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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

JOHN DOE I, Individually and on behalf of Proposed Class Members; JANE DOE I, as guardian of her minor son JOHN DOE I; JOHN DOE II, Individually and on behalf of Proposed Class Members; JOHN DOE III, Individually and on behalf of Proposed Class Members; JOHN DOE IV, Individually and on behalf of Proposed Class Members; JOHN DOE V, Individually and on behalf of Proposed Class Members; JOHN DOE VI, Individually and on behalf of Proposed Class Members; JOHN DOE VII, Individually and on behalf of Proposed Class Members; and JOHN DOE VIII, Individually and on behalf of Proposed Class Members. All Plaintiffs C/O 621 Maryland Ave. NE, Washington, D.C. 20002

Plaintiffs,

v.

STARBUCKS CORPORATION, 2401 Utah Ave. South, Seattle, WA 98144

Defendant.

Case No. 1:25-cv-01261

CLASS COMPLAINT FOR INJUNCTIVE RELIEF AND DAMAGES

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The coffee sector in Brazil was founded on slavery and continues to depend upon slavery. The early coffee industry in Brazil relied entirely on slaves to harvest coffee. In the first half of the 19th century, 1.5 million slaves were imported from Africa to work on the plantations.[1] When Brazil outlawed the foreign slave trade in 1850, coffee plantation owners turned to Italian, Spanish, and Japanese immigrants to supplement their need for labor to harvest coffee.[2] However, slaves remained the major source of labor. As in the United States, Brazil allowed internal slave trading until slavery was finally abolished in 1888.[3]

2. Many of the newly freed slaves in Minas Gerais, the major coffee producing state in Brazil, who had been forced to work in mining, sugar cane cultivation, and cotton and coffee production, fled to the hills in the North of the state and formed communities called Quilombos, which still exist today. The term Quilombo originates from Central Africa and means "encampment". The Brazilian Constitution of 1988 finally recognized and incorporated the term "quilombola descendant" to refer to the inhabitants of these rural communities who were descended from groups of fugitive and freed black slaves. Brazil's 2023 population census indicated around 1.3 million Quilombolas reside in thousands of Quilombos countrywide.[4]

3. Despite the abolition of slavery and the recognition of the rights of Quilombolas, the coffee plantations still needed labor and a new system of "modern" slavery was established.

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[1] Eakin, Marshall C., *Brazil: The Once and Future Country* (1988), at 33.
[2] *See, e.g.*, Thomas H. Holloway, *Immigrants on the Land: Coffee & Society in São Paulo, 1886–1934* (1980).
[3] Crocitti, John J.; Vallance, Monique, *Brazil Today: An Encyclopedia of Life in the Republic* (2012), at 238.
[4] Flavio Gomes, *Quilombos, Hotbeds of Afro-Brazilian Resistance*, The UNESCO Courier (July 3, 2024), https://courier.unesco.org/en/articles/quilombos-hotbeds-afro-brazilian-resistance.

Illegal labor brokers called "Gatos," literally "cats" but meaning "catchers," traveled to the Quilombos in the North of Minas Gerais and recruited workers for the coffee plantations in the South. Almost always, the Gato would make false representations to potential workers, promising jobs with high pay and good conditions. The Gatos would often advance money to the workers for food, travel and equipment. The workers were then put into debt bondage and worked off their debts harvesting coffee under miserable, slavery-like conditions. This entire system is regularized and has repeatedly been found to be illegal by the Government of Brazil. All of the Plaintiffs fell victim to this system of trafficking and slavery.

4. Defendant Starbucks Coffee Company ("Starbucks") prominently assures the public on its website that "We Believe in the Pursuit of Doing Good. As it has been from the beginning, our purpose goes far beyond profit. We believe Starbucks can, and should, have a positive impact on the communities we serve."[5] This is not only false and misleading, but also extremely cruel and cynical. As the allegations below establish in documented detail, Starbucks is responsible for massive trafficking, child slavery, and forced labor, as well as extremely poor working conditions, in its coffee harvesting around the world, including in Brazil, China, Colombia, Mexico, Indonesia, Uganda and Guatemala. In addition, Starbucks is one of the leading drivers of deforestation in the world as pristine forests are leveled to make way for new coffee plantations.

5. The Plaintiffs in this case, John Doe I, as a minor child represented herein by his mother, Jane Doe I, John Doe II, John Doe III, John Doe IV, John Doe V, John Doe VI, John Doe VII, and John Doe VIII, were all trafficked by organized and illegal labor brokers called "Gatos." They were then forced to work on Starbucks-controlled coffee plantations in Brazil

[5] *Our Company*, Starbucks, https://www.starbucks.com/about-us/ (last visited Apr. 17, 2025).

that the Brazilian government found imposed "slavery-like conditions."[6] Based on their unlawful treatment by Starbucks and its coffee plantations, these Plaintiffs bring claims under the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act ("TVPRA"), 18 U.S.C. § 1595 *et. seq*., to redress their injuries suffered from being trafficked and forced to work on Starbucks-supplying coffee plantations that are members of Cooxupé, a cooperative that is made up of member plantations and operates as a single entity that is a Tier 1 supplier to Starbucks. Plaintiffs also allege that Starbucks aided and abetted Cooxupé's violations of the TVPRA. Cooxupé is one of the major Brazilian suppliers of coffee to Starbucks and is in a venture with its member plantations that benefit from trafficked and forced labor harvesting coffee on their farms. In addition, Plaintiffs seek to hold Starbucks accountable for aiding and abetting violations of the laws of Brazil prohibiting trafficking and forced labor, including Law No. 13.344/2016, Article 149 (Law No. 10,803) (prohibiting forced labor) and Article 149-A (prohibiting trafficking) of the Brazilian Criminal Code. Starbucks aided and abetted its supplier plantations in systematically violating these laws and causing injury to the Plaintiffs. Plaintiffs also seek relief based on common law claims of unjust enrichment, negligent supervision, and intentional infliction of emotional distress. Plaintiffs bring these claims on behalf of themselves and the class of similarly situated workers harvesting coffee for Starbucks in Brazil. The class is defined in paragraphs 22-27, *infra*, and the class is referred to herein as "Forced Coffee Workers."

6. Starbucks' profits are enhanced by the low wages and miserable conditions forced upon Plaintiffs and thousands of other coffee workers in the class. As the Brazilian Ministry of Labor

[6] Each of the Plaintiffs were included in official Brazilian government reports and were found to have been trafficked and forced to work under "slavery-like" conditions. See paragraphs 112-137, *infra*.

has found with respect to the Plaintiffs, these workers endure "slavery-like conditions" and live in squalor while, in sharp contrast, Starbucks is thriving based largely on its ill-gotten gains. Starbucks is a global coffee giant that purchases around three percent of the coffee produced in the world by over 400,000 farmers from 30 countries.[7] Starbucks is the world's largest coffee shop chain, with around 35,000 stores across 83 countries.[8] In 2022, Starbucks earned ***net*** profits of $3.2 billion, with its stores in the United States accounting for 72% of its sales.[9] The company's newest CEO, Brian Niccol, joined the company in September 2024 and has already been paid about ***$96 million in just four months*** as of January 27, 2025.[10]

7. Plaintiffs bring their claims against Starbucks in the United States because such claims cannot be maintained in their home country of Brazil. There is currently no law in Brazil whereby Plaintiffs can seek civil damages for their injuries against the parent company of Starbucks empire, Defendant Starbucks. Further, Plaintiffs bring their claims in the United States, as the U.S. has provided a forum for such human rights lawsuits with the passage of the TVPRA, which specifically provides for extraterritorial jurisdiction. *See* 18 U.S.C. § 1596.

8. In addition, Plaintiffs have well-founded concerns about whether they will face violent retaliation against themselves and their families by the Gatos who illegally trafficked them to work on coffee plantations, the owners of farms on which they were forced to work under slavery-like conditions, and by those who gather and provide harvested coffee to Cooxupé, who by virtue of the "venture" between Cooxupé and Starbucks described herein, are also

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[7] *Coffee*, Starbucks, https://www.starbucks.com/responsibility/sourcing/coffee/ (last visited Apr. 17, 2025).
[8] Repórter Brasil, *Behind Starbucks Coffee* (Oct. 2023), https://reporterbrasil.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/monitor_starbucks_coffee_slave_labor_ENG.pdf, at 5–6.
[9] *Id.* at 17.
[10] Heather Haddon, *Starbucks CEO Pay Hits $96 Million*, Wall St. J., Jan. 27, 2025, at B3.

employees and/or agents of Starbucks. Plaintiffs' case not only threatens to expose criminalized elements within the coffee industry, but also to dismantle the source of its significant profits: cheap labor procured through trafficked and forced labor. Plaintiffs hope that this case, brought in the United States, will be the vehicle to expose to the world the horrors of trafficking and forced labor in the Brazilian coffee sector and to educate the public, consumers and government regulators so they can directly work to end these abhorrent practices. Coffee production need not be based on exploitation; it should be a source for good jobs at livable wages and with decent working conditions.

II. JURISDICTION AND VENUE

9. This case is brought under the TVPRA, 18 U.S.C. § 1596 for violations of 18 U.S.C. §§ 1581, 1584, 1589, and 1590, and the offender, Starbucks, is a national of the United States or present in the United States, irrespective of nationality, providing this Court with federal question jurisdiction pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331. 18 U.S.C. § 1596 specifically grants U.S. courts extraterritorial jurisdiction for Plaintiffs' TVPRA claims, all of which accrued after December 23, 2008, the effective date of § 1596.[11]

10. Plaintiffs' state law claims arise out of the same case or controversy as their federal law claims and involve a common nucleus of operative facts. All the injuries Plaintiffs suffered were the result of their being trafficked and subjected to harsh conditions performing forced labor. Thus, this Court also has supplemental jurisdiction over Plaintiffs' state law claims under 28 U.S.C. § 1367.

[11] *See Adhikari v. Kellogg Brown & Root, Inc.*, 845 F.3d 184 (5th Cir. 2017), cert. denied, No. 16-1461, 2017 WL 2463601 (U.S. Oct. 2, 2017).

11. This Court also has jurisdiction pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1332(a)(2) based on diversity of citizenship. All Plaintiffs are foreign nationals and citizens and residents of Brazil, and each of their claims for damages exceeds $75,000. Defendant Starbucks is a U.S. corporation headquartered in the United States.

12. This Court has personal jurisdiction over Defendant Starbucks because it is a U.S. resident company that does substantial and continuous business within the District of Columbia. The long arm statute of the District of Columbia, D.C. Code § 13-423(a)(1), uses the same standard as the due process clause of the Constitution, whether there are "minimum contacts." "Section (a)(1)'s 'transacting any business' clause generally has been interpreted to be coextensive with the Constitution's due process requirements and thus to merge into a single inquiry." *GTE New Media Servs. Inc. v. BellSouth Corp.*, 199 F.3d 1343, 1347 (D.C. Cir. 2000). "[The] 'transacting any business' clause has been interpreted to provide jurisdiction to the full extent allowed by the Due Process Clause. Therefore, the 'statutory and constitutional jurisdictional questions, which are usually distinct, merge into a single inquiry here.'" *United States v. Ferrara*, 54 F.3d 825, 828 (D.C. Cir. 1995). *See also Toumazou v. Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus*, 71 F. Supp. 3d 7, 15-16 (D.D.C. 2014) (quoting *Burger King Corp. v. Rudzewicz*, 471 U.S. 462, 474-75 (the "transacting business" requirement of D.C. Code § 13-423(a)(1) requires that a defendant "'purposefully avail[ed] itself of the privilege of conducting business within the forum state and that it has established sufficient minimum contacts in the forum state so that it should reasonably anticipate being hailed into court there.'"). Defendant conducts significant business in the District of Columbia, including selling its products and also running business operations, such that it has well more than the "minimum contacts" required for this Court to exercise personal jurisdiction over it.

13. Venue over Defendant Starbucks is proper in this judicial district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1391(c)(2). Based on subjection (c)(2), all Defendant Starbucks is deemed to reside in this judicial district because it is subject to personal jurisdiction in this district.

III. PARTIES

A. Plaintiffs

14. Plaintiff John Doe I is a minor child represented herein by his mother Jane Doe I. He resides on a Quilombo in the Jequitinhonha Valley region of Minas Gerais, Brazil. He brings this action on behalf of himself and all others who, like him, were trafficked by a Gato and forced to work under slavery-like conditions on a coffee plantation in Minas Gerais that supplies directly to Defendant Starbucks.

15. John Doe II is an adult male who resides on a Quilombo in the Jequitinhonha Valley region of Minas Gerais, Brazil. He brings this action on behalf of himself and all others who, like him, were trafficked by a Gato and forced to work under slavery-like conditions on a coffee plantation in Minas Gerais that supplies directly to Defendant Starbucks.

16. Plaintiff John Doe III is an adult male who resides on a Quilombo in the Jequitinhonha Valley region of Minas Gerais, Brazil. He brings this action on behalf of himself and all others who, like him, were trafficked by a Gato and forced to work under slavery-like conditions on a coffee plantation in Minas Gerais that supplies directly to Defendant Starbucks.

17. Plaintiff John Doe IV is an adult male who resides on a Quilombo in the Jequitinhonha Valley region of Minas Gerais, Brazil. He brings this action on behalf of himself and all others

who, like him, were trafficked by a Gato and forced to work under slavery-like conditions on a coffee plantation in Minas Gerais that supplies directly to Defendant Starbucks.

18. Plaintiff John Doe V is an adult male who resides on a Quilombo in the Jequitinhonha Valley region of Minas Gerais, Brazil. He brings this action on behalf of himself and all others who, like him, were trafficked by a Gato and forced to work under slavery-like conditions on a coffee plantation in Minas Gerais that supplies directly to Defendant Starbucks.

19. Plaintiff John Doe VI is an adult male who resides on a Quilombo in the Jequitinhonha Valley region of Minas Gerais, Brazil. He brings this action on behalf of himself and all others who, like him, were trafficked by a Gato and forced to work under slavery-like conditions on a coffee plantation in Minas Gerais that supplies directly to Defendant Starbucks.

20. Plaintiff John Doe VII is an adult male who resides on a Quilombo in the Jequitinhonha Valley region of Minas Gerais, Brazil. He brings this action on behalf of himself and all others who, like him, were trafficked by a Gato and forced to work under slavery-like conditions on a coffee plantation in Minas Gerais that supplies directly to Defendant Starbucks.

21. Plaintiff John Doe VIII is an adult male who resides on a Quilombo in the Jequitinhonha Valley region of Minas Gerais, Brazil. He brings this action on behalf of himself and all others who, like him, were trafficked by a Gato and forced to work under slavery-like conditions on a coffee plantation in Minas Gerais that supplies directly to Defendant Starbucks.

B. The Trafficked and Forced Coffee Workers' Class Action Allegations

22. The Trafficked and Forced Coffee Workers bring this action individually, and pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(a), 23(b)(2), and 23(b)(3), on behalf of the following class:

> All individuals during the period April 24, 2015 through the present who reside or did reside in Minas Gerais, Brazil and who, like Plaintiffs herein, were trafficked

by a Gato and forced to harvest coffee under slavery-like conditions on a coffee plantation in Minas Gerais that supplies coffee to Defendant Starbucks.

23. The class is so numerous that joinder of all members is impractical. Based on extensive objective research done on the system of modern slavery on coffee plantations in Minas Gerais, there is uniform agreement that there are thousands of coffee workers trafficked by Gatos and subjected to slavery-like conditions who would qualify as class members.

24. There are questions of law and fact common to the class. Key common questions include, but are not limited to, the following:

a) Whether Plaintiffs and the Proposed Class Members were unlawfully trafficked and forced to work under slavery-like conditions that constitutes "trafficking" and/or "forced labor" in violation of the TVPRA, Brazilian Law, and/or International Labor Conventions Nos. 29 and 105 on coffee plantations that supplied coffee beans to Defendant Starbucks?

b) Whether Defendant Starbucks caused and/or aided and abetted the trafficking of Plaintiffs and Proposed Class Members who were then forced by the coffee plantation owners who supplied coffee to Starbucks to work under slavery-like conditions on coffee plantations by either providing logistical support to the supplier farms and/or failing to provide sufficient supervision and/or take adequate action to prevent and stop such forced labor in violation of international law, federal law and Brazilian law?

c) Whether Starbucks knew or should have known that Plaintiffs and Proposed Class Members situated were trafficked and forced to harvest coffee on plantations that sourced cocoa to Starbucks?

d) Whether Starbucks was unjustly enriched by trafficked or forced labor?

e) Whether Starbucks negligently supervised the Plaintiffs and the Proposed Class Members?

f) Whether Plaintiffs and the Proposed Class Members suffered severe emotional distress and other serious injuries as a result of being trafficked and forced to harvest coffee for Starbucks?

g) Whether injunctive relief can be fashioned to prevent further trafficking of workers and forcing them to work under slavery-like conditions on coffee plantations supplying coffee to Defendant Starbucks?

25. The Forced Coffee Worker Plaintiffs' claims are typical of the claims of the class. They seek redress for the same conduct that has affected all class members and press legal claims which are the same for all class members.

26. The Forced Coffee Worker Plaintiffs named herein will fairly and adequately represent the class. These Plaintiffs do not have conflicts of interest with members of the class and have retained counsel who are experienced in complex litigation, including class actions and international litigation, and who will vigorously prosecute this action.

27. A class action is the superior method for adjudication of this controversy. In the absence of a class action, courts will be unnecessarily burdened with multiple, and duplicative individual actions. Moreover, if a class is not certified, many meritorious claims will go un-redressed as the individual class members are not able to prosecute complex litigation against Starbucks, a large defendant corporation with massive resources.

C. Defendant Starbucks

28. Defendant Starbucks is a U.S.-based international coffee producer headquartered in Seattle, Washington at 2401 Utah Ave. South. Starbucks has numerous outlets in Washington, D.C. and does substantial and continuous business in the District.

29. Starbucks is one of the largest purchasers of coffee beans in the world and is the largest coffee house chain in the world. Starbucks sells and markets coffee products sourced from Brazilian plantations that utilize trafficked forced child laborers and forced adult laborers, all

of whom are underpaid due to various schemes by the labor brokers and the farmers. Starbucks distributes these products throughout the United States. Starbucks' coffee products are widely available in national supermarket chains, regional stores, and in over 16,000 retail outlets across all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

IV. FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

A. Defendant Starbucks is a worldwide offender of human rights law and systematically exhibits patterns and practices of criminal and illegal activities and human rights violations in its coffee harvesting operations.

30. As the allegations herein demonstrate, Starbucks knowingly profits from an entrenched system of trafficking and forced labor on the coffee plantations it partners with in Brazil. This is not an isolated failure to comply with legal norms and its "policies" promising great treatment of its workers. Violating laws and international norms is standard practice for the company in its operations in the United States and around the world.

Violations of U.S. Laws

31. Despite being an American company with its headquarters in Seattle, Washington, Starbucks has repeatedly violated the laws of the United States. The most prominent example is its practice of union busting and violating its own workers' rights in the United States. Ever since late 2021 when Starbucks workers – called "partners" – began organizing their union, Starbucks Workers United, Starbucks has reacted with aggressive anti-union actions.[12] Starbucks constantly faces lawsuits in the United States for its illegal labor practices, including

[12] Starbucks Workers United, *Bitter Blend: Starbucks' Historic Anti-Union Campaign is Brewing Conflict with Partners, Government Complaints, Negative Press & Political Scrutiny*, 2 (2023).

firing its partners who support the union even though the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) provides workers with the right to unionize.

32. As of January 2023, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), a U.S. government agency that protects the right of workers to unionize, had filed 63 complaints against Starbucks alleging over 1,200 labor rights violations.[13] These alleged violations include changes in the terms and conditions of employment, coercive statements, coercive actions, discharge, and discipline, which violate sections 8(a)(1) and 8(a)(3) of the NLRA.[14] The NLRB issues a complaint after conducting an investigation that culminates in sufficient evidence supporting workers' allegations. In one case, one of the violations alleged was interference with the NLRB's investigation, and the judge found Starbucks guilty of threatening to discipline their employees for testifying pursuant to an NLRA subpoena if they did not find coverage for their shifts.[15] While many of these cases are currently being litigated, numerous judges have ruled that Starbucks is guilty of violating their workers' rights, and in several cases in 2022 ordered the reinstatement of workers that Starbucks had fired for being union leaders or for engaging in union activity.[16] Most recently on December 28, 2024, a federal appeals court ruled that Starbucks lacked standing to appeal a NLRB finding that the company had illegally fired two of its baristas attempting to unionize in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.[17] A case search on the NLRB database reveals that 2,160 cases have been filed against Starbucks over a 24-year

[13] Starbucks Workers United, *supra* note 12.
[14] *Id.* at 4.
[15] *Id.* at 7.
[16] *Id.* at 2, 8-9.
[17] *Court Rejects Starbucks' Challenge to US Labor Board, Ruling it Illegally Fired Baristas*, The Guardian (Dec. 28, 2024), https://amp.theguardian.com/business/2024/dec/28/starbucks-national-labor-relations-board-lawsuit.

period, from April 2001 to April 15, 2025.[18] 1,280 of these cases are for unfair labor practice charges while the remaining 876 are for failure to engage in good faith with lawfully elected union representatives.

33. While these anti-union efforts were ongoing in 2022, Bloomberg reported that a survey of Starbucks employees at the corporate level in the U.S. revealed that only 52% "completely agree" that Starbucks "behaves in an ethical and responsible manner" and only 42% of staff agreed that Starbucks "lives up to its mission and values."[19] Also in 2022, members of the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate sent letters to Starbucks detailing their concern regarding their anti-organizing actions. Over 30 members of Congress also sent letters to Howard Schultz, the CEO at the time, expressing their concern over reports that Starbucks was withholding pay and benefits and using other illegal tactics for union-busting.[20] Howard Shultz initially declined an invitation in February 2023 to testify before the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions about Starbucks' "compliance with federal labor laws" but later agreed to testify after the threat of a subpoena.[21]

34. Starbucks has faced and is currently facing consumer fraud lawsuits for its deceptive claims of ethically sourcing its products, including coffee. The National Consumers Leage (NCL) filed a lawsuit against Starbucks on January 10, 2024 in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia, claiming that Starbucks falsely and deceptively claims its coffee and tea sourcing is "100% ethical" despite evidence that the company sources from farms and

[18] *Case Search Results for Starbucks*, National Labor Relations Board, https://www.nlrb.gov/search/case/Starbucks?sort=asc (last visited Apr. 17, 2025).
[19] Starbucks Workers United, *supra* note 12, at 10.
[20] *Id.* at 14.
[21] *Id.* at 17.

cooperatives with known labor and human rights violations.[22] Despite reports of these human rights violations, including child labor, forced labor, sexual harassment and assault, among other rights violations, NCL alleged that Starbucks misleads its customers through its marketing practices by making false and misleading claims that it is committed to using products that are 100% ethically sourced and failing to disclose the unreliability of its certification program, Coffee and Farmer Equity (C.A.F.E.) Practices.[23]

35. Another consumer fraud lawsuit against Starbucks was filed in California in 2020 by a plaintiff class alleging that Starbucks fraudulently made claims on its packaging that its hot cocoa products are ethically and sustainably sourced despite "knowing that its cocoa is primarily procured from farms using the Worst Forms of Child Labor" and contributed to mass deforestation and other environmental harms in West Africa.[24] The U.S. District Court for the Central District of California denied Starbucks' motion to dismiss, holding that the plaintiff alleged sufficient facts for the allegation that Starbucks' claims are false or misleading.[25] Shortly after the ruling, likely to avoid embarrassing discovery, Starbucks settled the case. This further demonstrates that as a company, Starbucks has faced a multitude of accusations that it routinely violates various laws in various jurisdictions.

36. On March 8, 2025, the Center for International Corporate Tax Accountability and Research (CICTAR) released a report detailing that Starbucks reduced its tax bills in the U.S.

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[22] *National Consumers League Sues Starbucks, Alleging Coffee Giant Deceives Customers with Claims of "100% Ethical" Coffee, Tea*, National Consumers League (Jan. 10, 2024), https://nclnet.org/national-consumers-league-sues-starbucks-alleging-coffee-giant-deceives-customers-with-claims-of-100-ethical-coffee-tea/.

[23] *Id.*

[24] Complaint at ¶¶ 3, 5, 35, *Myers v. Starbucks Corp.*, (C.D. Cal. Feb. 19, 2020) (No. 5:20-cv-00335).

[25] *Myers v. Starbucks Corp.*, 536 F. Supp. 3d 657, 665-6 (C.D. Cal. 2021).

and other countries by shifting $1.3 billion in profit into a subsidiary in Switzerland over the span of a decade. This subsidiary, Starbucks Coffee Trading Company (SCTC) owns and manages Coffee and Farmer Equity (C.A.F.E.) Practices, which is Starbucks' ethical sourcing and certification program. Through SCTC, Starbucks was booking the cost of unroasted coffee beans, that never actually pass through Switzerland, and then selling those beans at a 3-18% markup between 2005 and 2014.[26]

Violations of Laws in Other Countries

37. Starbucks has contributed to human rights violations globally in several countries where it sources its products, including Kenya, Guatemala, China, and Brazil. These systematic and continuous violations establish that Starbucks is receiving a steady stream of notice of illegal conduct in its operations around the world but does nothing to correct and remediate the known violations. For example, at the James Finlay plantation in Kenya, where Starbucks sources its tea, BBC reporters uncovered widespread sexual abuse, such as supervisors forcing women to exchange sex for work.[27] Between two to three thousand workers from the Finlay plantation filed a class action lawsuit against Finlay in Scotland for grueling work conditions, lack of healthcare, and weekly payments amounting to only the equivalent of $30 despite working for twelve hours a day, six days a week. As of November 2023, this case was put on hold so that plaintiffs could seek redress in Kenya first.[28] As a result of being publicly exposed for profiting from a longstanding unlawful practice, Starbucks stopped purchasing tea from

[26] *Starbucks Likely Avoided Taxes on $1.3 Billion in Profit Using a Swiss Subsidiary, A New Report Finds*, Business Insider (Mar. 8, 2025), https://www.businessinsider.com/starbucks-used-a-swiss-subsidiary-to-avoid-taxes-report-2025-3.
[27] National Consumers League, *supra* note 22; *True Cost of Our Tea: Sexual Abuse on Kenyan Tea Farms Revealed*, BBC News (Feb. 20, 2023), https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-64662056.
[28] *Tea Pickers' Scottish Compensation Case on Hold*, BBC News (Nov. 7, 2023), https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-67342246.

James Finlay and Company in Kenya.[29] Starbucks is fighting the claims of the victims, though, and has done nothing to offer remediation to the impacted workers.

38. In Guatemala, reports from Channel 4 Dispatches documented child labor at farms that supply coffee to Starbucks and other companies.[30] Every single one of the seven farms visited by these investigators in 2022 had children under the age of 14, with some as young as 11 years old, working "excessive hours" in "grueling conditions". Five of those farms were linked to Starbucks. Child workers reported that their waists would hurt from lifting and carrying the heavy bags of coffee, often weighing close to a hundred pounds. The child workers would be paid based on the weight of the coffee they picked. One boy reported that he had been picking coffee almost daily since he was five years old. The coffee cooperatives displayed the Starbucks logo on their walls and told the investigators that they would receive advanced notice from Starbucks when their farms were going to be visited for certification reviews. When the investigators reached out to Starbucks for comment, the company declined to be interviewed.

39. In response to the aforementioned lawsuit brought by the NCL, Starbucks claims that it suspended its commercial relationship with the tea estate in Kenya and that it made a commitment in 2020 to work with coffee farmers in Guatemala to conduct more third-party audits on farms verified by its C.A.F.E. Practices program.[31] Starbucks also claims that its C.A.F.E. Practices program, developed with and run by Conservation International, ensures that almost all its coffee is ethically sourced, and that Starbucks takes "immediate action" when

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[29] Edna Mwenda, *James Finlay Banned by Starbucks in Tea Plantation Sex Scandal*, Business & Human Rights Resource Centre (Feb. 24, 2023), https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/james-finlay-banned-by-starbucks-in-tea-plantation-sex-scandal/.

[30] Channel 4 Dispatches, *Starbucks and Nespresso: The Truth About Your Coffee*, YouTube (Mar. 2020), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h7R0IJl2aZo (last visited Dec. 2024).

[31] *Starbucks Response – March 4, 2024*, Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, https://media.business-humanrights.org/media/documents/2024-0304_BHRRC_Response.pdf.

it is notified of any alleged violations.[32] However, as detailed in the facts below, this has proven to not be the case. Starbucks continuously chooses to work with and certify its suppliers and cooperatives through its C.A.F.E. Practices program despite the continual and regular discoveries of human rights violations.

40. Most recently on February 14, 2025, Coffee Watch, Empower, and ProDESC together released a report on the human rights violations, exploitative and abusive labor practices, and environmental destruction pervading the Mexican coffee supply chains for major companies, including Starbucks.[33] The report highlights how Starbucks' profit maximization practices have trapped Mexican coffee farmers in poverty. Starbucks has forced farmers into "unfavorable trading conditions" by dividing peasant organizations that were involved in negotiations for improved collective conditions. One of Starbucks' importers hired armed civilians to violently put down peasants who protested these unfair practices. Compared to Starbucks CEO Niccol's $96 million four-month salary, Mexican coffee farmers make an average of $106 USD a month, well under the poverty line. It would take a Mexican coffee farmer more than 7,000 years of working long hours under miserable conditions to match what the Starbucks CEO has earned in just one month.

41. On November 29, 2024, Coffee Watch and China Labor Watch (CLW) published a report on labor abuses taking place on farms in Yunnan Province in China that are linked to Starbucks' and Nestlé's supply chains.[34] Through three undercover investigations on 26

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[32] *Id.*

[33] *Exploitation and Opacity: The Hidden Reality of Mexican Coffee in Nestlé and Starbucks Supply Chains*, Coffee Watch (Feb. 14, 2025), https://coffeewatch.org/exploitation-and-opacity/.

[34] "Ghost Farms and Coffee Laundering": How Labor Violations Enter Starbucks' and Nestlé's Chinese Coffee Supply Chain, Coffee Watch (Nov. 29, 2024), https://coffeewatch.org/ghost-farms-and-coffee-laundering/.

Yunnan farms linked to Starbucks' certified coffee in 2024, CLW uncovered child labor and adult workers laboring for twelve hours a day, seven days a week, for three consecutive months – the entirety of the harvest season.[35] These workers received only low wages, equivalent to around $421 USD each month, and did not receive paid leave or compensation for holidays or illness as required by law. Employers did not provide these farmers with legally required health insurance or protective gear and safety equipment even though they faced occupation health risks such as the use of agrochemicals and harsh working conditions. At one C.A.F.E. Practices certified farm linked to Starbucks, CLW found a child picking coffee cherries.

42. In addition to labor rights violations, Coffee Watch and CLW found that farms linked to Starbucks' supply chain also contributed to environmental harm. CLW investigated the Tian Yu Coffee Farm, a C.A.F.E. Practices certified supplier for Starbucks, and found that it had experienced a striking increase in deforestation from the time of Starbucks' entry into the Yunnan Province in 2010 to 2023.[36] These actions go against the ethical and environmental standards set forth by Starbucks itself through its C.A.F.E. Practices certification program, run by Conservation International. Some of these abuses violate laws not only in China but also in France and Germany, where Chinese-produced coffee is sold.[37] The Washington Post reported that Starbucks responded to CLW's findings by stating it has strict rules in place to prevent these labor violations and that it would investigate further.[38]

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[35] *Id.*; Vic Chiang and Christian Shepherd, *Starbucks and Nestlé Face Scrutiny Over Labor Practices in China*, The Washington Post (Dec. 3, 2024), https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/12/03/china-coffee-starbucks-nestle-labor-violations/?utm_campaign=wp_main&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.

[36] "Ghost Farms and Coffee Laundering", *supra* note 34.

[37] *Id.*

[38] Vic Chiang and Christian Shepherd, *supra* note 35.

43. In its 2024 and 2023 List of Suppliers, Starbucks disclosed that it sourced tea from India and coffee from Uganda. In eastern Uganda, the prevalence of child labor in the coffee farm industry was 48% - 51% for young boys and 42% for young girls.[39] Around 70% of coffee sourced from India comes from coffee plantations in Karnataka's Coorg district, where bonded labor has been well-documented.[40] In particular, Tata Coffee was the exclusive supplier of arabica coffee to Starbucks in India, at least up until 2016, and the coffee company was alleged to be in violation of several labor rights through its enforcement of compulsory overtime, use of verbal threats, and practice of paying below the legal minimum wage, among other violations.[41]

44. Almost two decades ago in 2006, a Speakit Films documentary called BLACK GOLD premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, detailing poverty among coffee industry workers in Ethiopia. The producers spent six months attempting to contact Starbucks for an interview through the company's public relations agencies and their headquarters in Seattle, Washington, but all their requests were declined. After the film's release, Starbucks tried to publicly discredit the film and conducted several public relations stunts despite the fact that the film was not targeted against Starbucks specifically. Starbucks also tried to initially block Ethiopia's

[39] Global Fund to End Modern Slavery, *Child Labor in the Coffee Sector in Eastern Uganda: Findings and Policy Recommendations* (2023), https://gfems.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/GFEMS_Child-Labor-in-Coffee-Sector_Uganda.pdf, at 1.
[40] The News Minute, *Coorg's Bitter Brew: Bonded Labour in India's Biggest Coffee Estates*, YouTube (Jan. 24, 2018), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rjCjOrFkT0U; Saurav Kumar, *'We Know the Pain': Freed India Coffee Workers Lead Way from Bonded Labour*, The Guardian (Oct. 5, 2023), https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/oct/05/we-know-the-pain-freed-india-coffee-workers-lead-way-from-bonded-labour.
[41] Finnwatch, *Brewing Up a Sustainable Coffee Supply Chain* (2016), https://www.finnwatch.org/images/pdf/FW_Coffee_report_18102016.pdf, at 58-67.

attempt to trademark the names of its coffee, which would have allowed the coffee sector in Ethiopia to earn more from its coffee brands.[42]

Violations of International Law

45. Starbucks is shirking its corporate social responsibilities per the United Nations (UN) Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the UN Global Compact, the International Labour Organization (ILO) Core Labor Standards, Children's Rights and Business Principles, and the Framework Principles on Human Rights and the Environment, all of which the company itself agreed to adhere to in its 2020 Global Human Rights Statement.[43]

46. The ILO's fundamental principles include the freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labor, the abolition of child labor, the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation, and a safe and healthy working environment.[44] Starbucks has constantly violated these principles, particularly by profiting from known forced labor, child labor, and unsafe and unhealthy working environments in its coffee supply chain.

47. In 2023, several labor unions filed a complaint with the ILO alleging that Starbucks, in preventing employees from participating in unions and collective bargaining, was violating international labor standards, its workers' rights, and the ILO principles that Starbucks itself

[42] *BLACK GOLD* (Speakit 2006), https://www.speakit.org/film/black-gold/; Nick Francis and Marc J. Francis, *BLACK GOLD*, https://blackgoldmovie.com/directors-faq.
[43] Starbucks Corporation, *Starbucks Global Human Rights Statement* (2020), https://content-prod-live.cert.starbucks.com/binary/v2/asset/143-72282.pdf.
[44] *ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work*, International Labour Organization, https://www.ilo.org/about-ilo/mission-and-impact-ilo/ilo-declaration-fundamental-principles-and-rights-work.

had agreed to follow in its Global Human Rights Statement.[45] The allegations included Starbucks retaliating against union organizers by firing activists, delaying efforts, and closing stores that were unionized. The case is still pending, and as usual, Starbucks is fighting the claims rather than addressing its well-documented legal violations.

B. Brazil's economy depends on the coffee industry, which is reliant on and notorious for its use of human trafficking, forced labor, and child labor.

Brief History of Brazil's Coffee Industry

48. Brazil is the top producer and exporter of coffee worldwide. Over a third of the world's coffee supply originates in Brazil, making it the world's largest coffee exporter.[46] In February 2025, Brazil exported $1.03 billion in coffee.[47] The United States, the European Union, and Japan together comprise 73% of Brazil's coffee exports.[48]

49. The Coordination of Rural Employees of the State of Minas Gerais (ADERE MG), an organization in Brazil that documents and presents complaints on labor rights abuses in the coffee industry, informed the United Nations Forum on Business and Human Rights in November 2019 that six major global coffee companies control the coffee supply chain in Brazil.[49] One of the largest of those companies is Starbucks.

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[45] Hilary Russ, *Labor Unions Ask UN Body to Probe Starbucks' Use of Legal Loopholes*, Reuters (May 11, 2023), https://www.reuters.com/business/retail-consumer/labor-unions-ask-un-body-probe-starbucks-use-legal-loopholes-2023-05-11/.
[46] Fabio Teixeira, *Picked by Slaves: Coffee Crisis Brews in Brazil*, Reuters (Dec. 12, 2019), https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN1YG13D/.
[47] *Brazil: Latest Trends Up to February 2025*, Observatory of Economic Complexity (Feb. 2025), https://oec.world/en/profile/country/bra (last visited Apr. 17, 2025).
[48] Repórter Brasil, *Certified Coffee, Rightless Workers* (Dec. 2016), https://base.socioeco.org/docs/cafe_ing_web.pdf, at 3.
[49] Coordination of Rural Employees of the State of Minas Gerais, Brazil (ADERE/MG), *Slave Labor in Coffee Farms in Brazil and the Role of Transnational Companies*, (Nov. 27, 2019), http://www.bit.ly/AdereUNForum2019, [hereinafter *ADERE Report to UN Forum*] (document presented at the 8th United Nations Forum on Business and Human Rights).

50. Over 200,000 coffee farms exist in Brazil, with around eight million workers.[50] Coffee plantations in Brazil have roots dating back to the 1700s and have historically relied on slave labor to operate.[51] As worldwide demand for coffee from Brazil grew, so did demand for slavery, thereby creating a correlative relationship between coffee and slavery. According to Oxfam, "[t]he strength of slavery in Brazil's history is linked to the development of the coffee economy – both in the country and in the world."[52] From 1800 to 1930, Brazil underwent what is coined as "the great coffee cycle", during which the country gained its independence, proclaimed an end to its involvement in the trade of enslaved Africans, experienced a coup that toppled the coffee oligarchy's control over the presidency, and afterwards thwarted the coffee oligarchy's attempted countercoup.[53] Brazil was the last country to proclaim the end to the practice of slavery, almost 400 years after slavery began.[54] While slavery was formally abolished in Brazil in 1888, "modern-day slavery" persisted and this very cheap form of labor contributed to the growth of profits in the coffee industry.[55] Coffee production has greatly contributed to Brazil's development, and many local economies still depend greatly on coffee production to sustain them.[56]

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[50] Benedict Smith, *The Stock Market is Failing Brazil's Coffee Producers*, Coffee Intelligence (Nov. 25, 2022), https://intelligence.coffee/2022/11/stock-market-brazils-coffee-producers/; Benjamin Soloway, *In Brazil's Coffee Industry, Some Workers Face 'Conditions Analogous to Slavery'*, Foreign Policy (Apr. 13, 2016), https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/04/13/in-brazils-coffee-industry-some-workers-face-conditions-analogous-to-slavery/.
[51] Corey Gilman, *Rooted in Racism: Coffee's Bitter Origins*, Heifer International (July 30, 2020), https://www.heifer.org/blog/newsworthy/rooted-in-racism-coffees-bitter-origins.html.
[52] Oxfam Brasil, *Coffee Stain: Coffee Workers in the State of Minas Gerais, Brazil and Supermarkets' Corporate Social Responsibility* 9 (July 2021) (available at: https://www.oxfam.org.br/justica-rural-e-desenvolvimento/por-tras-do-preco/mancha-de-cafe/).
[53] *Id.* at 8.
[54] *Id.* at 9.
[55] Corey Gilman, *supra* note 51.
[56] Diane I. Kruger, *Coffee Production Effects on Child Labor and Schooling in Rural Brazil*, 82 Journal of Development Economics 448-463 (2007).

51. The Inter-American Coffee Agreement (ICA) formed in the 1940s to address coffee overproduction, with Brazil joining as a member in the 1960s.[57] Despite the existence of the ICA, price fluctuations in the supply of coffee continued and impacted coffee farm workers the most as their rights and conditions worsened whenever the economy worsened.[58] Moreover, when countries outside of the ICA entered the coffee sector with cheaper supply, Brazil had to lower its coffee prices even more to stay competitive.[59] The ICA was eventually suspended in the 1980s, which caused Brazil to experience a decrease in demand for its coffee.[60] The volatility of the coffee industry in Brazil, with its recorded highs and lows, has had and continues to have harmful impacts on the rights and conditions of coffee farm workers the most.

Labor Laws and Human Rights in Brazil

52. Brazil's labor regulation framework, called the Consolidation of Labour Laws (CLT), was enacted in 1943 but did not include regulations or rights for rural workers. In 1962, Brazil's Congress passed the Rural Worker's Statute, but rural workers did not achieve equal rights to urban workers until the 1988 Constitution.[61] While some labor laws were passed in 1973 in

[57] *Part I — The History of Brazilian Coffees*, Five Senses Coffee (Dec. 4, 2013), https://fivesenses.com.au/blogs/news/part-i-the-history-of-brazilian-coffees; Germain N. Pichop and Francis M. Kemegue, *International Coffee Agreement: Incomplete Membership and Instability of the Cooperative Game*, Southwest Business and Economics Journal 25, 27 (2005/2006).
[58] Verena Stolcke, *Coffee Planters, Politics, and Development in Brazil: A Comment on Mauricio Font's Analysis*, 24 Latin American Research Review 136-142 (1989).
[59] John Baffes, *Set Up to Fail? How Commodity Agreements Collapse*, World Bank Blogs (June 29, 2020), https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/voices/set-fail-how-commodity-agreements-collapse.
[60] Julie Craves, *The Coffee Crisis*, Coffee Habitat (Feb. 8, 2006), https://www.coffeehabitat.com/2006/02/the_coffee_cris/; Matthew J. Foli, *International Coffee Agreements and the Elusive Goal of Price Stability,* 4 Minnesota Journal of International Law 79 (1995), https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/217210324.pdf.
[61] Oxfam Brasil, *Coffee Stain*, *supra* note 52, at 11.

Brazil to guarantee rights to rural workers, including coffee farm workers, over 60 percent of rural workers still do not receive formal employment contracts, leading to a lack of labor rights.[62] Since coffee harvesting is a seasonal activity of a short duration, it is not often subjected to as much monitoring or inspection as other employment activities, which allows farmers to act with impunity and bypass labor laws, leaving coffee workers without legal protections on coffee farms in Brazil.[63]

53. In November 2017, Brazil's government amended an existing labor law to remove several workers' rights across all sectors, including the right to support from labor unions and the requirement of having Ministry of Labor agents approve severance pay packages and termination agreements.[64] This amended law harms the rights of workers who lack education or workers who may have some literacy skills but whose employers refuse to let them read the terms they are signing.[65] Many coffee workers are thus impacted. Without understanding their rights, many workers sign documents claiming their employers completed payments, leaving them unable to sue their employers for withholding those payments since they no longer can prove their employers acted fraudulently.[66] Many coffee farm workers also end up excluded from Brazil's social security regime because without formal employment contracts, they are unable to prove how long they have worked and therefore their retirement claims get denied.[67] This law remains in force today.

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[62] *ADERE Report to UN Forum*, *supra* note 49, at 8.
[63] *Id.* at 7.
[64] *Id.* at 8.
[65] *Id.* at 9.
[66] *Id.*
[67] *ADERE Report to UN Forum*, *supra* note 49, at 10.

54. From 2019 to 2022, Brazil's government dissolved the Ministry of Labor and significantly reduced the resources available for labor inspections across the country.[68] During the global COVID-19 pandemic, Brazil's government reduced its budget for labor inspections by 40%, the lowest it had been in 10 years.[69]

55. More recently in July 2024, after labor inspectors found and rescued workers from conditions analogous to slavery on coffee plantations in Minas Gerais, a federal deputy, Emidinho Madeira, began calling for changes to inspection rules, arguing that the fine for violations "is very heavy and it puts many people out of business" and that rescue operations should be replaced with simple "guidance" and "dialogue" with the coffee producers and should not involve the presence of police officers.[70] This federal deputy not only has coffee producers from Minas Gerais as part of his electoral base, his own father, Emídio Alves Madeira, was a rural producer who had been placed on the "Dirty List" in Brazil twice in 2017 for the use of slave labor. Around the same time in June 2024, federal authorities identified a man who had been sending threatening audio messages to labor inspectors.[71] This behavior was reminiscent of the Unaí Massacre, an incident that took place in January 2004 during which four labor inspectors were killed by gunmen on the orders of rural landowners.[72] These incidents demonstrate that the longstanding political and personal interests of the various

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[68] SOMO and Conectas Human Rights, *Bitter Brew: Modern Slavery in the Coffee Industry* 3 (Jan. 10, 2024) (available at: https://www.somo.nl/bitter-brew/).
[69] Oxfam Brasil, *Coffee Stain*, *supra* note 52, at 30.
[70] Leonardo Sakamoto, *Escravizados do Café: Resgates de Trabalhadores em MG Têm Ataques e Ameaças* [*Coffee Slaves: Worker Rescues in Minas Gerais Face Attacks and Threats*], Repórter Brasil (July 1, 2024), https://reporterbrasil.org.br/2024/07/escravizados-cafe-resgates-trabalhadores-mg-ataques-ameacas/(translated using Google Translate).
[71] *Id.*
[72] Serhat Demirkol, *Remembering the Unaí Massacre,* Brazilian NR (Feb. 1, 2024), https://braziliannr.com/2024/02/01/remembering-the-unai-massacre/.

stakeholders in the coffee industry complicate the potential for change in the use of slave labor on coffee farms.

Forced Labor, Child Labor, and Other Forms of Modern Slavery in Brazil

56. The coffee industry in Brazil is the economic sector with the highest number of workers in conditions analogous to slavery in the country.[73] In 2023, Brazil's Ministry of Labor and Employment reported that 316 people were rescued from conditions analogous to slavery in coffee cultivation, making it the economic activity with the highest number of workers rescued from such conditions.[74] The 316 cases in 2023 marks an increase in such cases since 2003.[75] The coffee industry in Brazil is also recognized by the U.S. Department of Labor for involving the use of both child labor and forced labor.[76] According to ADERE, as of 2019, at least 10% of all slave labor in Brazil was due to the coffee industry, and the southern part of the state of Minas Gerais accounted for 70% of all slave labor in Brazil's coffee supply chain.[77] The Labor Inspection Information and Statistics Panel in Brazil reported that 3,700 workers were found in conditions analogous to slavery on coffee plantations from 1996-2023.[78]

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[73] Daniel Giovanaz, *Multinational Coffee Companies Ignore Accusations and Continue Buying From Suppliers Linked to Farms with Slave Labour*, Repórter Brasil (May 12, 2022), https://reporterbrasil.org.br/2022/05/multinational-coffee-companies-ignore-accusations-and-continue-buying-from-suppliers-linked-to-farms-with-slave-labour/.

[74] Renatta Leite and Poliana Dallabrida, *Cooperados da Cooxupé São Flagrados com Trabalho Escravo em Colheita de Café* [*Cooxupé Cooperative Members Caught Using Slave Labor During Coffee Harvest*], Repórter Brasil (July 12, 2024), https://reporterbrasil.org.br/2024/07/cooxupe-trabalho-escravo-cafe/ (translated using Google Translate).

[75] Giovanaz, *supra* note 73; *Portal da Inspeção do Trabalho: Painel de Informações e Estatísticas da Inspeção do Trabalho no Brasil (Statistics and Information Dashboard of Labor Inspection in Brazil)*, SIT Radar, https://sit.trabalho.gov.br/radar/.

[76] Bureau of International Labor Affairs, *Child Labor and Forced Labor Reports: Brazil*, U.S. Department of Labor, https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/brazil (last visited Apr. 17, 2025) [hereinafter *DOL Reports on Brazil*].

[77] *ADERE Report to UN Forum*, *supra* note 49, at 6.

[78] SOMO, *Bitter Brew*, *supra* note 68, at 3.

57. Brazil's Ministry of Labor compiles and publishes the "Dirty List" consisting of employers using slave labor. Before being added to the list, employers have the opportunity to appeal and defend themselves to the Brazilian government, so final decisions are highly reliable.[79] However, not all employers engaged in using labor analogous to slavery end up on the "Dirty List" due to lawsuits and political delays.[80] The Brazilian government added a total of 336 new employers to the list in 2023.[81] As of October 2023, 39 out of the 471 employers on Brazil's "Dirty List" were coffee producers.[82] This represents an increase from the 18 coffee producers on the 2019 "Dirty List" who were caught using slave-like labor, with 13 of those companies based in Minas Gerais.[83] This number is certainly an underestimate of forced labor in the coffee sector due to the low number of inspections and farmers have the ability to appeal decisions and remove themselves from the Dirty List. The system is also susceptible to corruption. The list was most recently updated in April 2025 and includes several coffee farm owners who are members of Cooxupé, which supplies to Starbucks, and the new farms listed are among the farms Plaintiffs were trafficked to and forced to work under "slavery-like" conditions. See ¶¶ 112-37, *infra*.

58. The use of child labor is rampant and recognizable across Brazil. A well-known case is that of Jose Pereira Ferreira, a 17-year-old who was shot and left for dead in 1989 when he tried escaping from the rural farm where he was forced to work in inhumane conditions without

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[79] Daniel Camargos, *Slave Labor Found at Second Starbucks-Certified Brazilian Coffee Farm*, Mongabay (May 3, 2019), https://news.mongabay.com/2019/05/slave-labor-found-at-second-starbucks-certified-brazilian-coffee-farm/.
[80] *ADERE Report to UN Forum*, *supra* note 49, at 4.
[81] *DOL Reports on Brazil*, *supra* note 76 (last visited Apr. 17, 2025).
[82] SOMO, *Bitter Brew*, *supra* note 68, at 3.
[83] Teixeira, *Picked by Slaves*, *supra* note 46.

pay along with 60 others.[84] Since 2004, the Ministry of Labor and Employment has counted at least 980 children and adolescents who have been rescued from labor conditions analogous to slavery in Brazil.[85] Of the 980 people rescued, 377 were children under 16, and 603 were between the ages of 16 and 18. Coffee harvesting and cattle raising are the two activities that employ the most number of children up to the age of 18, with at least 88 children rescued from slave-like labor in the coffee industry between 2004 and 2022.[86] The U.S. Department of Labor reports on its website that in 2023, working children between the ages of 5 and 14 make up 2.1% (about 619,654 children) of the population in Brazil, while children between the ages of 15 and 17 who perform hazardous work make up 16.3% (1,484,274) of the population.[87] The Brazilian government conducted the 2015 National Household Sample Survey and found that an estimated 4,993 children under 14 years of age were working in coffee farming; however at least 31,000 children between the ages of 10 and 17 were believed to be laboring on coffee farms in Brazil as of 2015.[88] . Although more recent estimates are not available, child labor on farms remains an ongoing issue in Brazil, as seen in the data published by the Statistical Information Panel of the Labor Inspection in Brazil (RADAR SIT), providing that between 2017 and 2024, a total of 148 children and adolescents were found and rescued by Brazilian

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[84] *Blacklisted: An Overview of Brazil's "Dirty List"*, Human Trafficking Search (May 11, 2015), https://humantraffickingsearch.org/blacklisted-an-overview-of-brazils-dirty-list/.
[85] Fabiola Perez, *País Resgatou 980 Crianças e Adolescentes em Trabalho Análogo à Escravidão* [*Country Rescued 980 Children and Adolescents from Work Analogous to Slavery*], UOL (May 7, 2023), https://noticias.uol.com.br/cotidiano/ultimas-noticias/2023/05/07/criancas-escravizadas-resgatadas-trabalho-analogo-escravidao.htm (translated using Google Translate).
[86] *Id.*
[87] *DOL Reports on Brazil*, *supra* note 76 (last visited Apr. 17, 2025).
[88] *Brasil – Café- Trabalho Infantil*, U.S. Department of Labor, https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/goods_translations/BrazilCoffeeTranslation.pdf; Fundação Abrinq, *O Trabalho Infantil no Brasil: O Desafio do Trabalho Infantil nas Atividades Agrícolas* (2017), https://www.fadc.org.br/sites/default/files/2019-08/trabalho-infantil-no-brasil.pdf, at 18.

labor inspectors in a situation of child labor in agricultural activities, including coffee cultivation.[89]

C. The trafficking of adults and children to coffee farms within Brazil for forced labor and the use of forced labor and child labor for the performance of hazardous work in cultivating and harvesting coffee beans is well-documented by highly credible sources.

59. The ILO estimates that close to 28 million people are "trapped in forced labor" around the world, including over three million children.[90] The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) categorizes the coffee industry in Brazil as involving both child labor and forced labor.[91] Forced labor remains rampant in coffee farming in Brazil. While not all coffee farm workers who are performing forced labor are trafficked in Brazil, the trafficking of individuals to and within these farms for the purposes of forced labor is extremely common. All of the workers IRAdvocates interviewed in its March 2025 investigation were trafficked by a gato and then forced to work on coffee farms under slavery-like conditions. Additionally, child labor is prevalent in coffee farming across Brazil. The minimum age for work in Brazil is 16, while the minimum age for hazardous work is 18.[92]

60. The United States is committed to combatting human trafficking, forced labor, and child labor. The United States. became a party to the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons in 2000. Congress has also enacted and repeatedly authorized the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPRA), which defines "severe

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[89] *Trabalho Infantil* [*Child Labor*], SIT Inspeção do Trabalho (2025), https://qlik-publico.paineis.gov.br/extensions/radar-trabalho-infantil/radar-trabalho-infantil.html (last visited Apr. 17, 2025) (translated using Google Translate).
[90] ILAB, *Sweat & Toil: Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking Around the World,* U.S. Department of Labor, https://www.dol.gov/general/apps/ilab (last visited Apr. 17, 2025).
[91] *DOL Reports on Brazil*, *supra* note 76 (last visited Apr. 17, 2025).
[92] *DOL Reports on Brazil*, *supra* note 76 (last visited Apr. 17, 2025).

forms of trafficking in persons" as "the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery."[93] The United States ratified the ILO Convention on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor in 1999.[94]

Human Trafficking and Forced Labor on Coffee Farms

61. The majority of the coffee produced in Brazil comes from the states of Minas Gerais, São Paulo, Espírito Santo, Paraná, Bahia, and Rondônia, with most coffee plantations in these areas being very small or family-based rural establishments.[95] Of the 47.7 million bags of coffee exported by Brazil in 2021, over 46% of that coffee was harvested in the state of Minas Gerais.[96] Between April 2014 and December 2019, over 121 farms in Minas Gerais were investigated by labor prosecutors.[97] Although Minas Gerais has around 119,000 coffee plantations that employ hundreds of thousands of workers, it only has 245 inspectors so the "scale of slave labor" across the state is "likely to be significant and largely unchecked."[98] For example, only about 20 labor tax auditors oversee thousands of farms in the southern region of Minas Gerais.[99] Between 2015 and 2019, at least 495 people were rescued from labor analogous to slavery on coffee plantations in Minas Gerais and 395 people were rescued from

[93] Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, *2024 Trafficking in Persons Report*, U.S. Department of State, https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-trafficking-in-persons-report/.
[94] *Ratification of ILO Convention on Worst Forms of Child Labor*, U.S. Department of State ARCHIVE (1999), https://1997-2001.state.gov/issues/economic/991202_fsdos_bkilo.html.
[95] Oxfam Brasil, *Coffee Stain*, *supra* note 52, at 12.
[96] Giovanaz, *supra* note 73.
[97] Teixeira, *Picked by Slaves*, *supra* note 46.
[98] *Id.*
[99] *ADERE Report to UN Forum*, *supra* note 49, at 4.

19 municipalities in the southern region of the state.[100] From the period of 1995 to 2020, Oxfam Brasil reports that 2,808 people were rescued from slave-like labor on coffee plantations in the country, with almost 100% of those rescues taking place in Minas Gerais.[101] An estimated two-thirds of all coffee farm workers in Minas Gerais are hired informally, meaning they retain no right to minimum wages, overtime pay, or other benefits.[102] In Minas Gerais, a 41% gap existed between the average wage paid to workers and the amount needed for a basic decent life in Brazil in 2020.[103]

62. In 2024, Al Jazeera partnered with ADERE, a nonprofit based in Brazil, on a documentary film titled "The Human Cost of Coffee," which highlighted the dangerous realities of workers on coffee farms in the Minas Gerais state.[104] This short documentary explained that Brazilian authorities only investigate or inspect farms if they receive formal complaints, but many workers fear repercussions if their complaints are leaked. Moreover, farm owners will hide their workers when inspectors arrive. The workers told the documentary interviewers that they were not provided with access to bathrooms or seating for lunch and were not given basic materials such as blankets for sleeping.

63. Modern forms of slavery, including degrading work conditions and debt bondage, were discovered on 17 farms inspected by Brazil's Ministry of Labor from 2014 to 2018.[105] ADERE

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[100] *Id.*
[101] Oxfam Brasil, *Coffee Stain*, *supra* note 52, at 1.
[102] Teixeira, *Picked by Slaves*, *supra* note 46.
[103] Oxfam Brasil, *Coffee Stain*, *supra* note 52, at 22.
[104] Al Jazeera English, *Rescuing Coffee Farm Workers from Slave-Like Conditions in Brazil | Witness Documentary*, YouTube (Aug. 19, 2024), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1BJ6eThzyvQ.
[105] *Trabalho Escravo em Fazendas de Café em MG é Denunciado na OCDE* [*Slave Labor on Coffee Farms in Minas Gerais is Reported to the OECD*], Conectas Direitos Humanos (Sept. 6, 2018), https://www.conectas.org/noticias/trabalho-escravo-cafe-minas-gerais-ocde/ (translated using Google Translate).

and Conectas Human Rights filed a complaint in August 2018 with the National Contact Point (NCP) of Brazil for the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) detailing the violations against 37 workers who were rescued from these 17 farms in Minas Gerais.[106] According to this complaint, these farms participated in the supply chain for several multinational companies, including Starbucks.[107] The complaint was rejected on technical grounds not related to the facts alleged. See ¶ 74, *infra*.

64. Brazil's Labour Prosecution Service and its Federal Prosecution Service share joint responsibility in cases of human rights violations taking place in large companies' supply chains.[108] In 2022, for example, a Brazilian labor prosecutor issued a complaint against Cooxupé, Starbucks' largest coffee supplier from Brazil, for illegally trafficking over 30 migrant workers and subjecting them to working conditions analogous to slavery.[109] Unfortunately, transparency in the coffee supply chain is almost nonexistent[110] due to the different layers of players involved in the producing, purchasing, and selling of coffee.

65. The actors involved in the human trafficking of coffee farm workers include labor brokers or Gatos who mediate the hiring and recruitment of workers between states, such as from Bahia to Minas Gerais, by making false promises of decent employment and housing conditions and payment.[111] Conectas Human Rights, a Brazilian non-governmental organization, reports that workers are persuaded to accept offers of employment by the Gatos' promises, only to find upon arrival at the plantations that their work permits are withheld and

[106] *Slave Labor on Coffee Farms in Minas Gerais is Reported to the OECD*, *supra* note 105.
[107] SOMO, *Bitter Brew*, *supra* note 68, at 4.
[108] Oxfam Brasil, *Coffee Stain*, *supra* note 52, at 27.
[109] *National Consumers League Sues Starbucks*, *supra* note 22.
[110] Oxfam Brasil, *Coffee Stain*, *supra* note 52, at 29.
[111] *Slave Labor on Coffee Farms in Minas Gerais is Reported to the OECD*, *supra* note 105.

they do not have running water, beds, or toilets in some cases. Moreover, some workers reported their living situations as "living in a barnyard" without proper hygiene facilities.[112] Workers are expected to begin harvesting at 4 a.m. and experience pain in their hands and back along with health risks from exposure to harvesting mechanisms and pesticides without any personal protective equipment.[113] While employers agree to pay workers based on the number of bags of coffee they each harvest, in reality workers do not receive their full wages and are often subjected to fraudulent coffee bag counts.[114] For example, ADERE reported that workers were only being paid for 60 liters despite harvesting 80 liters of coffee.[115] This dishonest accounting forced workers to labor for long hours in order to meet the required daily rates to get paid.[116]

66. OXFAM Brasil published a short documentary titled "Mancha de Café" ("Coffee Stain") and produced by Papel Social and ADERE.[117] This documentary included interviews with workers on plantations in Minas Gerais, who detailed how they were deceived and mistreated by their employers. Their employers promised them they would not have to pay rent or pay for supplies such as personal protective equipment and machines. However, not only did they have to pay for those items, they were also not paid their wages at all. Despite not paying them, farm owners pushed their employees to work as fast as they could. The documentary provides video evidence of the squalid conditions in which the workers lived –

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[112] *Id.*
[113] *Slave Labor on Coffee Farms in Minas Gerais is Reported to the OECD*, *supra* note 105.
[114] *Id.*
[115] *ADERE Report to UN Forum*, *supra* note 49, at 17.
[116] *ADERE Report to UN Forum*, *supra* note 49, at 8.
[117] *Mancha de Café* [*Coffee Stain*],Oxfam Brasil (2021), https://www.oxfam.org.br/justica-rural-e-desenvolvimento/por-tras-do-preco/mancha-de-cafe/mancha-de-cafe-filme/ (translated using Google Translate and YouTube Closed Captions)

dirty spaces, with multiple mattresses placed on floors of small rooms shared by multiple people, a single unsanitary bathroom and kitchen, with mice crawling around. The workers would have to collect firewood from the woods to warm up their cold living quarters. These slave-like conditions would be glaringly obvious to corporations that actually visited and inspected the base of their supply chains, as Starbucks claims to do. This documentary accompanies a more detailed "Coffee Stain" report by OXFAM Brasil published in July 2021.[118] This report details the history and interconnectedness of the coffee industry and slavery in Brazil, and discusses the power asymmetries and informalities existing in rural workers' relationships with their employers that exacerbates their exploitation and inability to defend their rights.

Child Labor on Coffee Farms

67. Child labor has also been well-documented in Brazil's coffee industry. In 2013, Danwatch reported 116,000 children between the ages of 5 and 14 were working in agriculture in Minas Gerais, with 60,000 of them younger than the age of fourteen.[119] In July 2015, Danwatch joined government authorities on an inspection during which two boys, aged 14 and 15, were rescued from picking coffee while under slave-like conditions on a farm in Minas Gerais.[120] These boys were living in an unsanitary and small space housing a total of 17 people without access to clean drinking water. The boys were forced to miss school in order to pick coffee without any safety equipment and without pay. Over a decade later, child labor in the coffee industry remains an issue in Brazil.

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[118] Oxfam Brasil, *Coffee Stain*, *supra* note 52.
[119] *Children Pick Coffee on Brazilian Plantations*, Danwatch (2015), https://old.danwatch.dk/en/undersogelseskapitel/children-pick-coffee-on-brazilian/.
[120] *Id.*

68. The ILO publishes the list of "Worst Forms of Child Labor," which bans the employment of workers under the age of 18 for activities involving carrying heavy items or being exposed to the sun or rain without proper protection.[121] Children trafficked to work in the coffee industry in Brazil are subjected to such activities.

D. Starbucks routinely sources its coffee from cooperatives that include farms in Brazil that it knows or should have known have been found to be using trafficked workers forced to endure slavery-like conditions.

69. Despite the aforementioned widely documented and continued use of forced labor and child labor on these farms, Starbucks continues to source a sizable portion of its coffee from Brazil and continues to allow its certification program, C.A.F.E. Practices, to "certify" farms known to commit such labor and human rights violations.

70. In 2019, The Thomson Reuters Foundation conducted a six-month investigation of the billion-dollar coffee industry in Brazil and discovered "extensive slave labor running largely unchecked."[122] Despite the use of forced labor in coffee production, farms still had certification seals from major brands such as Starbucks.[123] The Thomson Reuters Foundation joined labor inspectors in Brazil as they embarked on raids of two plantations in Minas Gerais and found 59 workers, including children as young as 13 years old, who were "undocumented, underpaid and lacking safety equipment as required by law."[124] The inspectors had to act with quick speed given that plantation supervisors were known to send WhatsApp messages to workers ordering them "to flee at the first sight of authorities."[125]

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[121] Repórter Brasil, *Behind Starbucks Coffee*, *supra* note 8, at 4.
[122] Teixeira, *Picked by Slaves*, *supra* note 46.
[123] *Id.*
[124] *Id.*
[125] *Id.*

71. One of the farms raided was Alvorado do Canto Galo farm, owned by Jose Maria Domingos da Silva. Labor inspectors identified over 50 workers at this farm as being slave labor victims.[126] Workers at this farm were only paid around $3.43 for every 60 liters of beans picked, which could take an entire day.[127] They also had to pay for rent, gas, food and water, and were not provided with any boots or other safety equipment.[128]

72. Starbucks confirmed during an investigation by Danwatch that it purchased coffee from cooperatives and middlemen, including Cooxupé, that conducted business with Brazilian plantations that placed workers in "slavery-like conditions".[129] Cooxupé, based in Minas Gerais, is the world's largest coffee cooperative and accounts for 10% of coffee exports from Brazil, reaching 50 countries.[130] From 2021-2023, Cooxupé accounted for 40% of coffee exported from Brazil to Starbucks in the United States.[131] Cooxupé operates as a single corporate entity and all of its members are required upon joining to meet all of its quality requirements and also abide by its ethical code. Cooxupé claims the right to expel members that fail to meet its standards.[132] As of 2021, over 2,000 member farms of Cooxupé supplied Starbucks.[133] Several workers, including children under the age of 18, were rescued from

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[126] *Id.*
[127] Teixeira, *Picked by Slaves*, *supra* note 46.
[128] *Id.*
[129] *Slavery-Like Working Conditions at Suppliers to World's Largest Coffee Company*, Danwatch (2015), https://old.danwatch.dk/en/undersogelseskapitel/slavery-like-working-conditions/.
[130] Leite, *Cooxupé Cooperative Members Caught*, *supra* note 74.
[131] Repórter Brasil, *Behind Starbucks Coffee*, *supra* note 8, at 4, 7.
[132] *Cooxupé Bylaws, Article 20* (2022), https://www.cooxupe.com.br/wp content/uploads/2024/07/Bylaws.pdf.
[133] Daniel Camargos, *Labor Rights Violations at Brazil Coffee Farm Linked to Starbucks, Nespresso* (Sept. 30, 2021), https://news.mongabay.com/2021/09/labor-rights-violations-at-brazil-coffee-farm-linked-to-starbucks-nespresso/.

forced labor and child labor and unsanitary work conditions at farms that supplied the Cooxupé cooperative.[134]

73. These "slavery-like conditions" included debt bondage, lack of wages or work contracts, lack of protective equipment, lack of doors and mattresses in lodging spaces, and lack of clean drinking water.[135] Brazilian authorities freed 19 migrant workers from a coffee plantation called Fazenda Lagoa and 22 workers from a plantation called Fazenda de Pedra in 2015. Many of these migrant workers were trafficked from Bahia, a neighboring state to Minas Gerais.[136] Of these workers, two were only 14 and 15 years old.[137] Due to working on the farms, one of these children missed an entire month of school.[138]

74. As mentioned previously in ¶ 63 *supra*, ADERE and Conectas Human Rights filed complaints against coffee corporations such as Starbucks alleging a lack of transparency about their suppliers and the inadequacy of their due diligence processes.[139] Per the complaint against Starbucks, Starbucks had direct business relations with farms that engaged in modern slavery.[140] ADERE identified Cooxupé as a major supplier to Starbucks with serious forced labor and child labor issues, and Starbucks has listed Cooxupé as a Tier 1 Supplier to Starbucks for 2023 and 2024. Despite this plausible link between a company and the alleged violations, Brazil's NCP failed to follow OECD guidelines and rejected the complaint against Starbucks. The OECD's NCP system is one of few existing mechanisms for complaints related to human

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[134] SOMO, *Bitter Brew*, *supra* note 68, at 5.
[135] Danwatch, *Slavery-Like Working Conditions*, *supra* note 129.
[136] *Id.*
[137] *Café Amargo* [*Bitter Coffee*], Repórter Brasil (Mar. 7, 2016), https://reporterbrasil.org.br/2016/03/cafe-amargo-2/ (translated using Google Translate).
[138] *Id.*
[139] SOMO, *Bitter Brew*, *supra* note 68, at 4.
[140] *Id.*

rights abuses in business-related supply chains, yet the system's ineffectiveness leaves victims without recourse.[141] The OECD Watch stated on its website that the evidence showing a link between Starbucks and the farms should have been allowed into the review process and the NCP required too high of a standard of proof at the initial assessment stage and therefore wrongly rejected the complaint against Starbucks.[142]

75. In 2021, Repórter Brasil discovered that workers at the Pedreira Farm – owned by the family of Cooxupé's president, Carlos Augusto Rodrigues de Melo – had their wages illegally discounted for the purchase of coffee harvesting machines, called derriçadeiras, and the fuel used in harvesting coffee.[143] The owners took $100 per month from the workers' wages for the derriçadeiras and another $100 for the fuel, but ultimately, the workers never got to keep the derriçadeiras, which were worth around $550 each.[144] The Melo family directly benefitted from the coffee production on the Pedreira Farm.[145] In 2022, Palmital Farm, another property owned by the family of Cooxupé's president, was found in violation of labor laws, including not paying benefits and not paying wages on time.[146] As of 2023, these violations still existed on these farms. Repórter Brasil also found that these farms lacked proper accommodations for preparing and eating meals and required workers to pay for their own cooking gas, blankets, and bedding suitable for the climate. The water that workers used for drinking and bathing was stored in an old fuel tank.[147]

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[141] SOMO, *Bitter Brew*, *supra* note 68, at 10.
[142] Complaint, *Conectas Human Rights & ADERE MG v. Starbucks*, OECD Watch (Aug. 21, 2018), https://www.oecdwatch.org/complaint/conectas-human-rights-adere-mg-v-starbucks/.
[143] Repórter Brasil, *Behind Starbucks Coffee*, *supra* note 8, at 16.
[144] Camargos, *Labor Rights*, *supra* note 133.
[145] *Id.*
[146] Repórter Brasil, *Behind Starbucks Coffee*, *supra* note 8, at 16.
[147] *Id.*

76. In June 2023, two coffee producers that supplied Cooxupé were placed on the "Dirty List" after 11 workers were found working in conditions analogous to slavery at a farm called Sítio Douradinha located in São Pedro da União, Minas Gerais.[148] These workers were living in a space – housing 22 people at the harvest season's peak – with moldy walls, no kitchen, and filled with fire hazards such as fuel for the harvesting machines.[149] Violations occurred even before the workers reached the farm – they did not have registered work cards and had to pay for their own transportation and accommodations as well as for the fuel used in the harvesting machines.[150] The employer did not provide water, personal protective equipment, or portable toilets anywhere on the plantations.[151] Complaints about the working conditions at this farm were received as early as 2021, but the farm was not investigated until 2023 due to a lack of available auditors.[152] According to Repórter Brasil, in February 2024 there were 1,900 auditors nationwide, which is the lowest number in three decades.[153]

77. Recently, in June 2024, Ministry of Labor and Employment inspectors rescued 23 workers, including a 16-year-old, from slave-like conditions on seven coffee farms in Minas Gerais.[154] According to Repórter Brasil, three coffee producers were charged after these inspections, including two farmers who were members of the Cooxupé cooperative. The

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[148] Leite, *Cooxupé Cooperative Members Caught*, *supra* note 74.
[149] Poliana Dallabrida, *Produtores da Maior Exportadora de Café do Brasil Entram na 'Lista Suja' do Trabalho Escravo* [*Producers from Brazil's Largest Coffee Exporter Are Added to the 'Dirty List' of Slave Labor*], Repórter Brasil (Apr. 10, 2024), https://reporterbrasil.org.br/2024/04/produtores-exportadora-cafe-brasil-lista-suja-trabalho-escravo/ (translated using Google Translate).
[150] *Id.*
[151] *Id.*
[152] Dallabrida, *Producers from Brazil's Largest Coffee Exporter*, *supra* note 149.
[153] *Id.* As noted in ¶ 61, *supra*, Minas Gerais has only 245 labor inspectors to cover around 119,000 coffee plantations.
[154] Leite, *Cooxupé Cooperative Members Caught*, *supra* note 74.

rescued workers had been deprived of access to drinking water, bathrooms, and places to eat on the plantations. Since each of these workers were hired informally, they were also deprived of their fundamental labor rights. Even though the workers produced a lot of coffee, the farmers set low prices for coffee so the workers earned very little and also had the cost of their accommodations, and the machinery, equipment, and gasoline used for harvesting, deducted from their earnings. Of the 23 workers, six were rescued from Sítio Mata do Sino, owned by Marcos Florio de Souza in Juruaia, ten were rescued from Fazenda Cachoeirinha, owned by Vagner Freire da Silva in Nova Resende, and seven were rescued from Sítio de Ilha, owned by Luis Carlos Moreira in Alfenas. All three producers had to sign Conduct Adjustment Terms with the Labor Prosecutor's Office and had to pay severance. Marcos Florio de Souza and Vagner Freire da Silva were the two coffee producers that were Cooxupé members. Both farmers denied that they subjected their workers to slavery-like conditions. Cooxupé responded to Repórter Brasil that it blocked and suspended its commercial activities with the farms when it was officially informed of the violation. There is no public record of whether that happened or whether these farms are now back in the Cooxupé fold.

78. Not only are many farms making their workers pay for the use of the harvesting machines and the necessary fuel to power them, but these machines were also sold without safety features, such as a locking button, up until 2022. When using these dangerous machines to harvest conilon (beans used for instant coffee) in the state of Espírito Santo, many coffee farm workers have experienced horrible accidents, including amputations of their fingers,

arms, and legs, and a 24-year-old worker died when he was pulled into the coffee picking machine.[155]

Starbucks' Suppliers Linked to Slave Labor

79. Starbucks has a history of continuing to source its coffee from suppliers who have been publicly accused of having, and even been proven to have, forced labor on its coffee farms.

80. In 2023 and 2024, Starbucks sourced its coffee from List + Biesler, a company with operations in the U.S. that imported batches of coffee from the cooperative Coopercitrus *after* the publication of the reports in 2022 on workers being rescued from slave labor on coffee farms engaged in business with the cooperative.[156]

81. Also in 2023 and 2024, Starbucks sourced its coffee from Falcon Coffees Limited, a company that continued to conduct business with the cooperative Cocatrel *after* the publication of the reports in 2022 on workers being rescued from slave labor on coffee farms engaged in business with the cooperative.[157]

82. Again, in 2023 and 2024, Starbucks sourced its coffee from Sucafina, a company that continued to conduct business with Nutrade and Cocatrel *after* their supplies were fined in 2022 for labor violations, including forced labor and child labor.[158]

83. And of course, as detailed in paragraphs 69-78, Starbucks sourced its coffee from Cooperativa Regional De Cafeicultores Em Guaxupe Ltda (Cooxupé) for years, going back to

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[155] Poliana Dallabrida, *Amputações e Mortes: Máquina Para Colher Café Gera Onda de Acidentes no ES* [*Amputations and Deaths: Coffee Harvesting Machine Generates Wave of Accidents in ES*], Repórter Brasil (Mar. 4, 2024), https://reporterbrasil.org.br/2024/03/amputacoes-mortes-cafe-es/ (translated using Google Translate).
[156] Giovanaz, *supra* note 73.
[157] *Id.*
[158] *Id.*

at least 2012, and in 2023 and 2024, the first years Starbucks provided this information to the public, listed Cooxupé as a Tier 1 Supplier. Cooxupé has numerous member farms placed on the "Dirty List," including most recently in the April 2025 report. This means the identified Cooxupé farms were found by Brazil's government to have trafficked workers and forced them to work under "slavery-like" conditions.

E. Starbucks' C.A.F.E. Practices program has certified farms in Brazil that were caught engaging in forced labor and committing other human rights violations.

84. Many companies in the coffee industry, including Starbucks, rely on certification programs or third-party verifiers to ensure that the farms where they source their products use ethical practices. However, the unreliability and opaqueness of these schemes is well-documented by highly credible sources. In several countries, farms that bear seals from certification schemes such as those used by Starbucks are known offenders of labor and other human rights.

The failure and fallibility of certification schemes used by the coffee industry in various countries is well-documented by highly credible sources.

85. "Impact x Nightline" conducted a year-long investigation into coffee farms in southern Mexico and found that they employed child labor despite carrying "ethical" certifications.[159] In 2021, children as young as six years old were working on farms in Chiapas, Mexico that had been certified by the Rainforest Alliance. These children work on these farms instead of attending schools. Rainforest Alliance's certification scheme purports to prohibit the use of

[159] David Scott et al., *Caffeine Jungle: Child labor, Struggling Farmers Found on 'Ethically' Certified Coffee Farms in Southern Mexico*, ABC News (Oct. 21, 2022), https://abcnews.go.com/US/caffeine-jungle-child-labor-struggling-farmers-found-ethically/story?id=91735230.

child labor. Yet, Rainforest Alliance's regional lead for Chiapas admitted that not all of the farms are inspected prior to receiving their certifications.[160] In response to the photo and video evidence of child labor, Rainforest Alliance revoked its certification from three of the farms implicated in Impact x Nightline's investigation. But for outside intervention, these farms were considered by Rainforest Alliance to be in compliance.

86. Conectas Human Rights, in partnership with Dutch organization SOMO, conducted a study that documented dozens of violations recurring across farms, including payment irregularities, lack of employment contracts, lack of proper hygiene facilities, lack of drinking water and meals, and lack of personal protective equipment.[161] This study included the discovery of 20 workers, including a 15-year-old girl and three boys under the age of 18, working on a farm that carried a Rainforest Alliance international sustainability certification.[162]

87. When contacted by Repórter Brasil after it reported on labor violation allegations in 2016, Starbucks replied that it had used its own ethical sourcing program to carry out its own audits on the farms described in the reports, but when Repórter Brasil asked if problems had also been found in those audits, Starbucks refused to respond.[163] In fact, initially, Starbucks did not report that it was aware of labor rights violations prior to Repórter Brasil's reporting, indicating that it was failing to actively monitor the coffee farms it sources from in Brazil.[164]

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[160] *Id.*
[161] *Trabalho Análogo ao Escravo Persiste em Lavouras de Café Brasileiras, Aponta Estudo* [*Slave-Like labor Persists on Brazilian Coffee Plantations, Study Finds*], Conectas Direitos Humanos (Jan. 26 2024), https://www.conectas.org/noticias/trabalho-analogo-ao-escravo-persiste-em-lavouras-de-cafe-brasileiras-aponta-estudo/ (translated using Google Translate).
[162] *Id.*
[163] Repórter Brasil, *Certified Coffee, Rightless Workers*, *supra* note 48, at 20.
[164] *Id.* at 19.

Shortcomings of the C.A.F.E. Practices Program

88. In 2004, Starbucks partnered with Conservation International to develop an "ethical" certification program called Coffee and Farmer Equity (C.A.F.E.) Practices. This program evaluates and verifies farms based on economic, social, and environmental criteria, and also consists of a third-party verification process overseen by SCS Global Services.[165] The C.A.F.E. Practices program consists of over "200 checkpoints in categories like economic transparency, social responsibility, environmental leadership and quality – all audited through a third-party independent verification process."[166] Starbucks also relies on certification by Rainforest Alliance, a third-party supply chain verifier, for ethical sourcing of its tea.[167]

89. C.A.F.E. Practices has a "continuous improvement approach; rather than a one-time certification, the program works to improve practices over time."[168] As part of its C.A.F.E. Practices' scheme, Starbucks hires auditing firm SCS Global Services, which provides "training, approval, and on-going monitoring for the Vertification Organizations that audit Starbucks Suppliers."[169] On its website, SCS Global Services provides a list of Starbucks' ethical sourcing approved verification organizations for C.A.F.E. Practices. Of the 27 verification organizations on the list, four are involved in Brazil, including Imaflora, QIMA Brasil Ltda, SØREN KNUDSEN GROUP/Vaering Corp., and Savassi (Provisional Approval).

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[165] *Coffee*, Starbucks, *supra* note 7.
[166] *Starbucks Coffee, Bean-to-Cup*, Starbucks (Sept. 27, 2024), https://stories.starbucks.com/stories/2024/starbucks-coffee-bean-to-cup/ (last visited Apr. 17, 2025).
[167] *Tea*, Starbucks, https://www.starbucks.com/responsibility/sourcing/tea/ (last visited Apr. 17, 2025).
[168] *Starbucks C.A.F.E. Practices: Ensuring Ethical Sourcing for Coffee*, SCS Global Services, https://www.scsglobalservices.com/services/starbucks-cafe-practices (last visited Apr. 17, 2025).
[169] *Starbucks Ethical Sourcing Approved Verification Organizations*, SCS Global Services, https://www.scsglobalservices.com/certified-clients/starbucks-ethical-sourcing-approved-verification-organizations (last visited Apr. 17, 2025).

90. Starbucks' C.A.F.E. Practices program has certified 400,000 farms worldwide, of which 192,000 are in Latin America.[170] As of 2022, Starbucks sourced 94.86% of their coffee from farms "certified" under their C.A.F.E. Practices program.[171] While C.A.F.E. Practices claims to conduct surprise audits on farms, these audits are announced at least 24-48 hours in advance.[172] Although Starbucks has not published a list of the farms that are certified by C.A.F.E. Practices, there are likely tens of thousands of farms in Brazil that are certified through this flawed program that lacks basic transparency.[173]

91. In 2016, Repórter Brasil published a report revealing that two farms in Minas Gerais that participated in Starbucks C.A.F.E. Practices program had been inspected and fined by the Ministry of Labor for multiple labor rights violations.[174] In July 2015, the Ministry of Labor fined the owner of Rancho São Benedito, a participant in Starbucks' C.A.F.E. Practices and the Rainforest Alliance, for its use of labor from 13 unregistered workers during the coffee harvest season and for failing to provide required medical tests to workers prior to starting the harvest. Also in 2015, the Ministry of Labor inspected the Pedra Preta Farm, another participant in Starbucks' C.A.F.E. Practices, and found human rights violations including the improper storage and use of pesticides in spaces that were without ventilation and too close in distance to workers' eating areas. In response to these violations, Starbucks told Repórter Brasil that it had not purchased coffee from either of the two farms and that both farms were included in the audit process in 2015. However, the farms were participants of the Starbucks' verification

[170] Repórter Brasil, *Behind Starbucks Coffee*, *supra* note 8, at 5.
[171] *Global Environmental & Social Impact Report*, Starbucks (2021), https://stories.starbucks.com/uploads/2022/04/Starbucks-2021-Global-Environmental-and-Social-Impact-Report-1.pdf, at 11.
[172] Repórter Brasil, *Behind Starbucks Coffee*, *supra* note 8, at 8.
[173] Repórter Brasil, *Behind Starbucks Coffee*, *supra* note 8, at 7.
[174] Repórter Brasil, *Certified Coffee, Rightless Workers*, *supra* note 48, at 9-11.

program and Starbucks did not respond to the question of whether C.A.F.E. Practices had found labor problems at those farms.

92. In its 2023 "*Behind Starbucks Coffee*" report, Repórter Brasil chronicled the discovery of farms using slave and child labor with links to Starbucks over the past several years. The following paragraphs present those findings, starting with rescues taking place in 2018 and including Repórter Brasil's more recent investigation of four farms with the C.A.F.E. Practices certification seal in Minas Gerais in July 2023, during which it found unacceptable working conditions and other labor violations.[175]

93. Between 2018 to 2019, the Brazilian government rescued 24 workers from two farms in Minas Gerais with the Starbucks C.A.F.E. Practices seal, the Cedro II farm and Córrego das Almas.[176] Eighteen workers were rescued from slave labor at the Córrego das Almas farm, while six workers at the Cedro II farm were subjected to "conditions analogous to slavery", including working 17-hour shifts from 6am to 11pm and living in unhygienic housing conditions.[177] Coffee producer Helvécio Sebastião Batista is the owner and manager of Cedro II farm and was later added to Brazil's "Dirty List" of employers, prompting Starbucks to state that it would suspend the coffee producer from its supplier list while it looked into the matter.[178] Government labor inspectors found an additional 19 workers in "slavery-like conditions" at Cedro II and Batista's other properties, which lacked adequate toilets and kitchen facilities.[179]

[175] Repórter Brasil, *Behind Starbucks Coffee*, *supra* note 8, at 10.
[176] *Id.* at 8.
[177] Camargos, *Slave Labor Found*, *supra* note 79.
[178] *Id.*
[179] *Id.*

94. In 2022, 159 workers were rescued from modern slavery after 39 coffee farms were inspected.[180] The following four paragraphs provide an overview of Repórter Brasil's more recent findings, from the years 2022-2023..

95. In July 2022, a 17-year-old boy was rescued from working at the Cedro-Chapadão and Conquista farms in Minas Gerais, which are managed by Sebastião Aluísio de Sales and his family.[181] He and 25 others had been transported from Irecê, Bahia, which was 1,500 kilometers away, to work on these two coffee farms.[182] The Sales family did not provide the workers at these farms with drinking water, protective equipment, bedding, closets, or a place to have meals.[183] Workers also had to pay for their own bus tickets to reach the farms and had to pay the employer for a woman they hired to cook and clean for them.[184] The Sales family claimed that the farm was certified in 2022 and that it never sold coffee to Starbucks. However, in May 2021, their company posted on their social media account a (now-deleted) photo of the Starbucks logo to celebrate the Cedro Farm's C.A.F.E. Practices certification.[185] As of 2023, Starbucks stated that the farm no longer had a certification but did not explain how it ever obtained the seal or why it lost it.[186]

96. In August 2022, 17 workers, including one girl and two boys under the age of 18, were rescued from slave labor from the Mesas Farm in Campos Altos, Minas Gerais, which had a

[180] Repórter Brasil, *Behind Starbucks Coffee*, *supra* note 8, at 8.
[181] *Id.* at 12.
[182] Hélen Freitas and Poliana Dallabrida, *Starbucks: Slave and Child Labour Found at Certified Coffee Farms in Minas Gerais*, Repórter Brasil (Nov. 14, 2023), https://reporterbrasil.org.br/2023/11/starbucks-slave-and-child-labour-found-at-certified-coffee-farms-in-minas-gerais/.
[183] Repórter Brasil, *Behind Starbucks Coffee*, *supra* note 8, at 13.
[184] *Id.*
[185] *Id.* at 12, 13.
[186] *Id.* at 13.

seal from C.A.F.E. Practices.[187] Despite Brazilian labor law mandating employers to provide necessary tools and personal protective equipment for free, workers at Mesas Farm had to buy basic tools such as rakes and bags as well as protective clothing for harvesting coffee on their own or had these items discounted from their wages.[188] Workers at Mesas Farm were only paid around R$ 110 per day, which is less than $20 USD. The farm did not provide workers with space for their lunch breaks so they would have to eat on the ground in the middle of the plantations. The farm also did not provide working toilets so workers would have to go to the bathroom in the bushes or around the trees.[189] The farm owner used Gatos to illegally recruit these workers from the state of Alagoas and failed to sign formal work contracts, in addition to depriving them of humane working conditions.[190]

97. Guilherme de Oliveira manages the Mesas Farm and owns Bom Jesus farm, Pedras farm, Ourizona farm, and the roaster Café Ourizona, all located in Minas Gerais.[191] Only a month prior to modern slave labor being discovered at the Mesas Farm in 2022, Café Ourizona posted on one of its social media accounts that its coffee plantations held C.A.F.E. Practices certification seals.[192]

98. José Eduardo Bernardes is the owner of Bernardes Estate Coffee, which oversees two coffee plantations comprising of 178 hectares and carrying C.A.F.E. Practices certificates. In 2019, he was fined nine times for labor violations, and in 2022, he was charged with over 16 labor violations.[193] These violations include the failure to provide training, receipts for wages,

[187] Hélen Freitas and Poliana Dallabrida, *supra* note 182.
[188] Repórter Brasil, *Behind Starbucks Coffee*, *supra* note 8, at 4, 11.
[189] *Id.* at 11, 12.
[190] *Id.* at 12.
[191] *Id.* at 11.
[192] *Id.*
[193] Repórter Brasil, *Behind Starbucks Coffee*, *supra* note 8, at 14.

personal protective equipment, toilet paper, enough shower spaces, and a place for meals. Workers were trafficked from their hometowns to work on the Bernardes farms but only received signed contracts when they arrived at the farms so that the Bernardes family could claim that the workers came on their own accord and thereby avoid having to provide transportation and accommodations to them, in violation of Brazil's labor laws. As of 2023, Repórter Brasil found that the farm still had many of the same problems that the owner was charged with previously, including the lack of the use of personal protective equipment.[194] Starbucks confirmed that the farm is certified by C.A.F.E. Practices but stated it is investigating Bernardes after these allegations, though it refused to provide Repórter Brasil with more information on the timing and nature of the investigation.[195]

99. Another recent example, from 2023, is the failure of the C.A.F.E. Practices certification program at Fazenda Piedade in Campestre, Minas Gerais, where Repórter Brasil found that workers had to pay R$ 2700 for coffee harvesting machines out of their own pockets, which goes against Brazilian law.[196] Despite this illegal practice, Fazenda Piedade boasted the C.A.F.E. Practices seal. Starbucks responded to reporters with the common refrain that it was "deeply concerned to learn of allegations of labor violations or poor working conditions" at this farm and that it plans "to investigate the concerns" raised by Repórter Brasil.[197]

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[194] *Id.*
[195] *Id.*
[196] Poliana Dallabrida, *Fazenda fornecedora da Starbucks ignora lei e não fornece máquina para colheita de café, dizem trabalhadores* [*Starbucks Supplier Farm Ignores Law and Fails to Provide Coffee Harvesting Machine, Workers Say*], Repórter Brasil (May 12, 2023), https://reporterbrasil.org.br/2023/05/fazenda-fornecedora-da-starbucks-ignora-lei-e-nao-fornece-maquina-para-colheita-de-cafe-dizem-trabalhadores/ (translated using Google Translate).
[197] *Íntegra do Posicionamento da Starbucks Sobre Denúncias de Trabalhadores* [*Full Text of Starbucks' Statement on Worker Complaints*], Repórter Brasil (May 12, 2023), https://reporterbrasil.org.br/2023/05/integra-do-posicionamento-da-starbucks-sobre-denuncias-de-trabalhadores/ (translated using Google Translate).

F. Starbucks knowingly profits from and financially benefits from the use of trafficked and forced adult and child labor in its supply chains and despite having the industry control to effectively end such practices, Starbucks has willfully continued to permit trafficked and forced adult and child labor in its supply chains and has not taken meaningful action to improve its sourcing practices and to prevent these human rights violations.

100. For almost a decade, Starbucks has been called out by news reporters and consumers for human rights abuses taking place in its product supply chain, especially in Brazil where Starbucks maintains a major presence. Cooxupé, Starbucks' main Tier 1 supplier in Brazil, is regularly cited for trafficking and forced labor violations, including having several farms on Brazil's "Dirty List," which is widely publicized, yet, Starbucks has continued to receive its products from those sources. Starbucks continues to hide behind its knowingly deficient C.A.F.E. Practices program for its coffee products. By relying solely on its C.A.F.E. Practices program with no independent verification required or permitted, Starbucks is "validating a situation of omission and collusion with workers' rights abuses in Brazil's coffee farms" given the "widespread picture of human and labor rights violations on coffee farms in Brazil."[198] Given the very high visibility of Starbucks in Brazil and the many public reports about forced labor and trafficking in coffee production, there is no doubt that Starbucks is fully aware that such violations are prominent in its coffee supply chain in Brazil.

101. Based on its own criteria under C.A.F.E. Practices, Starbucks knew or should have known of the illegal use of human trafficking, forced labor, and child labor taking place in its supply chains. The program's economic transparency criteria require suppliers to submit detailed payment information so that Starbucks "know[s] which farms the beans come from,

[198] *ADERE Report to UN Forum*, *supra* note 49, at 2 .

the names of the farmers, and the price paid to each of them for the coffee."[199] Its social responsibility criteria lay out that coffee farmers must protect their workers' rights and that there is zero tolerance for child labor in any form, while its environmental leadership criteria provides that there is zero tolerance for the conversion of natural forest to agricultural production and the use of prohibited pesticides.[200] The Starbucks Code of Conduct, applicable to all Tier-1 Suppliers, which includes Cooxupé, requires compliance with all applicable laws, which would include Brazil's laws prohibiting trafficking and forced labor. However, as numerous media outlets and both governmental and non-governmental organizations have reported, workers' rights are not protected, child labor exists, and dangerous pesticides are being used without protection in the coffee industry in Brazil. When suppliers apply for a C.A.F.E. Practices certification, they must submit information "detailing the entire coffee supply chain" and to maintain an active status in the program, they must undergo reverification regularly.[201] Therefore, Starbucks cannot claim ignorance to what takes place in their supply chains, particularly by suppliers certified through their own verification program. Moreover, Starbucks asserts that when it is made aware of zero tolerance violations, it takes "immediate action, conducting an investigation which could lead to suspending the commercial relationship with a farm until the case has been clarified" and then based on the investigation it may ask the supplier to implement a corrective action plan with the farm in violation.[202] Thus, either Starbucks is blatantly lying about what it does to obtain compliance by all coffee

[199] *C.A.F.E. Practices: Starbucks Approach to Ethically Sourcing Coffee*, Starbucks (Feb. 28, 2024), https://about.starbucks.com/press/2024/cafe-practices-starbucks-approach-to-ethically-sourcing-coffee/ (last visited Apr. 17, 2025).
[200] *Id.*
[201] *Id.*
[202] *Id.*

suppliers in its C.A.F.E. Practices certification system, which includes Cooxupé, and is committing fraud, or, based on its requirements, it knows or should know about trafficking and forced labor in its coffee supply chain and is sourcing from violators despite knowing about such violations.

102. Starbucks has been aware that its C.A.F.E. Practices was not serving its purpose of ensuring ethical practices in its coffee supply chain. In December 2024, Starbucks announced revisions to its C.A.F.E. Practices program. The revisions include a tiered approach; Tier 1 will consist of Zero Tolerance (ZT) indicators that applicants must be in compliance with in order to be approved by the program, and any non-compliance will require immediate corrective action.[203] Tier 1 also includes major and minor indicators, and applicants that receive a noncompliance evaluation will have one year to correct noncompliance with these major or minor indicators. Among other revisions, all applications will now undergo a deforestation assessment to be carried out via satellite imagery of the geo-location data of the farms, and if deforestation is detected then the applicant will be in non-compliance of a ZT indicator and will be required to take corrective action prior to approval. These revised C.A.F.E. Practices program requirements are scheduled to go into effect in Brazil on April 15, 2025 and in all other countries on July 1, 2025. Despite knowing its certification program was falling short of its intended purposes, Starbucks continued to rely on it for years in vetting its suppliers and continued to claim with certainty that it was ethically sourcing its coffee. Cooxupé is a Tier 1 supplier and has faced no consequences for the many violations of the C.A.F.E. Practices standards detailed herein.

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[203] *C.A.F.E. Practices Revision*, Starbucks (Dec. 09, 2024), https://3684091.fs1.hubspotusercontent-na1.net/hubfs/3684091/CAFE_GUI_SupplierGuidance V4.0_SCS_V1-0_121824.pdf.

103. For at least as far back as 2012, Starbucks sources its coffee from Cooxupé, one of the world's largest coffee cooperatives that has over 18,000 members and is Brazil's largest coffee exporter.[204] Cooxupé, a Tier 1 Starbucks supplier, supplies Starbucks with coffee from its member farms. Cooxupé mentions its participation in Starbucks' C.A.F.E. Practices and other certification programs on its website[205] and also developed its own certification program to "go above and beyond these programs to help educate, establish farm-based protocols, provide technical assistance, and offer financial support to implement sustainable change in a way that had never been done before."[206]

104. Starbucks acknowledges and exercises its control over the coffee industry. In its 2022 Form 10-K submitted to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, Starbucks states that "To help ensure the future supply of high-quality green coffee and to reinforce our leadership role in the coffee industry, Starbucks operates ten farmer support centers," which "are staffed with agronomists and sustainability experts who work with coffee farming communities to promote best practices in coffee production designed to improve both coffee quality and yields and agronomy support to address climate change and other impacts."[207]

G. Starbucks knowingly makes misleading and false claims about its success in or intention of eradicating the use of forced labor and child labor in order to allow them to continue to benefit from these human rights abuses without consequence.

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[204] *How Brazil's Largest Coffee Cooperative Developed a World-Class Sustainability Program*, SCS Global Services, https://www.scsglobalservices.com/resources/case-study/sustainable-sourcing-in-the-coffee-industry (last visited Apr. 17, 2025).
[205] *Certificações*, Cooxupé, https://www.cooxupe.com.br/certificacoes/ (last visited Apr. 17, 2025).
[206] SCS Global Services, *supra* note 204.
[207] Starbucks Corporation, *Form 10-K*, U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (2022), https://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/829224/000082922422000058/sbux-20221002.htm, at 8-9.

105. Starbucks states that it "proudly sources 100% arabica coffee from more than 450,000 farmers in 30 markets along "The Coffee Belt" – in Latin America, Asia Pacific and Africa."[208] Starbucks claims that it tracks its "responsible" methods of producing and purchasing goods such as coffee and cocoa.[209]

106. Starbucks provides specific goals and some more vague goals on its consumer-facing website. It states that its "purpose goes far beyond profit" and that it is "people positive – investing in humanity and the well-being of everyone [it] connect[s] with, from [its] partners to coffee farmers to the customers in [its] stores and beyond."[210]

107. Starbucks also states that it strives to be "resource positive" by "giving back more" than it "take[s] from the planet."[211] Starbucks claims on its website that "[g]iven the stressors on coffee and agriculture, including rapid climate change, we feel the responsibility and urgency to help and protect – not only farmer livelihoods but the human connections inherent to coffee," which is why it "is focused squarely on improving coffee productivity, profitability and climate resilience."[212]

108. Starbucks claims that it partakes in ethical sourcing programs including its Global Farmer Fund program, which has committed $100 million in investments to coffee farmers to "renovate and strengthen their farms and farming practice to be even more productive and sustainable".[213] Starbucks later revised this to a "a $50M Global Coffee Farmer Fund, which

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[208] *Starbucks Coffee, Bean-to-Cup*, *supra* note 166.
[209] *Giving More Than We Take*, Starbucks, https://www.starbucks.com/responsibility/planet/ (last visited Apr. 17, 2025).
[210] *Our Company*, Starbucks, *supra* note 5
[211] *Id.*
[212] *Starbucks Coffee, Bean-to-Cup*, *supra* note 166.
[213] *Starbucks Solidifies Pathway to a Planet Positive Future*, Starbucks (Dec. 9, 2020), https://stories.starbucks.com/stories/2020/starbucks-solidifies-pathway-to-a-planet-positive-future/ (last visited Apr. 17, 2025).

provides financing to coffee farmers, and a pledge to donate 100M climate-resilient trees to farmers around the world by 2025." [214]

H. Defendant Starbucks does not have any "ethical" environmental protocols in place in their coffee supply chain and contributes to environmental degradation and harms experienced by farmworkers and local communities in Brazil.

109. In 2020, Starbucks revealed its commitment to becoming a "resource-positive company," which included efforts to donate 100 million coffee trees to farmers.[215] Starbucks claims it is investing in "regenerative agriculture, reforestation, forest conservation and water replenishment in [its] supply chain."[216]

110. In addition to being the world's leading coffee producer, Brazil is also the world's leading pesticide user.[217] According to estimates, the production of 1000 kilograms of green coffee in Brazil necessitates the use of 10 kilograms of pesticides.[218] Reported environmental and health risks from the use of pesticides in coffee farming in Brazil include acute toxicity risks, such as skin irritation or carcinogenicity, and contamination of both surface water and groundwater.[219] One study conducted an environmental risk assessment for the use of pesticides in southern Espirito Santo in Brazil and found that the environment and local residents are both at high risk of contamination from pesticide application.[220] Farm owners in

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[214] *Starbucks Coffee, Bean-to-Cup*, *supra* note 166.
[215] *Starbucks Solidifies Pathway to a Planet Positive Future*, Starbucks (Dec. 9, 2020), https://stories.starbucks.com/stories/2020/starbucks-solidifies-pathway-to-a-planet-positive-future/ (last visited Apr. 17, 2025).
[216] *Giving More Than We Take*, Starbucks, *supra* note 209.
[217] Athina Koutouleas, David B. Collinge, and Anders Ræbild, *Alternative Plant Protection Strategies for Tomorrow's Coffee*, 72 Plant Pathology 409, 410 (2022).
[218] *Id.*
[219] *Id.* at 410-411.
[220] Vagner Tebaldi de Queiroz et al., *Environmental Risk Assessment for Sustainable Pesticide Use in Coffee Production*, 219 Journal of Contaminant Hydrology 18, 27 (2018).

Brazil instruct workers to spray dangerous pesticides on the coffee plants that are so toxic they are banned in the European Union.[221] These pesticides poison the workers, who are not given protective clothing or equipment, and pollute the surrounding environment including local drinking water.[222] These substances that workers are instructed to use are toxic to the point that even skin contact could result in deadly consequences.[223]

111. Starbucks' coffee supply chain actively contributes to deforestation in Brazil. Between 2001 and 2015, coffee farming replaced around two million hectares of forest globally.[224] Despite the false assurances that Starbucks' C.A.F.E. Practices program ensures the farms it certifies meets certain environmental standards, the documented harms perpetuated by these certified coffee farms in Brazil supplying to Starbucks are directly destroying the local environment and contributing to the injuries suffered by workers who are facing health risks and whose human rights are being violated. A Coffee Watch report on Starbuck's role in deforestation in Brazil is forthcoming.

V. HARM TO THE INDIVIDUAL PLAINTIFFS

112. As is detailed in Sections IV B-E, *supra*, trafficking and forced labor under slavery-like conditions is pervasive in coffee harvesting in Brazil. The facts alleged below by the eight Plaintiffs who are filing this complaint are representative examples of the horrific conditions

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[221] *Brazilian Coffee is Sprayed with Deadly Pesticides*, Danwatch (2015), https://old.danwatch.dk/en/undersogelseskapitel/brazilian-coffee-is-sprayed/.
[222] *Id.*
[223] *Café Amargo*, *supra* note 137.
[224] Mikaela Weisse and Elizabeth Goldman, *Just 7 Commodities Replaced an Area of Forest Twice the Size of Germany Between 2001 and 2015*, World Resources Institute (Feb. 11, 2021), https://www.wri.org/insights/just-7-commodities-replaced-area-forest-twice-size-germany-between-2001-and-2015 (last visited Apr. 17, 2025).

endured by the thousands of similarly situated coffee workers that Plaintiffs seek to represent in this class action.

113. Plaintiff John Doe I was under 16 years old in April, 2024, the start of the coffee harvesting season in Brazil. He was living within a Quilombo in the Jequitinhonha Valley region of Minas Gerais, Brazil. He was not attending school at this time. A labor trafficker or Gato approached John Doe I and convinced him to accompany him to a coffee plantation in the South of Minas Gerais. The Gato named the specific plantation where John Doe I would be working and made clear to John Doe I that he was employed by the plantation to recruit workers who would be given good pay and would work under good conditions. Plaintiff John Doe I had previously worked on other coffee plantations in 2022 and 2023. He made some money the prior times and the conditions were not too bad, so he thought that this time would be the same. He and his family were desperate for money so he agreed to go. After a long bus ride of 16 hours, they arrived at the coffee plantation, which consisted of the farms Corrego do Jacu and Paquera. ADERE determined that the Corrego do Jacu and Paquera farms were owned and operated by Marcos Flório de Souza, a member of Cooxupé, which Starbucks calls a Tier 1 supplier of coffee to Defendant Starbucks.

114. After they arrived, John Doe I observed that the Gato was also a supervisor for the plantation. The Gato became very aggressive towards John Doe I. The Gato made him get up at 4 a.m. and ordered him to make food for the workers. The Gato threatened to beat him if he did not follow orders. The other workers who were already at the plantation warned John Doe I that the Gato had beaten others. On the first day of harvesting coffee, John Doe I was not provided with any protective equipment and the Gato made him pick coffee on very steep hills. John Doe I worked 11-12 hours for seven days with no time off. John Doe I could not escape

at this time because he had absolutely no money for a bus, he was in a remote area 16 hours by bus from his home, and he did not know where he was. He was also terrified of the Gato who continued to threaten him with beatings if he did not follow orders. On the eighth day, federal police officers and officials of the Ministry of Labor rescued John Doe I and six other workers. They were also accompanied by representatives of ADERE. After a hearing, the Ministry of Labor found that the coffee plantation was responsible for trafficking John Doe I and forcing him to work under "slavery-like" conditions. After an administrative decision of admissibility by Brazil's government in October 2024, Sítios Corrego do Jacu e Paquera were officially placed on Brazil's "Dirty List" in April 2025.[225]

115. The Ministry of Labor's Inspection Report is on file with IRAdvocates and contains confidential identifying information about John Doe I and the other workers with whom he was rescued. The Report includes details of the conditions under which John Doe I was forced to work. Among other findings, it states that John Doe I was found working barefoot in the field because he was unable to wear shoes after hurting his toe on the property and he also told inspectors he felt pain throughout his body from working, which included carrying over 20 kilograms of coffee bags.[226] The Report also provides the Gato took away the harvesting equipment John Doe I was required to rent for R$ 1,000 (about $174 USD).[227] The Ministry of Labor provided in the Report that this work performed by this minor is "totally inappropriate

[225] *Cadastro de Empregadores Que Tenham Submetido Trabalhadores a Condições Análogas à de Escravo*, Secretaria de Inspeção do Trabalho (Apr.14, 2025), https://www.gov.br/trabalho-e-emprego/pt-br/assuntos/inspecao-do-trabalho/areas-de-atuacao/cadastro_de_empregadores.pdf, at 37, ID 470 [hereinafter "Dirty List"].

[226] Ministério do Trabalho e Emprego, *Relatório de Fiscalização: Marcos Florio de Souza (CPF N. 0.49.727.276-83) Sítio Corrego do Jacu and Paquera*, SUPERINTENDÊNCIA REGIONAL DO TRABALHO E EMPREGO EM MINAS GERAIS, (July 27, 2024) at 24 [hereinafter Sítios Corrego do Jacu and Paquera Inspection Report].

[227] Sítios Corrego do Jacu and Paquera Inspection Report at 17, 113, 118, 176.

for workers of his age group" and constitutes "the worst form[] of child labor."[228] ADERE had investigated the plantation from which John Doe I was rescued and provided details of the horrific conditions there to the Ministry of Labor. The physical conditions at the plantation were so horrendous that the Ministry of Labor described them as "degrad[ing] human dignity" and deemed them as qualifying as "Human Trafficking for the Purposes of Labor Exploitation."[229] The sleeping area was crowded with the other workers and there were not sufficient bathrooms. At the worksite, workers did not have any access to drinking water, water for washing their hands, a place to store, eat, or heat up their lunches, or any shelter for protection from harsh weather. Workers had to eat in the middle of the coffee plantation wherever they could find shade or a space to sit on the ground and they even had to search for privacy to relieve themselves on the plantation since there were no restrooms at the worksite.[230] John Doe I and other workers also faced several risks of physical harm while working, including extreme heat and sunlight exposure, the risk of deafness from operating the heavy machinery, injuries from handling sharp tools, and the risk of venomous snake and insect bites.[231] Despite all of these conditions and work, the Report notes that the rescued workers, including John Doe I, were in debt bondage that began when their employers, acting through the Gato, illegally charged them R$ 350 (about $61 USD) for transportation to the plantation and continued when the employers illegally charged them for groceries and necessary work equipment.[232] Ultimately, John Doe I owed the Gato and the plantation more than he had earned

[228] Sítios Corrego do Jacu and Paquera Inspection Report at 17.
[229] Sítios Corrego do Jacu and Paquera Inspection Report at 9, 13.
[230] Sítios Corrego do Jacu and Paquera Inspection Report at 9, 18–19, 25, 116-17, 157.
[231] Sítios Corrego do Jacu and Paquera Inspection Report at 12, 15, 17, 114-16.
[232] Sítios Corrego do Jacu and Paquera Inspection Report at 19, 24, 116-17.

so he did not receive any compensation.[233] John Doe I confirmed to IRAdvocates in a March 2025 interview that he had endured these conditions.

116. Plaintiff John Doe I suffered serious injury and trauma from being trafficked and forced to work under "slavery-like" conditions harvesting coffee for Starbucks. He brings this action on behalf of himself and all other similarly situated current and former coffee workers trafficked by a Gato to harvest coffee in Minas Gerais under "slavery-like" conditions on plantations supplying to Starbucks.

117. Plaintiffs John Doe II and John Doe III are brothers. They live near each other within a Quilombo in the Jequitinhonha Valley region of Minas Gerais, Brazil. The main coffee harvesting season in Minas Gerais in Brazil is April to August. Plaintiffs John Does II and III had on previous occasions gone together for the season to harvest coffee on various plantations. They would complete the harvest and return to the Quilombo with extra money for their subsistence. Starting with the coffee harvest in 2022, they got caught up in the trafficking and forced labor system operated by Defendant Starbucks' coffee suppliers in Minas Gerais, Brazil.

118. In early April, 2022, at the start of the coffee harvest season, John Does II and III were recruited by a Gato called "Mr. X" (this is a pseudonym because it is certain that he will know who John Does II and III are and retaliate against them). ADERE later determined that Mr. X was a notorious Gato in the Jequitinhonha Valley region of Minas Gerais and often used a system of debt bondage to control his recruits. Mr. X took John Does II and III to a plantation called Fazenda Piedade, which was part of Cooxupé, which supplies to Starbucks. Despite pervasive, serious and open violations of the law at the Piedade farm, as well as prior issues of violations that were brought to Starbucks' attention, see ¶ 99, *supra*, it remains certified by

[233] Sítios Corrego do Jacu and Paquera Inspection Report at 24.

C.A.F.É. Practices, the certification system established by Starbucks.. Mr. X had authority at the Piedade farm as he appeared to be in charge of assigning work to John Does II and III and the other workers followed his direction. John Does II and III found the working conditions miserable and complained to Mr. X, who told them to get to work and if they complained more or refused to work, he would make sure they would never work on any other coffee plantation in the area. Mr. X arranged for John Does II and III to obtain coffee picker machines, boots, goggles, and gloves, and he told them they owed the money to him and it would be deducted from their earnings. The pay they were promised for harvesting coffee was greatly reduced due to deductions for the cost of their equipment and also for gasoline, oil, and maintenance for the coffee picker machines. John Does II and III also endured horrible conditions, including crowded and filthy lodging and inadequate bathrooms. They were not able to leave because of their debt to Mr. X and his threats to blackball them. ADERE conducted an investigation and issued a report that they were trafficked and forced to work under "slavery-like" conditions. At the end of the season, John Does II and III returned to their homes with virtually no money and no equipment. John Does II and III filed a complaint about their experience and a government prosecutor later determined that the debt bondage scheme was illegal.

119. In 2023 at the start of the coffee season, John Does II and III were desperate for money. A different Gato recruited them and promised lucrative work picking coffee. The Gato advanced them the money for transport and initial food supplies. The Gato took them to a farm called Coqueiros, which ADERE determined was part of Cooxupé, which is a Tier 1 supplier to Starbucks. This Gato delivered them to the Coqueiros farm and took them to the farm manager. The Gato made clear that their debts for transport and food, as well as equipment rental, would be deducted from their pay. John Does II and III began work and discovered that

there were horrible working conditions. They complained to the farm manager who threatened them and told them to quit complaining and work. They were unable to leave as they had no money for transport or food to return to their homes. They kept working hoping to pay off their debts and earn enough to go home. One of their co-workers managed to contact ADERE and complain. ADERE investigated and provided their findings to the Ministry of Labor. In approximately 10 days after John Does II and III arrived at the plantation, the Ministry, accompanied by federal police and ADERE, rescued John Does II and III, along with their coworkers.

120. After a hearing, the Ministry of Labor found that the coffee plantation was responsible for trafficking John Does II and III and forcing them to work under "slavery-like" conditions. The Ministry of Labor's Inspection Report is on file with IRAdvocates and contains confidential identifying information about John Does II and III, as well as the other workers they were rescued with. The Report includes details of the conditions under which John Does II and III were forced to work. Among other findings, it states that the workers, who were brought onto the property through clandestine transportation and were not registered as employees, were exposed to "a series of physical, chemical, biological, ergonomic and accident risks, among which the following can be mentioned: exposure to bad weather, heat, solar radiation (non-ionizing); noise and vibration originating from stripping machines; exposure to vapors from the fuel used in the stripping machine; attack by venomous animals, such as snakes, centipedes, spiders and scorpions; poor posture; accidents with stumps, holes, branches of coffee trees and uneven terrain; development of musculoskeletal problems due to intense

physical effort."[234] The Report also states that workers' dormitories were inhospitable; mattresses were of poor quality and wood shavings were used as bed frames, while stoves were located inside the workers' rooms, which did not have any cabinets or doors for storage and privacy.[235] The Report describes the "lack of hygiene and minimum comfort in the accommodations" as a "threat to the health and safety of the workers."[236] The Report also states that the employer not only violated Brazil's 44-hour weekly limit by making working hours go from 7am to 4pm daily including on Saturdays without paying overtime, the employer also illegally deducted the costs of tools, supplies, machinery, cooking gas, gasoline, lubricating oil, food, and transportation to the farm from workers' salaries.[237] John Does II and III confirmed to IRAdvocates in a March 2025 interview that they had endured these conditions.

121. Based on its own investigation and reporting, ADERE publicly named Starbucks as largely responsible for the system of trafficking and forced labor in Brazil's coffee sector. ADERE later received threats due to its report that exposed Starbucks. ADERE does not know specifically who made the threats, but they only occurred after ADERE exposed Starbucks. After an administration decision of admissibility by Brazil's government in October 2023, Coqueiros was officially placed on Brazil's "Dirty List" in April 2024.[238]

122. In 2024, at the start of the coffee harvest in April, again desperate for money, John Doe II went alone with another Gato, Geraldo, who took him to a farm called Facienda Boa Vista.

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[234] Ministério do Trabalho e Emprego, *Relatório de Fiscalização: Rodrigo de Faria Franco (CPF N. 074.521.296.07) Sítio Coqueiros,* SUPERINTENDÊNCIA REGIONAL DO TRABALHO E EMPREGO EM MINAS GERAIS, (July 19, 2023) at 6-7, 46, 64 [hereinafter Sítio Coqueiros Inspection Report].
[235] Sítio Coqueiros Inspection Report at 7, 52, 56, 68, 92.
[236] Sítio Coqueiros Inspection Report at 52.
[237] Sítio Coqueiros Inspection Report at 7-8, 42, 48, 50, 62.
[238] "Dirty List", *supra* note 225, at 48, ID 619.

The farm was owned by the Correa family and supplied to Heringe, which ADERE, based on its initial investigation, believes with reasonable certainty supplies to Starbucks. This farm has been included on Brazil's "Dirty List" since October 2023. Geraldo loaned John Doe II some money for food and transport, which John Doe II had to work off. When he arrived at the plantation, John Doe II contracted Dengue Fever and was unable to work. Geraldo obtained medicine for him and added the cost to his debt. In violation of Brazilian law, John Doe II received no pay for the seven or so days he was very ill with Dengue.

123. The lodging at Facienda Boa Vista was dangerous as it had gas ovens and gasoline storage at the front entrance and there was no other exit. He was very concerned that if there was a fire there would be a huge explosion and he would have no way out. After several weeks of working under difficult conditions, including long walks on steep slopes to reach the coffee, John Doe II left his possessions at the farm and escaped, returning to his home.

124. Plaintiffs John Doe II and III suffered serious injury and trauma from being trafficked and forced to work under "slavery-like" conditions harvesting coffee for Starbucks. They bring this action on behalf of themselves and all other similarly situated current and former coffee workers trafficked by a Gato to harvest coffee in Minas Gerais under "slavery-like" conditions on plantations supplying to Starbucks.

125. Plaintiffs John Doe IV and John Doe V are brothers. They live in the same house with other family members within a Quilombo in the Jequitinhonha Valley region of Minas Gerais, Brazil. In early April of 2023, they were recruited by a Gato with the nickname Ze da Viola to go to work on a coffee plantation in the South of Minas Gerais called São João Farm. The plantation was near the city of Muzambinho. Based on ADERE's subsequent investigation, they determined that São João Farm was part of Cooxupé, which is a Tier 1 supplier to

Starbucks. After an administration decision by Brazil's government in November 2023, São João was officially placed on Brazil's "Dirty List" in April 2024.[239]

126. John Does IV and V told the Gato they could not go because they had no money for bus fare or for food and supplies once they got there. The Gato persuaded them to go by advancing them the money for transport, food and supplies. He indicated that he would take what they owed him from their earnings. They then went with the Gato and rode a bus for around 16 hours to get to the plantation. The Gato delivered them to the farm owner and remained at the farm. John Does IV and V learned that the Gato also worked on the farm when they saw him doing various tasks at the farm.

127. When they arrived, John Does IV and V found horrible conditions on the farm, most of which were violations of Brazilian law. The lodging and bathrooms were filthy and there were no eating or bathroom facilities out in the coffee trees. They were forced to work long hours, from 5 a.m. until dusk. The Gato advanced the money for the groceries they needed to survive while working and added this to their debt. The only market in the area was extremely overpriced and of low quality. John Does IV and V suspected that the market was connected to the farm or to the Gato.

128. In violation of Brazilian law, which requires payment every 15 days, John Does IV and V worked for 40 days without being paid. The Gato then approached them and demanded the money they owed him. The brothers appealed to the farmer to pay them so they could pay the Gato. The farmer did provide a payment for 40 days, but deducted money for gas, oil, and maintenance of the coffee pickers they were using. He also deducted a kickback to the Gato for recruiting them. When they received the greatly reduced pay, they then paid the Gato what

[239] "Dirty List", *supra* note 225, at 26, ID 329.

they owed him. They had almost nothing left. They wanted to leave once they realized they were essentially working hard under miserable conditions for virtually nothing, but they did not have the money for bus fare to return home.

129. After John Does IV and V paid the Gato and were left with no money, conditions got worse for them. Within a few days, they were no longer provided with drinking water in the field. They heard about ADERE from other workers and John Doe IV managed to call and lodge a complaint. Shortly thereafter, ADERE arrived with federal police and Ministry of Labor officials. They rescued John Does IV and V, along with some other workers.

130. After a hearing, the Ministry of Labor found that the coffee plantation was responsible for trafficking John Does IV and V and forcing them to work under "slavery-like" conditions. The Ministry of Labor's Inspection Report is on file with IRAdvocates and contains confidential identifying information about John Does IV and V, as well as the other workers they were rescued with. The Report includes details of the conditions under which John Does IV and V were forced to work. Among other findings, it states that none of the workers were registered as employees or given work contracts, preventing them from accessing government benefits, and they were required to pay for the harvesting machines and blowers and their accompanying gasoline, oil, and maintenance costs, leaving them in debt.[240] Workers were not provided medical exams nor any training on how to safely operate the machines, and they had to purchase their own safety gear and carry gasoline from their lodgings over to the worksite in plastic bottles.[241] The Report states that the "workers were subjected to conditions that

[240] Ministério do Trabalho e Emprego, *Relatório de Fiscalização: João Batista Vieira (CPF 0.42.386.516-18) Sítio São João*, SUPERINTENDÊNCIA REGIONAL DO TRABALHO E EMPREGO EM MINAS GERAIS, (July 24, 2023) at 15-16 [hereinafter Sítio São João Inspection Report].
[241] Sítio São João Inspection Report at 13, 23.

violated human dignity, in a flagrant disregard for worker protection standards."[242] Such conditions in the accommodations included only one bathroom for all the workers, shared bedrooms where gallons of gasoline were stored, "old, torn, and uncomfortable" mattresses without any bed linens for the cold climate, harvesting machines stored in the living room, heaps of trash outside the building due to lack of garbage collection, no wastewater collection system in the building, and no access to water.[243] Such conditions at the worksite included no water available for drinking or handwashing, no restrooms so workers had to defecate in a nearby forest and expose other workers to diseases, and no places for meals or trash disposal.[244] Among other relief, the Ministry ordered the farmer to pay back wages to John Does IV and V and provide them with bus fare back to their home. John Does IV and V confirmed these details to IRAdvocates in a March 2025 interview.

131. Plaintiffs John Does IV and V suffered serious injury and trauma from being trafficked and forced to work under "slavery-like" conditions harvesting coffee for Starbucks. They bring this action on behalf of themselves and all other similarly situated current and former coffee workers trafficked by a Gato to harvest coffee in Minas Gerais under "slavery-like" conditions on plantations supplying to Starbucks.

132. Plaintiffs John Doe VI and John Doe VII are brothers, and Plaintiff John Doe VIII is their cousin. They all reside near each other within a Quilombo in the Jequitinhonha Valley region of Minas Gerais, Brazil. In April, 2024, they were together and a Gato known as Nick Van Dinho approached them to come work on a coffee plantation called Sitio da Ilha, near Alfenas, Brazil in the South of Minas Gerais. They were shown a photo from the farm owner

[242] Sítio São João Inspection Report at 16.
[243] Sítio São João Inspection Report at 7-11, 21.
[244] Sítio São João Inspection Report at 12.

that showed a lush plantation with plenty of coffee beans ripe for harvesting. The Gato said he was working with the farmer and was recruiting labor for this opportunity to work on the Sitio da Ilha farm. They agreed to go.

133. John Does VI, VII, and VIII took a bus for 16 hours and arrived in Alfenas. They were taken to Facendo de Serra, a different plantation than the one they agreed to work on, Sítio da Ilha. Facendo de Serra plantation was nothing like the photo and had much less coffee ready to harvest. The Gato introduced them to the farmer and left John Does VI, VII, and VIII in the farmer's custody. The farmer told them they had to work at a different farm, Facendo de Serra first, and then he would take them to the nicer Sítio da Ilha. Both farms were determined by ADERE to be part of Cooxupé, which is a Tier 1 supplier to Starbucks. While they were not aware of it, at the time John Does VI, VII, and VIII came to work at Facendo de Serra, there was already a complaint on file at the Ministry of Labor regarding the slavery-like conditions at the farm.

134. John Does VI, VII, and VIII went to work at Facendo de Serra because they had no choice. They did not have the funds to return home and they needed to at least earn the money to get home. They worked long days, from 5 a.m. to 4 p.m., harvesting coffee under miserable conditions. While they were working, they discovered that the farmer was cheating them by making them fill up an 80-kilogram basket but telling them it was only 60 kilograms. They were thus cheated when they were paid based on the false weight and there were significant deductions for fuel, oil, and maintenance of the coffee picking machines. After working a few weeks, they were paid almost nothing due to the deductions. They did not have sufficient funds to escape and get transportation home. They were taken to Sítio da Ilha, but it was no better

than Facendo de Serra, and the picture shown to them when they were recruited was not remotely accurate.

135. Shortly after John Does VI, VII, and VIII were taken to Sítio da Ilha, ADERE, federal police officials, and representatives of the Ministry of Labor went to Facendo de Serra to rescue the workers. The workers were not there, and the farmer lied and said they went home. Another worker overheard this and told the enforcement team that the workers were at Sítio da Ilha. The enforcement team went there and rescued John Does VI, VII, and VIII, along with five other workers.

136. After a hearing, the Ministry of Labor found that the coffee plantation was responsible for trafficking John Does VI, VII, and VIII and forcing them to work under "slavery-like" conditions. The Ministry of Labor's Inspection Report is on file with IRAdvocates and contains confidential identifying information about John Does VI, VII, and VIII, as well as the other workers they were rescued with. The Report includes details of the conditions under which John Does VI, VII, and VIII were forced to work. Among other findings, it states that the rescued workers had been working informally without contracts, proper registration, or any government benefits, and were forced to pay for transportation to the farm from their hometowns (R$ 350, or about $61 USD) and other expenses they were not made aware of beforehand by the Gato, such as rent, water, and electricity for their housing and around R$ 2,000 (approximately $348 USD) for the harvesting equipment needed to perform their tasks along with the fuel, oil, and maintenance needed for the machines.[245] The "degrading working

[245] Ministério do Trabalho e Emprego, *Relatório de Fiscalização: Rodrigo de Faria Franco (CPF N. 074.521.296.07) Sítio da Ilha*, SUPERINTENDÊNCIA REGIONAL DO TRABALHO E EMPREGO EM MINAS GERAIS, (July 27, 2024) at 9, 13-16, 22, 26, 85-86, 89, 97 [hereinafter Sítio da Ilha Inspection Report].

conditions" these workers were found in "constitute contempt for the dignity of the human person [] due to the failure to comply with the fundamental rights of the worker."[246] The workers were exposed to numerous risks on the coffee farms, including coming across venomous and dangerous animals, snakes, and insects, all while lacking medical examinations or first aid kits and having to either forego or purchase their own personal protective equipment since none was provided, due to the failure of the employer to implement the government's Rural Work Risk Management Program.[247] Workers did not have access to clean water for drinking or handwashing, bathrooms, or places to rest and eat their meals, and they had to buy their own food and a stove and gas for cooking.[248] The Report states that despite the workers' long work hours, they were not compensated properly for their labor since the farm owner's relative, who measured the coffee they harvested each day, would claim the workers harvested less than they actually did and would not give them receipts to track how much coffee they produced.[249] John Does VI, VII, and VIII confirmed to IRAdvocates in a March 2025 interview that the report accurately described the conditions they endured. Among other relief, the Ministry ordered the farmer to pay back wages to John Does VI, VII, and VIII and provide them with bus fare back to their home. After an administration decision by Brazil's government in September 2024, Sítio da Ilha was officially placed on Brazil's "Dirty List" in April 2025.[250]

137. Plaintiffs John Does VI, VII, and VIII suffered serious injury and trauma from being trafficked and forced to work under "slavery-like" conditions harvesting coffee for Starbucks. They bring this action on behalf of themselves and all other similarly situated current and

[246] Sítio da Ilha Inspection Report at 28.
[247] Sítio da Ilha Inspection Report at 21-23, 26, 88, 104.
[248] Sítio da Ilha Inspection Report at 19-20, 25-26, 83, 86.
[249] Sítio da Ilha Inspection Report at 25-26, 90.
[250] "Dirty List", *supra* note 225, at 34, ID 440.

former coffee workers trafficked by a Gato to harvest coffee in Minas Gerais under "slavery-like" conditions on plantations supplying to Starbucks.

VI. CLAIMS FOR RELIEF

COUNT I

FORCED LABOR BY ALL PLAINTIFFS AND PROPOSED CLASS MEMBERS AGAINST DEFENDANT STARBUCKS

TVPRA, 18 U.S.C. §§ 1589 and 1595

138. Plaintiffs reallege and incorporate by reference all paragraphs previously alleged herein.

139. As victims of systematic trafficking and forced labor, Plaintiffs were deprived of their freedom, separated from their families, and forced to suffer severe physical and mental abuse by being forced to perform hazardous work under miserable conditions that the Brazilian authorities found to be "slavery-like" conditions on coffee plantations operated by Cooxupé that supplies coffee to and is in a venture with Defendant Starbucks. As previously alleged, Cooxupé operates as a single entity and its members act together through it to supply coffee to Starbucks. The Plaintiffs were coerced into going to work on distant coffee plantations through trickery or deception by a Gato, which in all cases, was working for the specific Cooxupé member farm where each of the Plaintiffs was forced to work under slavery-like conditions. Many of the Plaintiffs were subjected to debt bondage schemes and were required to perform hazardous work with dangerous tools, as well as apply pesticides and herbicides without proper training and without safety equipment. Plaintiffs were especially vulnerable to being tricked into forced labor because they were desperate for money, lacked education, and

had little conception of their rights. The coffee harvesting system depends upon an army of vulnerable workers like the Plaintiffs and Members of the Proposed Class to harvest coffee under illegal conditions for maximum profit to Cooxupé and Starbucks.

140. The Cooxupé cooperative member-farmers that supply coffee to Defendant Starbucks subjected Plaintiffs to various forms of psychological coercion and threatened that the workers would never work again if they failed to do what they were told and complained about their conditions. As part of this system of forced labor and trafficking, many of the Plaintiffs were also subjected to physical threats of beatings from either a farmer or a Gato. The farmers orchestrated a lack of options: Plaintiffs were kept on isolated coffee plantations in the South of Minas Gerais, most of them were working off debts to the farmer and/or the Gato that trafficked them, and they had no money to cover transport and other costs to escape to their homes over 16 hours away by bus. They were required to live in squalid conditions in isolation and to regularly perform dangerous acts.

141. The Cooxupé member-farmers exacted labor from the coffee worker Plaintiffs through the means described herein, including trickery and coercion, financial deprivation, debt bondage, isolation on remote coffee plantations, the use of Gatos to lure them under false pretenses, and the constant threat of being blackballed from ever working again on a coffee plantation, coupled with the miserable living and working conditions they endured, lack of proper water and food, insufficient bathrooms and overcrowded sleeping arrangements, all of which provided more than sufficient grounds for the Brazilian government to conclude that all of the Plaintiffs were subject to trafficking and forced labor under "slavery-like" conditions. These facts and findings constitute actionable forced labor under sections 1589 and 1595 (a) of the TVPRA. Further, Defendant Starbucks, with its constant presence in the coffee-

producing areas of Brazil, as well as the well-documented history of forced labor, illegal child labor, and miserable conditions on its coffee plantations in Brazil, knew or recklessly disregarded the facts about this systematic trafficked and forced labor endured by Plaintiffs and Members of the Proposed Class.

142. Under §§ 1589 and 1595 of the TVPRA, Defendant Starbucks is liable if they (1) participated in a venture; (2) knowingly "receiv[ed] anything of value" from the venture; (3) Plaintiffs were subjected to forced labor as defined by § 1589; and (4) knew or should have known that the venture had engaged in forced labor as defined by § 1589. As previously alleged and detailed below, with respect to Defendant Starbucks, the three elements required for liability under the TVPRA are easily satisfied in this case.

Starbucks is Participating in a "Venture" with its Major Tier-1 Coffee Supplier, Cooxupé.

143. Defendant Starbucks is the major and most influential of the coffee companies that source from Cooxupé. As the following allegations establish, Starbucks and Cooxupé are in a venture together based on two complementary tracks. First, Starbucks is in a long-term, continuous business relationship with Cooxupé in which Starbucks has and exerts substantial control over Cooxupé's means of production for their mutual benefit. In addition, Starbucks established and funds C.A.F.E. Practices, a program that allows Cooxupé, as a Tier 1 Supplier, to obscure its violations of trafficking and forced labor laws by getting cover from the "certification" of the C.A.F.E. Practices seal. This allows both companies to market their "sustainable" coffee. The long-term business relationship between Starbucks and Cooxupé significantly benefited from the C.A.F.E. Practices program that allowed Starbucks to increase sales of Cooxupé coffee by branding it as compliant with C.A.F.E. Practices. Cooxupé gained

the world market reach of Starbucks and has a guaranteed market for its coffee from the largest coffee retailer in the world. They have helped each other grow and prosper through their operation of a "venture" for their mutual benefit.

144. Cooxupé was listed as a Tier 1 supplier for Starbucks in 2023 and 2024. Starbucks exercises a great deal of control over its Tier 1 suppliers, including Cooxupé. Starbucks requires these suppliers to sign its "Starbucks Supplier Code of Conduct" and "follow" the provisions of this Code "as a condition of doing business with Starbucks."[251] Among other substantive standards, expectations of all "first-tier" suppliers, including Cooxupé, include:

> ***Compliance with Local Laws and International Regulations:*** ***Suppliers are required to abide by all Applicable Laws []. Where Applicable Law differs from this Supplier Code, we expect suppliers to comply with the more stringent requirements. As used in this Supplier Code, "Applicable Law" means any law, rule, regulation, regulatory interpretation, order, injunction, notice, approval, judgment, or settlement of any national, federal, state, provincial, or local government or governmental department, agency, court, board, or the like that applies to Supplier or its assets or business.***

Starbucks Supplier Code of Conduct at 2 (emphasis added). Defendant Starbucks is very clear that compliance with these provisions is mandatory and Starbucks explicitly claims control to enforce these provisions: "Failure to comply… or failure to work with Starbucks or a third party to correct non-complying situations, are grounds for cancellation of open orders, discontinued use of non-complying production sites, or termination of our business relationship." *Id*. Thus, Starbucks has promised consumers, regulators, shareholders, and the general public that it requires suppliers to comply with "local laws and international

[251] Starbucks Corporation, *Starbucks Supplier Code of Conduct* (revised Dec. 2024), https://content-prod-live.cert.starbucks.com/binary/v2/asset/143-96213.pdf, at 1.

regulations" and that it exercises sufficient control over its Tier-1 suppliers, which includes Cooxupé, to require compliance or face termination of all business with Starbucks.

145. As previously alleged in paragraphs 112-137, *supra*, working on Cooxupé coffee farms, Plaintiffs endured conditions that the Brazilian government described as being trafficked and forced to work under slavery-like conditions in violation of the laws of Brazil. Such conditions also violated ILO Convention Nos. 29 and 105, defining and prohibiting forced labor. Thus, Plaintiffs were forced to work by Cooxupé under conditions that clearly and explicitly violated the Starbucks Supplier Code of Conduct, which itself specifically prohibits suppliers from using any forced or involuntary labor, including slave labor, bonded labor, or indentured labor, as well as the use of any child labor. Starbucks has the authority and control under its Code to require Cooxupé to correct and remediate its unlawful actions in violation of the Code, but elected not to enforce its Code. Both Cooxupé and Starbucks have a shared interest in preserving and benefitting from the cheap labor provided by workers who are trafficked and forced to work under "slavery-like" conditions, including the cheap labor of Plaintiffs and Members of the Proposed Class. Cooxupé's blatant violations of law allowed it and Starbucks to increase profits due to the cheap labor of exploited workers, including Plaintiffs.

146. Starbucks has a long and continuous business relationship with Cooxupé and they share a common purpose. While Starbucks has long resisted transparency and refused for years to disclose its coffee producers, it finally did so in 2023, and Cooxupé is listed as a Tier 1 supplier for 2023 and 2024. These years are the period in which all Plaintiffs were trafficked and forced to work under slavery-like conditions on a Cooxupé farm. As a Tier 1 supplier, Cooxupé is subject to Starbucks' Supplier Code of Conduct. Prior to 2023, Cooxupé supplied

coffee to Starbucks for at least eleven years. As previously alleged, Cooxupé is the largest coffee cooperative in the world and Starbucks is the largest buyer of coffee from Brazil. Cooxupé supplies to Starbucks 40% of the coffee Starbucks imports from Brazil, and Brazil is the largest source of coffee for Starbucks. The relationship between Starbucks and Cooxupé is much more than a mere arms-length buyer-seller relationship; the two companies are in a symbiotic relationship because Starbucks needs a steady, reliable supply of high-quality Brazilian coffee and Cooxupé needs the extraordinarily large market for its coffee that Starbucks provides. They have prospered together as they have grown together through their venture. Both companies benefit from and are heavily dependent upon their mutual success and increased profits from the low cost of trafficked and forced labor.

147. Both Starbucks and Cooxupé claim that their practices are "sustainable" and in compliance with law. In today's coffee market, such assertions are critical to success. Cooxupé relies heavily on its certifications from "C.A.F.E. Practices," the previously discussed Starbucks-supported certification system that is a mere sham providing cover for Starbucks and Cooxupé to falsely claim to be compliant with international human rights standards. As demonstrated in ¶¶ 88-104, *supra*, C.A.F.E. Practices has repeatedly been shown to "certify" farms that have serious problems with trafficking, forced labor, and other human rights violations. C.A.F.E. Practices was developed by Starbucks and is operated and paid for by Starbucks as a service to Cooxupé and other Tier 1 Suppliers to allow them to sell their coffee and market it as "sustainable" because it has the weight of the Starbucks/C.A.F.E. Practices seal, which is nothing more than a very successful Starbucks marketing scheme. Both Starbucks and Cooxupé jointly publish false claims about conditions on Cooxupé farms producing for Starbucks by citing to the C.A.F.E. Practices verification seal as proof of

"sustainability." They jointly benefit from their collusion in informing consumers that C.A.F.E. Practices ensures the quality and human rights compliance of coffee sourced from Cooxupé farms. As Starbucks claims that 94.86% of all of their Brazilian farms are certified by C.A.F.E. Practices, see ¶ 90, *supra*, this means that virtually all Cooxupé farms, including the specific farms where Plaintiffs were forced to endure slavery-like conditions, are within the C.A.F.E. Practices system and are collaborating with Starbucks for their mutual benefit.

148. In addition to mutually benefitting coffee sales for both companies, Cooxupé's participation in Starbucks' C.A.F.E. Practices program is a clear demonstration of the degree of control that Starbucks has over its Tier-1 Suppliers, including Cooxupé. The Code of Conduct that Starbucks applies to its Tier-1 Suppliers, as noted in ¶ 144, *supra*, requires suppliers like Cooxupé to actually comply with the requirements to continue doing business with Starbucks. Starbucks, among other available tools, uses the Starbucks self-verification scheme of C.A.F.E. Practices to claim to the public that each of its suppliers meets the standards. While, as noted, C.A.F.E. Practices appears to be a sham, see ¶¶ 88-104, *supra*, it certainly emphasizes that Starbucks in fact has the contractual control to require Cooxupé to allow its member farms to be subjected to regular verifications (whether they are properly performed and reported or not). When more Cooxupé farms where workers were trafficked to and forced to work under slavery-like conditions were named in the April 2025 Dirty List, Starbucks responded by emphasizing the control it has over its suppliers and that it ensures compliance. Starbucks stated: "Suppliers are required to comply with our Supplier Code of

Conduct. We are actively engaged with farms to monitor adherence to our standards and each supply chain is required to undergo reverification regularly."[252] Starbucks continued:

> The cornerstone of our approach to buying coffee is Coffee and Farmer Equity (C.A.F.E.) Practices, which was one of the coffee industry's first set of ethical sourcing standards when it launched in 2004, and we continuously work to improve the standard. As you may know, C.A.F.E. Practices was developed in collaboration with Conservation International. C.A.F.E. Practices is a verification program that measures farms against economic, social, and environmental criteria, all designed to promote transparent, profitable, and sustainable coffee growing practices while also protecting the well-being of coffee farmers and workers, their families, and their communities. To maintain an active status in the program, each supply chain is required to undergo reverification regularly.[253]

This is not the language of an arms-length economic transaction. Starbucks claims control over its Tier-1 Suppliers, including Cooxupé, to require compliance with its standards and require submission to verification processes. Further, Starbucks uses the language of long-term partnership with its coffee farmers, not cold one-time coffee transactions. The reality of this partnership is that Starbucks funds and operates C.A.F.E. Practices to allow Starbucks and Cooxupé to claim to consumers their coffee is "sustainable," allowing both companies to sell more coffee to their mutual benefit.

149. Starbucks and Cooxupé also share profit and risk within their venture. For example, during the severe drought now plaguing Brazil's coffee sector, both companies face losses from reduced coffee production and are cooperating together to face this crisis. Their collaboration is driven by their mutual desire to maximize coffee production, which leads to increased profits for both of them.

150. Cooxupé's member-farmers have also received financial benefits from participating in

[252] Starbucks' entire response was published by *Repórter Brazil*: https://reporterbrasil.org.br/2025/04/integra-produtores-cafe-lista-suja/
[253] *Id*.

Starbucks' C.A.F.E. Practices program. Cooxupé's 2021 Management Report and Financial Statements reveals that a transfer of R$ 973,665 was made to a group of 39 cooperative members providing coffee for the C.A.F.E. Practices from Starbucks as "award and recognition."[254] This means that Starbucks is directly incentivizing Cooxupé farms to improve their quality and meet the Starbucks standards. Starbucks is investing in its long-term relationship with Cooxupé. The report also reveals that Starbucks representatives visited the cooperative in November 2021 to see several facilities and visit farms participating in C.A.F.E. Practices,[255] while Cooxupé's 2024 Sustainability Report reveals that in June 2024, the director of Starbucks' Global Farm Support Center (FSC) and agronomists from Starbucks' Brazil's FSC visited Cooxupé and met with producers who participate in the C.A.F.E. Practices program,[256] demonstrating that Starbucks was exercising significant quality control and logistical oversight over Cooxupé's operations. Also, it reinforces that Starbucks views investing resources and logistical support in Cooxupé member-farmers as building and strengthening a long-term, mutually beneficial relationship with Cooxupé.

151. Starbucks is the largest single source of Cooxupé's income from coffee sales and 40% of Starbucks' exports from Brazil to the United States are sourced from Cooxupé. See ¶ 72, *supra*. Starbucks' ongoing support of Cooxupé through purchasing coffee despite Cooxupé's systematic use of trafficked and forced labor allows Cooxupé farmers to increase their profits

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[254] Cooxupé, *Management Report and Financial Statements (As of December 31, 2021 and 2020, accompanied by the opinions of the independent auditors and Fiscal Board)* (May 2022), https://www.cooxupe.com.br/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Cooxupe-Management_Report_2021_EN_Reviewed-.pdf, at 49.

[255] *Id.* at 58.

[256] Cooxupé, *Compromisso Sustentável: Relatório de Sustentabilidade e Demonstrações Financeiras Cooxupé 2024 | 2023* [*Sustainable Commitment: Cooxupé Sustainability Report and Financial Statements 2024 | 2023*] (Mar. 2025), https://www.cooxupe.com.br/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/COMPLETO-WEB.pdf, at 16 (translated using Google Translate).

through cheaper labor costs of forced laborers and also allows Starbucks to reduce its own costs for coffee. Starbucks is willing to ignore the law and its own Code of Conduct to ensure its supply of Cooxupé's coffee, especially during this period of increased demand during the ongoing drought that began in 2023. Cooxupé member-farmers benefit greatly from having a guaranteed market for their coffee without regard to their systematic violation of trafficking and forced labor laws.

152. Embracing the mutually beneficial partnership between Starbucks and Cooxupé, in a video published on Cooxupé's YouTube channel, Michelle Burns, Starbucks' Executive Vice President of Global Coffee, Social Impact, and Sustainability, states "Cooxupé is an incredibly important partner to us. As our largest supplier in the country of Brazil, building together with us over the last decade, the relationship, the trust, the partnership that we feel at every level is absolutely integral to us, we couldn't be more proud and also more grateful that we see a future together. We know that we will continue to grow as a company and we envision…many more stores around the world, and Cooxupé and Brazil…will be an integral part of our growth strategy."[257] She also goes on to say that Starbucks thanks everyone at Cooxupé for everything they do "on behalf of coffee" and refers to them as "the leader in the world" that Starbucks relies on "heavily" and is "pleased to work together towards growing a sustainable future of coffee." There can be no stronger evidence of a long-term, mutually beneficial, symbiotic relationship between Starbucks and Cooxupé.

153. Starbucks' conduct has established and maintained an organized venture with Cooxupé that depends upon a steady supply of trafficked and forced labor of coffee workers, many of

[257] Cooperativa Cooxupé, *Cooxupé em Foco - Starbucks*, YouTube (July 19, 2022), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSW5ObCRGcc, at 3:44-5:05.

them working under horrible conditions on Cooxupé farms, including Plaintiffs and Members of the Proposed Class.

Starbucks knowingly received something of value from the "venture."

154. Based on section 1595 of the TVPRA, "whoever knowingly benefits" from forced labor as defined by section 1589 is liable. Starbucks knowingly benefits from the ongoing trafficked and forced labor of coffee workers. The main benefit is that Starbucks receives coffee from Cooxupé at lower prices that are attributable to cheaper labor from workers who are trafficked and forced to work under slavery-like conditions. If Starbucks actually imposed its Code of Conduct on Cooxupé, compliance with labor and environmental standards would greatly increase Cooxupé's costs resulting in more expensive coffee for Starbucks. Instead, Starbucks turns a blind eye towards the systematic use of trafficked and forced labor by Cooxupé in Brazil so that both companies enjoy increased profits from the abuse of coffee workers, including Plaintiffs and Members of the Proposed Class. Indeed, Starbucks goes a step further by working with Cooxupé within the C.A.F.E. Practices scheme to obscure Cooxupé's TVPRA violations.

155. To protect its system of cheap labor on Cooxupé farms, Starbucks, along with Cooxupé, falsely claims to the public that C.A.F.E. Practices, the Starbucks system of monitoring and certification, ensures that Cooxupé farms are compliant with applicable laws and the Starbucks Supplier Code of Conduct. The public accepts this elegantly dressed scheme as true, and allows Starbucks and Cooxupé to continue to profit from the trafficked and forced labor of coffee workers, including Plaintiffs and Members of the Proposed Class.

156. Defendant Starbucks, in falsely promoting Cooxupé's coffee as compliant with its Code of Conduct and as certified by C.A.F.E. Practices, gains a significant financial benefit from coffee beans without having to pay a reasonable price for the labor required to harvest this labor-intensive product. In short, the prices Starbucks pays for coffee largely reflect the systematic exploitation of coffee workers, including Plaintiffs and Members of the Proposed Class.

Plaintiffs were subjected to "forced labor" in violation of § 1589 (a).

157. As previously alleged, all Plaintiffs were trafficked by a Gato and forced to work on a Cooxupé member farm. According to specific findings by the Brazilian government, the Plaintiffs were forced to endure "slavery-like conditions." See paragraphs 112-137, *supra*.

158. Section 1589 (a) of the TVPRA provides "[w]hoever knowingly provides or obtains the labor or services of a person by any one of, or by any combination of, the following means— (1) by means of force, threats of force, physical restraint, or threats of physical restraint to that person or another person; [or] (2) by means of serious harm or threats of serious harm to that person or another person" is subject to liability for imposing forced labor.

159. The ILO has identified eleven distinct indicators of forced labor that add dimension to the term as used in section 1589 (a) of the TVPRA:

> abuse of vulnerability; deception; restriction of movement; isolation; physical and sexual violence; intimidation and threats; retention of identity documents; withholding of wages; debt bondage; abusive working and living conditions; and excessive overtime.

INT'L LABOUR ORG., ILO INDICATORS OF FORCED LABOUR 2 (2012) (hereinafter "ILO FORCED LABOUR INDICATORS"). However, not all indicators are required to establish forced labor; a single indicator may be sufficient.[258]

160. The conditions under which Plaintiffs were trafficked and forced to work establish nearly all of the ILO indicators. Plaintiffs were inherently vulnerable due to their lack of education and lack of knowledge about their rights. Further they were desperate for money, making them willing to take a risk in going with a Gato to obtain work. Further, virtually all of them were deceived by the Gato regarding actual working conditions and payment of wages. All of them were either threatened with physical violence or with assertions that they would never work again if they complained. They were all isolated on remote coffee plantations and were unable to leave due to a lack of money. Most of them were victims of a debt bondage scheme and had much of their wages withheld to pay unlawful deductions. All of them were forced to work overtime beyond the legal working hours under the laws of Brazil and were forced to endure abusive living and working conditions. See paragraphs 112-137, *supra*. The referenced findings by the Brazilian government that Plaintiffs were all trafficked and forced to endure "slavery-like conditions" is highly probative on the issue of whether they were subjected to "forced labor."

[258] The ILO states that "[t]he presence of a single indicator in a given situation may in some cases imply the existence of forced labour. However, in other cases you may need to look for several indicators which, taken together, point to a forced labour case." ILO FORCED LABOUR INDICATORS, *supra*, at 2.

Starbucks knew or should have known that their venture partner Cooxupé engaged in forced labor as defined by § 1589 (a).

161. Over the years, going back to at least 2016, Starbucks has been featured in various articles and reports as a coffee company in Brazil that sources from Cooxupé farms that utilize trafficked and forced labor to harvest coffee. *See, e.g.*, paragraphs 91-99, *supra*. These reports provided Starbucks with actual notice that it is benefitting from trafficked and forced labor in coffee harvesting. Rather than address the issue effectively, Starbucks has issued denials and reiterated its false claim that C.A.F.E. Practices has accurately certified that Starbucks' coffee farms are free from trafficked and forced labor.

162. Starbucks claims in its Code of Conduct that its Tier-1 suppliers, which include Cooxupé, "must provide transparency into their operations" whenever they are "requested to do so" and suppliers are also subjected to compliance verifications " conducted by Starbucks or a third party." Code of Conduct at 2, 6. Unless Starbucks admits this is a complete fabrication, a reasonable inference from this assertion is that Starbucks knows or certainly should know what conditions are like on the farms of its Tier 1 suppliers, which include Cooxupé farms, where Plaintiffs were trafficked and forced to work under slavery-like conditions. In response to learning that farms belonging to its Tier 1 supplier were on the 2025 Dirty List, Starbucks affirmatively claimed it knows what is going on at all of its suppliers: "We are actively engaged with farms to monitor adherence to our standards and each supply chain is required to undergo reverification regularly . . . [and that] We have procedures in place to monitor the Brazil dirty list to mitigate the potential for coffee to come from a farm on the list to Starbucks."[259]

[259] See *supra* note 252.

163. In 2023, ADERE issued a report that specifically identified Starbucks as benefiting from coffee harvested from farms the Brazilian government found were subjecting their workers to "slavery like conditions." Starbucks did not change its actual practices as a result of this Starbucks-specific complaint, but ADERE received serious threats following their complaint.

164. Starbucks has been on notice for years that Cooxupé, its Tier 1 coffee supplier in Brazil, has been involved in trafficking and forced labor that required coffee workers to endure "slavery-like conditions." Starbucks' knowledge was specific and current that coffee workers were subjected to the very same unlawful conditions that Plaintiffs were forced to endure. As detailed in Section V, *supra*, all four of the Cooxupé farms from which Plaintiffs were rescued were named on the "Dirty List" in either April 2024 or April 2025, which has been published by the Brazilian government and is available to the public through its website online. As detailed in Section IV, *supra*, reports of forced labor and "slavery-like conditions" on coffee farms in Brazil, and particularly on coffee farms certified by Starbucks' C.A.F.E. Practices program including farms that are Cooxupé members, have been published and widely circulated since at least 2016. In light of many of these reports, Starbucks has been contacted for comment by reporters and has even issued statements in response to these allegations, indicating their acknowledgement of these media and government reports. For example, in their response to Repórter Brasil's findings in 2023 on Fazienda Piedade, Starbucks put out a statement asserting that "We take seriously any allegations of labor violations or poor working conditions at the farms we source from" and "As soon as we get an allegation of a violation of our zero-tolerance standards, we stop any plans to purchase coffee from farms in question until we can verify that they are in full compliance with our

stringent ethical sourcing requirements."[260] Similarly, in response to the January 2024 NCL lawsuit in which Cooxupé is named, Starbucks wrote a letter stating "In instances where Starbucks is notified of alleged violations, we take immediate action. We conduct an investigation that may lead to suspending the commercial relationship with a farm, or asking the farm to create a plan describing how the issue will be corrected."[261] This indicates that Starbucks exercises oversight and control over its suppliers, and based on its own assertions, certainly should be aware that trafficked and forced labor is an endemic problem within its coffee supply chain in Brazil. Despite these assertions, Starbucks continued to source from Cooxupé in 2024.

165. The forced labor perpetuated by the Starbucks-Cooxupé venture has caused Plaintiffs to sustain significant injuries, as well as pain and suffering, extreme and severe mental anguish, and emotional distress. Plaintiffs are thereby entitled to compensatory and punitive damages in amounts to be proven at trial.

166. Starbucks as a co-venturer with Cooxupé is jointly and severally liable with Cooxupé for the injuries caused to the Plaintiffs by the venture's forced labor system.

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[260] *Full Text of Starbucks' Statement on Worker Complaints*, *supra* note 197.

[261] *Message from Michelle Burns: Understanding Starbucks Commitment to Ethically Sourced Coffee*, Starbucks (Jan. 10, 2024), https://about.starbucks.com/press/2024/message-from-michelle-burns-understanding-starbucks-commitment-to-ethically-sourced-coffee/ (last visited Apr. 17, 2025).

COUNT II

TRAFFICKING COFFEE WORKERS AND SUBJECTING THEM TO FORCED LABOR

BY ALL PLAINTIFFS AND PROPOSED CLASS MEMBERS AGAINST DEFENDANT STARBUCKS

TRAFFICKING VICTIMS PROTECTION ACT, 18 U.S.C. §§ 1590 & 1595

167. Plaintiffs reallege and incorporate by reference all paragraphs previously alleged herein.

168. As previously alleged, Plaintiffs were all subjected to forced labor under slavery-like conditions on coffee plantations controlled by Cooxupé that supply coffee to Starbucks. In addition, all Plaintiffs were trafficked to work on the coffee plantations by a Gato, a labor broker who knowingly misrepresented the nature and terms of the work Plaintiffs would be doing if they came with him. In many of the cases, the Gatos also established a debt bondage relationship with the Plaintiffs. The Gatos all had direct relationships with coffee farmers and fulfilled the farmers' requests for workers. The Gatos brought the Plaintiffs to coffee plantations in Southern Minas Gerais, Brazil, and transferred control over the trafficked workers to the coffee farmers who are members of Cooxupé. The farmers forced Plaintiffs to work under slavery-like conditions, as previously alleged. The Cooxupé coffee farmers therefore knowingly harbored the Plaintiffs as trafficked workers. See ¶¶ 112-37, *supra*.

169. Starbucks, as the world's dominant coffee brand, is involved in the coffee production process in Brazil, its largest supplier of coffee. Starbucks provides significant and reliable financial support to Cooxupé farms. Since Starbucks elevates Cooxupé to the status of a Tier 1 supplier, the farmers within Cooxupé have a steady and virtually guaranteed source of income

from Starbucks. All of the Plaintiffs were coerced into working for a Cooxupé farm by trickery and deception and they were required to work under slavery-like conditions. Plaintiffs were especially vulnerable to being tricked into forced labor because they lacked education, did not understand their legal rights, and were desperate for money.

170. All of the Plaintiffs were tricked and deceived by Gatos, labor brokers who convinced them to travel with the Gatos to the South of Minas Gerais to get "good" jobs harvesting coffee. Instead, when they arrived at the coffee plantations, as previously alleged, Plaintiffs were forced to work under slavery-like conditions. As part of this system, Plaintiffs were placed on remote coffee plantations and lacked the funds to return home. They had no choice but to work until they were rescued or earned enough money to travel back to their homes.

171. Starbucks gains significant financial advantage from its direct involvement with its Tier 1 coffee suppliers, including Cooxupé. By providing support for Cooxupé's plantations, Starbucks is able to rely on the plantations as a steady source for coffee beans. Starbucks' ongoing support through purchasing coffee from Cooxupé farmers using trafficked and forced labor is material support that keeps these farmers in business without requiring them to stop their illegal use of forced labor. Only through Starbucks' financial support have the Cooxupé coffee farmers been able to sustain their farming operations, making Starbucks, through their venture, directly responsible for the Plaintiffs' being compelled to work under slavery-like conditions on the farms.

172. Based on section 1595 of the TVPRA, "whoever knowingly benefits" from trafficking as defined by section 1590 (a) is liable. As previously alleged in paragraphs 154-56, *supra*, Starbucks knowingly benefited from the trafficking and forced labor of workers, including Plaintiffs, in the coffee sector.

173. As previously alleged in paragraphs 143-53, *supra*, Starbucks is a participant with Cooxupé in a coffee supply chain "venture" that they "knew or should have known" engaged in the trafficking of workers to feed the system that requires the cheap labor of large numbers of workers.

174. Starbucks' conduct has established and maintained an organized system that depends upon the cheap labor of vulnerable workers, most of whom, like Plaintiffs, were trafficked. In addition, Starbucks is directly liable for injuries Plaintiffs suffered from trafficking because Starbucks' greenwashing of Cooxupé's trafficking through the C.A.F.E. Practices scheme, see ¶¶ 88-104, 143, 147-48, "obstructs, attempts to obstruct, or in any way interferes with or prevents the enforcement of this section [making trafficking a violation]." 28 U.S.C. § 1590 (b). Thus, regardless of whether Starbucks is in a "venture" with Cooxupé, Starbucks is directly liable under section 1590 (b) for obstructing or obscuring Cooxupé's trafficking violations.

175. This system for which Starbucks and Cooxupé are responsible has caused the Plaintiffs to sustain significant injuries as well as pain and suffering, extreme and severe mental anguish, and emotional distress. Plaintiffs are thereby entitled to compensatory and punitive damages in amounts to be proven at trial.

176. Starbucks as a co-venturer with Cooxupé is jointly and severally liable with Cooxupé for the injuries caused to the Plaintiffs by the venture's forced labor system.

COUNT III

STARBUCKS AIDS AND ABETS THE COOXUPÉ VENTURE'S VIOLATIONS OF THE TVPRA

BY ALL PLAINTIFFS AND PROPOSED CLASS MEMBERS AGAINST DEFENDANT STARBUCKS

177. Plaintiffs reallege and incorporate by reference all paragraphs previously alleged herein.

178. As previously alleged, Plaintiffs were all trafficked and subjected to forced labor under slavery-like conditions on coffee plantations controlled by Cooxupé that supply coffee to Starbucks. Each of the Cooxupé farmers that subjected Plaintiffs to trafficking and forced labor are members of the Cooxupé cooperative.

179. Cooxupé and its member farms are in violation of §§ 1589, 1590, and 1595 of the TVPRA. Cooxupé consists of a venture between each of its member farms, including those that subjected Plaintiffs to trafficking and forced labor. Cooxupé requires membership of each farm in its cooperative and imposes standards on the farms. In exchange, Cooxupé handles all aspects of promoting and selling the coffee beans for its member farms. In particular, Cooxupé manages the relationship with Starbucks on behalf of its member farms. Thus, Cooxupé and its member farms, including those that subjected Plaintiffs to trafficking and forced labor, are in a long term, mutually beneficial relationship. Cooxupé and its member farms depend upon each other for income, and they share the risks of the coffee business together. If there are conditions that impact the price of coffee or sales to large multinationals like Starbucks, then Cooxupé and its member farms are jointly impacted.

180. Cooxupé and its member farms, including those that subjected Plaintiffs to trafficking and forced labor, received and continue to receive something of value from their venture. They receive increased profits from relying on cheap labor from workers that are trafficked and forced to work under miserable conditions. Further, Cooxupé members benefit from Cooxupé's direct and long-term relationship with Starbucks, which assures them of a reliable, steady, and long-term buyer of their coffee. Being a member of Cooxupé also gains them access to benefits from C.A.F.E. Practices, including obscuring their violations of forced labor and trafficking laws and direct cash payments from Cooxupé for meeting target standards. See ¶¶ 147-49, *supra*. Further, because Cooxupé is a Tier-1 Supplier to Starbucks, its members are eligible for training and support from the Starbucks Farm Support Centers.

181. Cooxupé and its member farms, including those that subjected Plaintiffs to trafficking and forced labor, knew or should have known that their venture engaged in trafficking and forced labor practices as defined by §§ 1589 and 1590 of the TVPRA. As previously alleged and detailed, there is overwhelming evidence of reports of forced labor on Starbucks supplier coffee farms, including those within Cooxupé. See Sections IV B-E, *supra*. In addition, the Cooxupé member farms, including those that subjected Plaintiffs to trafficking and forced labor, are certainly aware of trafficking and forced labor they facilitate on their own farms.

182. As previously alleged, Plaintiffs herein were trafficked and forced to work under slavery-like conditions in violation of §§ 1589 and 1590 of the TVPRA. See ¶¶ 139-176, *supra*.

183. Defendant Starbucks had knowledge of the forced labor and trafficking violations of the Cooxupé venture by its member farms. See Sections IV B-E and ¶¶ 161-64, *supra*. Despite this knowledge, Starbucks provided substantial assistance to Cooxupé for the benefit of its member farms within the venture. This substantial assistance includes:

- By agreement with its Tier 1 supplier Cooxupé, Starbucks provides a steady, certain, and reliable long-term market for Cooxupé members to sell their coffee;
- Starbucks provides cover for Cooxupé members by promoting them as meeting the standards of C.A.F.E. Practices when in fact Starbucks does little to monitor or verify the compliance of Cooxupé farms with the standards. Starbucks' promotion of the farms, regardless of compliance, allows the Cooxupé members to sell to discerning consumers all over the world who buy Starbucks coffee only because they trust that the C.A.F.E. Practices seal means that the coffee is produced in compliance with the Starbucks Code of Conduct, when in fact it is harvested by workers who were trafficked and forced to work under slavery-like conditions;
- As previously alleged, Starbucks, through C.A.F.E. Practices, provides logistical and financial support to the Cooxupé members; and
- Starbucks provides world-wide marketing and advertising to promote the sale of its coffee, which directly benefits and increases the sales of its Tier 1 supplier, Cooxupé, and its members.

184. By providing knowing and substantial assistance to the Cooxupé venture, Defendant Starbucks aided and abetted the trafficking and forced labor violations perpetrated by the Cooxupé venture causing injury to the impacted workers, including Plaintiffs herein. Defendant Starbucks, as an aider and abettor of these crimes, is jointly and severally liable for Plaintiffs' injuries.

COUNT IV

STARBUCKS AIDS AND ABETS COOXUPÉ'S VIOLATIONS OF BRAZILIAN LAW PROHIBITING TRAFFICKED AND FORCED LABOR

BY ALL PLAINTIFFS AND PROPOSED CLASS MEMBERS AGAINST DEFENDANT STARBUCKS

185. Plaintiffs reallege and incorporate by reference all paragraphs previously alleged herein.

186. As previously alleged, Plaintiffs were all trafficked and subjected to forced labor under slavery-like conditions on coffee plantations controlled by Cooxupé that supply coffee to Starbucks. Each of the Cooxupé farmers that subjected Plaintiffs to trafficking and forced labor are members of the Cooxupé cooperative.

187. Cooxupé and its member farms are in violation of the laws of Brazil prohibiting trafficking and forced labor, including Law No. 13.344/2016, Article 149 (Law No. 10,803)(prohibiting forced labor) and Article 149-A (prohibiting trafficking) of the Brazilian Criminal Code. Starbucks aided and abetted its Cooxupé plantations in systematically violating these laws and causing injury to the Plaintiffs.

188. As previously alleged, Plaintiffs herein were trafficked and forced to work under slavery-like conditions in violation of the laws of Brazil. See ¶¶ 112-137 and 139-76, *supra*.

189. Defendant Starbucks had knowledge of the forced labor and trafficking violations of Cooxupé and its member farms. See Sections IV B-E, *supra*. Despite this knowledge, Starbucks provided substantial assistance to Cooxupé for the benefit of its member farms. This substantial assistance includes:

- By agreement with its Tier 1 supplier Cooxupé, Starbucks provides a steady, certain, and reliable long-term market for Cooxupé members to sell their coffee;
- Starbucks provides cover for Cooxupé members by promoting them as meeting the standards of C.A.F.E. Practices when in fact Starbucks does little to monitor or verify the compliance of Cooxupé farms with the standards. Starbucks' promotion of the farms, regardless of compliance, allows the Cooxupé members to sell to discerning consumers all over the world who buy Starbucks coffee only because they trust that the C.A.F.E. Practices seal means that the coffee is produced in compliance with the Starbucks Code of Conduct, when in fact it is harvested by workers who were trafficked and forced to work under slavery-like conditions;
- As previously alleged, Starbucks, through C.A.F.E. Practices, provides logistical and financial support to the Cooxupé members; and
- Starbucks provides world-wide marketing and advertising to promote the sale of its coffee, which directly benefits and increases the sales of its Tier 1 supplier, Cooxupé, and its members.

190. By providing knowing and substantial assistance to Cooxupé and its member farms, Defendant Starbucks aided and abetted the trafficking and forced labor violations perpetrated by the Cooxupé member farms causing injury to the impacted workers, including Plaintiffs herein. Defendant Starbucks, as an aider and abettor of these violations of Brazilian law, is jointly and severally liable for Plaintiffs' injuries.

COUNT V

UNJUST ENRICHMENT

BY ALL PLAINTIFFS AND PROPOSED CLASS MEMBERS AGAINST DEFENDANT STARBUCKS

191. Plaintiffs reallege and incorporate by reference all paragraphs previously alleged herein.

192. As previously alleged, Starbucks has financially benefited from the trafficked and forced labor of Plaintiffs and Members of the Proposed Class.

193. It is unjust for Starbucks to retain this benefit when trafficking and forced labor is unlawful under Brazilian and international law. Indeed, each of the eight Plaintiffs was found by the Brazilian government to have been unlawfully trafficked and forced to work under "slavery-like conditions."

194. It is not fair or just for Starbucks to retain the benefit of the trafficked and forced labor of Plaintiffs and Members of the Proposed Class when Starbucks promised in its Code of Conduct to prevent these illegal practices and intentionally failed to follow through.

195. Plaintiffs and Members of the Proposed Class seek financial restitution, attorney's fees, costs, and any other just and proper relief available under law.

COUNT VI

NEGLIGENT SUPERVISION

BY ALL PLAINTIFFS AND PROPOSED CLASS MEMBERS AGAINST DEFENDANT STARBUCKS

196. Plaintiffs reallege and incorporate by reference all paragraphs previously alleged herein.

197. Starbucks knew or should have known that trafficked and forced laborers were working on Cooxupé coffee plantations within its Tier 1 supply chain.

198. The Cooxupé plantations were servants or agents of Starbucks.

199. By the terms of its Code of Conduct, Starbucks exercised control over the Cooxupé plantations and failed to supervise the plantations and enforce its Code of Conduct, despite that it knew or should have known the Cooxupé plantations were using trafficked and forced labor.

200. Plaintiffs and Members of the Proposed Class seek financial restitution, attorney's fees, costs, and any other just and proper relief available under law.

COUNT VII

INTENTIONAL INFLICTION OF EMOTIONAL DISTRESS

BY ALL PLAINTIFFS AND PROPOSED CLASS MEMBERS AGAINST DEFENDANT STARBUCKS

201. Plaintiffs reallege and incorporate by reference all paragraphs previously alleged herein.

202. Starbucks engaged in extreme and outrageous conduct by knowingly perpetuating conditions allowing and encouraging trafficked and forced laborers to work on Cooxupé coffee plantations under conditions the Brazilian government described as "slavery-like conditions." As per its own Code of Conduct, Starbucks has significant control over these coffee plantations but failed to exercise it to prevent serious harm to Plaintiffs and Members of the Proposed Class.

203. As a direct result of these conditions, Plaintiffs suffered severe emotional trauma and distress, including depression, fear, and daily loss of hope. Starbucks' failure to employ minimal protections to workers it promised in its Code of Conduct to protect from illegal conduct including trafficking, forced labor, and horrible working conditions, exacerbated Plaintiffs' distress and trauma.

204. Plaintiffs and Members of the Proposed Class seek financial restitution, attorney's fees, costs, and any other relief deemed just and proper under the law.

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

205. Plaintiffs demand a trial by jury on all triable issues.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

206. WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs pray for relief from this court as follows:

A. Injunctive relief as follows:

i. Based on Plaintiffs' demonstration of a concrete threat of violent retaliation against them for filing this case, the Court permitted them to proceed using pseudonyms. Plaintiffs continue to have a strong basis to believe that Starbucks, its subsidiaries, agents, or affiliated entities may engage in retaliatory conduct against Plaintiffs, class members, or witnesses involved in this litigation, including but not limited to intimidation, harassment, economic retaliation, or threats of physical harm.

ii. Given the severe power imbalance between Starbucks and the Plaintiffs, such retaliation would cause irreparable harm and undermine the integrity of these proceedings.

iii. Accordingly, Plaintiffs respectfully request that this Court issue an injunction prohibiting Starbucks, its subsidiaries, agents, employees, or affiliates from:

a) Threatening, intimidating, harassing, or retaliating in any way against Plaintiffs, class members, or potential witnesses;

b) Taking any adverse economic action against Plaintiffs or class members as a result of their participation in this litigation; and

c) Engaging in any conduct designed to discourage participation in this lawsuit or suppress evidence.

iv. Plaintiffs further request that the Court require Starbucks to notify all subsidiaries, contractors, and affiliated entities of this injunction and provide written confirmation of compliance.

v. Plaintiffs seek any other injunctive relief deemed necessary to prevent retaliation and protect the safety and rights of the Plaintiffs and the Class.

B. Entering judgment in favor of each of the Plaintiffs;

C. An order awarding monetary damages, including actual damages, statutory damages, compensatory damages, and punitive damages, in the maximum amount provided by law;

D. Awarding the Plaintiffs damages for the emotional distress experienced;

E. Injunctive relief as the Court deems just and appropriate;

F. An order for prejudgment interest on all amounts awarded;

G. An order awarding Plaintiffs and Proposed Class Members the reasonable costs and expenses of suit, including their attorneys' fees; and

H. Any further relief that the Court may deem appropriate.

Respectfully submitted on this 23rd day of April 2025.

/s/ Terrence P. Collingsworth
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