

New Lawsuit, Complaint to U.S. Customs Allege Slavery, Human Trafficking in Starbucks' Brazilian Coffee Supply Chain

8 trafficked workers bring TVPRA suit against Starbucks; Petition to U.S. CBP threatens to halt U.S. imports of Brazilian coffee tainted by slavery/forced labor

WASHINGTON, D.C., DC, UNITED STATES, April 24, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Starbucks was dealt



The coffee industry, led by Starbucks, has slaves working in its supply chain right this minute, and we must stop this abuse, starting in Brazil, as the world's top coffee producer."

*Etelle Higonnet, Coffee Watch
Founder and Director.*

a double blow today as [International Rights Advocates](#) filed a U.S. lawsuit against the coffee titan alleging trafficking and [Coffee Watch](#) filed a petition with U.S. customs authorities asking the government to block imports from Brazil to the U.S. of coffee tainted by slavery and forced labor by top importers including Starbucks, Nestlé, JDE, Dunkin', Illy, and McDonald's. The petition could end coffee imports to the U.S. from Brazil tainted by slavery, a decision that would have significant consequences for the industry.

The "307" petition was filed to the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol and cites the lawsuit filed on behalf of 8

workers who were trafficked and forced to work harvesting coffee in Brazil for Cooxupé, a major Starbucks supplier and the most powerful Brazilian coffee company. The case is brought under the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act ("TVPRA"), 18 U.S.C. § 1595 et. seq., in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. The workers seek to represent a class of the thousands of workers in Brazil trafficked and forced to work harvesting Starbucks coffee under "slavery-like conditions," according to Brazilian government reports. The Complaint documents the history of extreme abuse of coffee workers in Brazil, and widespread trafficking.

Relying on an extensive body of evidence of slavery and forced labor in coffee harvesting in Brazil, Coffee Watch filed its petition today with the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agency (CBP) under Section 307 of the Tariff Act of 1930, 19 U.S.C. § 1307. Coffee Watch asks the U.S. to block imports of coffee from Brazil produced using slavery and forced labor, citing Starbucks and other industry heavy hitters like Jacobs Douwe Egberts, Dunkin', McCafé, and Nestlé.

To show how widespread, systematic, and longstanding the problem is, the TVPRA Complaint

and the 307 Petition summarize and present every known report of slavery and forced labor on coffee plantations in Brazil documented by NGOs, journalists, Brazilian authorities, and in U.S. governmental reports. For decades, the coffee industry in Brazil has relied on slavery and forced labor, often with internal migrants working in abusive conditions, for low or no wages, in unsanitary, overcrowded housing. Workers and those defending them face violence and threats. Brazil is one of the most dangerous countries in the world for environmental and human rights defenders. 4 labor inspectors were murdered in Unaí, Minas Gerais, while inspecting rural labor conditions; and Brazilian advocacy group CONECTAS reports that in Minas Gerais where most Brazilian coffee grows, conflicts against slave labor led to 420 murders between 2014 to 2023.

In 2023, the coffee industry was the number one source of governmental slave rescues in Brazil, making up 11.4% of the total number of rescues from 2013 to 2023. Brazil is the world's top coffee producer, producing approximately 39% of the world's coffee. In 2022, Brazil exported over \$8 billion in coffee products, with U.S. coffee imports totaling nearly \$2 billion. Coffee has been one of the most important economical stimulants to Brazil's export economy. Brazil has over 200,000 coffee farms, employing roughly 8 million farmers and farmworkers. Some Brazilian coffee farms are immense. One Brazilian plantation allegedly produces more coffee than all of Bolivia.

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