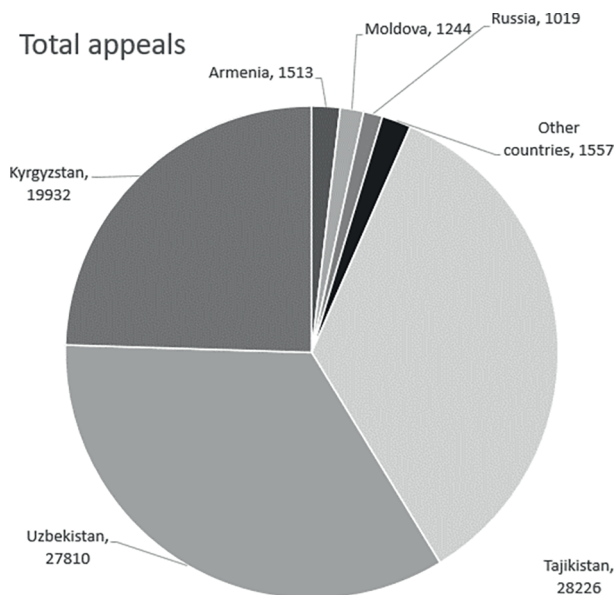


Figure 1. Number of calls to NGO “TONG JAHONI” from 01.12.2020 till 01.11.2021. Source: Case database NGO “TONG JAHONI.”

Slavery and human trafficking

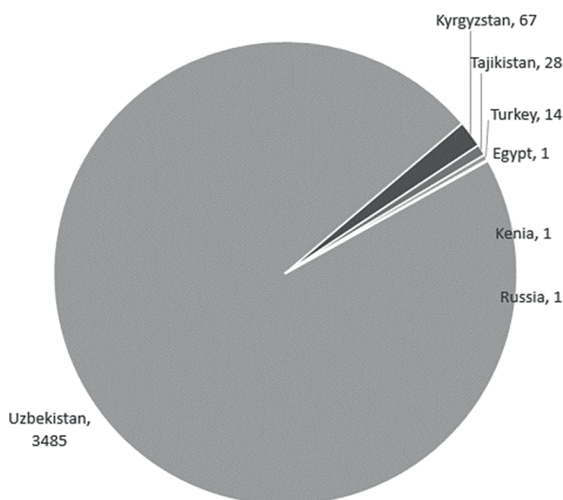


Figure 2.

The number of appeals to NGO “TONG JAHONI” from 01.12.2020 till 01.11.2021 concerning cases of slavery and human trafficking. Source: Case database NGO “TONG JAHONI.”

Figure 2 shows number of slavery and human trafficking victims identified by NGO TONG JAHONI out of the total number of applicants by nationality (01.12.2020–01.11.2021). But that cases identified slavery counted according to migrants’ appeals. In case if Uzbekistan number in the thousands, whilst in other countries these are just single digits. This is due to the bad organization of an organized recruitment system in Uzbekistan, as we present below in this paper. The other countries do not practice organized recruitment yet. For example, Tajikistan signed similar agreement with Russia but stopped its implementations due to risk of such cases.

To understand the underlying violations, refer to **Table 2**. As we see from **Table 2**, the number of calls is increasing. This may be due to both the growth of those involved in migration, and improved access to treatment opportunities, as well as increased contact of this NPO with migrants but also due to massive violation of migrants’ rights.

As we will see from the cases below, the employer often does not release the employee until he has reimbursed his expenses for the employer, and the employer is tempted to exploit the employee (who is deprived of the employer’s freedom of choice, which is actual slavery), as long as possible.

Consider several typical cases:

Case 1 – year 2016. 90 men aged 22–40 were selected for the construction of the Lakhta Shopping Mall in Saint Petersburg. As soon as they arrived in St. Petersburg, their passports were taken away and they were driven to country side town Priozersk, where they were accommodated in a hostel with 24 people per room. The employer did not fulfill their promise to arrange for the issuance of patents for them. They were fed badly, and their passports were never returned. They could not leave the hostel and could not escape. When the migrants exited a hungry riot, the anti-riot police squad was called, that beat them and threatened with deportation. The representative of the outsourcing company who came the next day demanded them to pay 8500 rubles (100 US dollars) each for accommodation and meals and 10,000 rubles (about 130 US

Year	Overall organized recruitment	Non-payment over 3 months requests	Complaints about seizure of passports and coercion to illegality	Appeals on deprivation of liberty	Debt bondage appeals	Addresses on labour injuries and diseases	Violence referrals	Average working week
2016	90	90	90	90	0	1	3	84
2017	601	439	115	194	115	4	16	98
2018	969	661	307	154	12	2	5	79
2019	237	219	36	179	139	0	1	86
2020	540	469	469	158	469	2	11	105
2021 Jan–Oct	5485	4917	5469	4072	5485	6	108	92

Source: Case database, NGO “TONG JAHONI.”

Table 2.
 The reasons for calls to human right NPO “TONG JAHONI”.

dollars) each for “ransom to the police” so that they would not be deported due to lack of registration and patent. Some migrants began to demand that they be sent home, others to be given passports, whilst some agreed to work without documents and even signed bills of debt. Most of the migrants were then “resold” to a person who said that they should go to work without patents and payment, as he had “BOUGHT” those migrants, allegedly paying their debts. One of the migrants contacted the NGO TONG JAHONI, which contacted the consul to send the migrants back to Uzbekistan. The consul secured the return of passports and sent migrants home.

The situation falls under the violation of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (CC RF) under articles related to trafficking 127.1. and with slavery 127.2., and 332.1 articles on illegal migration of the CC RF, as well as the Labour Code of the Russian Federation. But there was no punishment to the employers. The Agency did not control situation and the police was on the employers’ side as we could see.

Case 2 – year 2018. In Tashkent, the Agency was looking for skilled workers to work at the plant. There were no such specialists found. Then the Agency promised potential migrants to get them to those job positions for a bribe, promising that they could later, upon arrival, transfer to another job. 300 people were recruited, brought to St. Petersburg, where their passports were taken away in the hostel immediately, and the next day they were taken for execution of the patents, for which they were forced to pay on their own, although under an agreement with AELM, it was the employer who had to pay for it. 2 weeks later they were brought to the factory, where it turned out that migrants did not have the specialties that they indicated in questionnaires and patents. After a big scandal, migrants were kicked out of work and without passports and patents began to be resold by groups of 10–15–20 people, as their passports were sent to construction sites in the Kaluga, Moscow, and Rostov regions. People found themselves in a situation of illegality, working for food for 10–12 hours a day without weekends and holidays. Of these, 5 people were abused by exploiters and supervisors, including 1 person who suffered from sexual violence.

The corrupt nature of the Agency is evident in how they created a situation that misled the employer. He decided that the cheapest way to avoid bringing a case against the Agency to court was to sell the migrants. The situation falls under the violation of the CC RF under articles related to trafficking and slavery 127.1. and 127.2., and the organization of illegal migration as well (332.1), in addition there are other articles on sexual exploitation and abuse. According to the information, there was no opened case or trail.

Case 3 – year 2021. In March–April of 2021, the Bureau of AELM of Bukhara Viloyat (regional authority) on its website posted vacancies for poultry workers in the Tambov region with a promise of salaries starting from 52,000 up to 70,000 rubles (from about 900 to 1000 US dollars). The representative of the employer of Interservice LLC selected candidates who knew Russian, were physically strong and had relevant work experience. Upon their arrival to Russia, he took away their passports, and brought them to a poultry farm in the Tambov region, where 42 people were placed in a small house 40 m² in size, with no water, kitchen, heating, and sewage. There they worked without any legal paperwork, in the cold building with a temperature about +9 C, without water, dressing hens’ carcasses for 15 hours a day, 7 days a week without holidays. Once a day they were fed chicken giblets soup and mashed potatoes. Therefore, many caught a cold and fell ill. No medical care was provided to the sick, and 11,000 rubles (about 180 US dollars) were deducted from their salary for absenteeism. For 3.5 months of work, 42 employees were paid 3800 rubles for all (about 50 US dollars). The repeated appeals of migrants to the police did not give any result, nor did an appeal to the head of the Bureau of AELM in Bukhara Viloyat. The

victims turned to the NGO TONG JAHONI, which helped to return their passports, secured the placement of migrants before returning home in the Moscow AELM shelter, and opened a criminal case on organizing illegal migration against Interservice LLC in the Tambov region. However, they did not get a chance to get paid for their labour, as well as to get compensation for slave exploitation and harm to health.

This case also falls under the violation of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation under articles related to slavery, violations of Russian labour legislation, and Article 322.1 of the Russian Criminal Code, violations of the migrant control system as well as violation by the Uzbek authorities of legislation on protection against labour slavery. Again we can see the Agency do not protect their citizens and Russian police as well.

Case 4 – year 2021. A migrant from the Syrdarya Region has a family of 5 children. His wife turned to the anti-trafficking NGO, stating that her husband was chosen for work in St. Petersburg through AELM and was offered a salary of 80 thousand rubles (about \$800) with accommodation in a hostel. AELM helped him open a loan of \$1000 in the bank and immediately withdrew \$400 for its services, including 3-day training, for which the migrant paid himself. Then with a group of other migrants, he went from AELM to St. Petersburg, and again, this trip was not employer-sponsored, but on account of loan that was imposed on him. After arriving in Moscow, instead of the promised 80 thousand rubles he found in the contract a salary that equaled the official minimum monthly wage of 27 thousand rubles. He was settled in a hostel for a month, but no work was provided and no patent was issued, and after a while he was kicked out of the hostel. He tried to get a job himself, but after 3–7 days of work he was fired without pay, and he fainted from hunger. Many of his group returned home themselves or went to Moscow to the embassy to demand a return. He does not have money for a ticket. For the loan taken, the bank began to demand interest from his wife, so she had to sell their furniture to pay 700 thousand sums (700 dollars for 1000 taken). When the migrant returns, a great debt awaits him at home.

This case is also subject to violation of the Organized Recruitment Agreement by both the employer and the Agency, fraud by Credit Agency and corruption approach from all these organizations. The Agency plaid as initiator of the corruption scheme.

7.1 Bottom of form

The selected cases are typical amongst numerous others. All patterns of using migrants as slaves are very similar:

The Agency is the first step in human trafficking and enslavement. What it does is:

(a) misleading migrant workers; (b) not controlling their situation in Russia; (c) failing to fulfill its obligations to recruit the necessary employees; (d) extorting money from employers. Thus, it all begins with the unscrupulous attitude of the Agency.

The employer is also often involved in this scheme. He wants to return the costs and therefore (a) violates the provisions of the International Agreement on Organized Recruitment, (b) violates the contract with migrants, (c) violates the legislation of the Russian Federation on many articles related primarily to (c-1) the seizure of documents, (c-2) coercion to illegality, (c-3) non-registration of documents of migrants, (c-4) coercion to work, (c-5) restriction of freedom of movement, (c-6) poor working conditions. There is often abuse of power by the police as a result of which the migrant falls into debt bondage. Many cases of unlawful deprivation of liberty using the police are recorded.

An interview with an employer from Russia proves our conclusion about involvement of Agency into the slavery situation. This person refused the services of the Agency, since he had to officially pay for each migrant under an agreement with the Agency, plus unofficially with “black money” in the equivalent of 250—300 US dollars per person. If the employer pays this money, then the Agency helps him: in a microfinance organization at Solidarity Bank, at 48% per annum, he can take a loan in the name of the migrant, after which the migrant signs a receipt in the papers about his obligations to go to work and to appear at the airport. In his papers there is a line about consent to receive a loan. The loan is received by the employer (about 1000 US dollars in sums)—and 400 US dollars from this sum immediately goes to the Agency, whilst the employer receives its part (in order to reimburse the Agency for its services), and for the rest of the sum a ticket for a migrant to Russia is purchased. The payment of debt with huge percentages is due to the migrant or his family.

This conclusion from our cases is supported by Media news. In 2018 a bribe scandal revealed corruption in the Agency, falling into the media. Then they detained 20 AELM workers, the head of the Agency, his deputy, as well as the head of the center for pre-departure adaptation and training of citizens traveling to South Korea. The reason was as follows: migrants were deceived, as their permissions to go to Korea for work were not issued. On the same day, the director of the Agency and his deputy were apprehended when receiving a bribe of \$5000. Nevertheless, this vicious practice continues to work [43].

Nowadays, this practice is reflected at the news from press conference with representatives of the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations and the Agency on the topic “Reforms being carried out in Uzbekistan in the field of safe, orderly and legal labour migration,” the Ministry’s employees complained that 80 ChAZs were issued licenses for employment of citizens wishing to work abroad. However, in 2017–2021, the licenses of 71 ChAZs were **canceled** (of which 59 were at the request of the ChAZs themselves), and criminal cases were instituted against 12 others. At the time of March 2022, only 6 licensed ChAZs were operating in Uzbekistan [44]. That is, these agencies appear swiftly and shortly after die a fast death, carrying no responsibility for the recruited migrants.

8. Conclusions

Uzbekistan labour market is overloaded by labour forces and needs some channels to relocate in other countries’ labour market. Despite the differences between the history of organized recruitment in the USSR and the current situation, there are still many similarities. The only difference is that during the Soviet era, people were free to leave places they did not like, unlike the current situation. Nowadays situation is much worse, because workers often turn into a situation of slavery for many reasons:

1. Attachment of employees to the employer leads to deprivation of freedom of work, since the employee does not have the right to leave to another employer. The employer has the opportunity to exploit the employee much more intensively, not to comply with his labour rights, to pay below the market or not to pay at all.
2. The employer’s obligation to provide housing leads to poor housing conditions, deprivation of freedom of movement (migrants are kept locked up and guarded so that they do not escape from the poor housing).

3. The obligation of the employer to legalize the migrant turns into the seizure of documents and blackmail by legality. If the employer pays for the execution of documents, he believes that he can hold them until the employee “works out the debt,” charging up by several times the prices for the registration.
4. The obligation of the employer to ensure payment for the arrival of the employee results in debt bondage for the migrant. If the employer is obliged to pay the return ticket to the employee, then he does not want to buy it at his own expense, but hangs this “debt” on the migrant employee.
5. The employer’s obligation to pay no less than the minimum wage gives him reason to pay no more than the minimum wage, since the employee has no right to leave for another employer (see point 1).
6. Bribes from the AELM employer lead to direct human trafficking, and the employer’s desire to return his money spent on the employee leads to the overexploitation of migrants.
7. “State control” on both sides turns into a refusal of law enforcement agencies of the Russian Federation, the Embassy of Uzbekistan, and the Agency’s representative offices to protect migrants from the employer. They refuse to accept the statements of the injured migrants, arguing that “this cannot be, since organized recruitment is guaranteed by state control.”

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