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# New Evidence of Child Slavery in Production of Valentine's Day Chocolates

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New report & CD with photos available on request

NEW EVIDENCE OF CHILD SLAVERY IN PRODUCTION OF VALENTINE'S DAY CHOCOLATES

Former Child Slaves on Cocoa Plantations in West Africa Implicate Nestle, Cargill, ADM

Award-winning Filmmaker/Photographer Returns from Ivory Coast with Film and Photographs

As Valentine's Day approaches, new evidence emerges of continued use of child slaves on cocoa plantations used by major US companies—Nestle, Cargill, and Archer-Daniels-Midland (ADM)—to supply chocolate manufacturers including Hershey's and M&M/Mars.

An award-winning filmmaker/photographer, sponsored by the Washington, DC-based International Labor Rights Fund (ILRF), has just returned from West Africa after conducting filmed interviews with six young men currently living in Mali who are plaintiffs in a suit in US Court in Los Angeles. The men are former child slaves who had been trafficked as 14/-15 year-olds to Ivory Coast and forced to work on cocoa plantations.

The photographer also interviewed and took pictures of children currently working on cocoa plantations in Ivory Coast.

On Monday, February 6th, the ILRF will appear at a hearing in federal court in Los Angeles to press its case against Nestle, Cargill and ADM for using forced child labor on West African farms to produce cocoa they import into the United States. ILRF filed the suit last year using the same legal strategy it employed to sue Unocal Corporation. That case resulted in a multi-million dollar settlement for Burmese plaintiffs.

The Washington, DC-based International Labor Rights Fund (ILRF) sued Nestle, Cargill and ADM in US Court in Los Angeles last year for using forced child labor on their West African cocoa farms and will appear at a hearing in court on Monday, February 6th to press its case. Terry Collingsworth, ILRF's Executive Director, will argue the case and is available for interviews.

ILRF and allied organizations are promoting fair trade chocolates for Valentine's Day. Tom Neuhaus, owner of San Francisco-based Sweet Earth Chocolate, has traveled to Ivory Coast twice and formed a cooperative representing 8,000 cocoa farmers there. His experience demonstrates that it is possible to ensure that labor conditions are monitored and that local farmers receive a fair price for their cocoa, and that children are provided the opportunity to get an education. He is available for interviews (805-441-6727).

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