

Honorable Sheik Hasina
Prime Minister
People's Republic of Bangladesh
Dhaka, Bangladesh



January 12, 2017

Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina,

As multi-stakeholder organizations dedicated to the protection of workers' rights worldwide, the Fair Labor Association (FLA) and Fair Wear Foundation (FWF) wish to express concern over the recent response to worker protests in Ashulia, including the arrest or firing of protesting workers and the detention of union leaders and workers' rights advocates.

We share our concern as organizations with many affiliated multi-national companies, several of which currently source apparel, textiles, and footwear products from Bangladesh. While the FLA and FWF do not support any illegal actions or violent protests, we also do not support any actions that deprive workers, labor leaders, or workers' advocates of the free exercise of their rights. Our organizations and our affiliated companies very strongly support workers' rights to associate freely and to bargain collectively, free from the threat of retaliation.

When companies affiliated with the FLA and FWF establish long-term sourcing relationships, they include the expectation of government and industry adherence to international labor standards including International Labor Organization (ILO) conventions, which companies clearly communicate to factory owners and suppliers. We are asking our company affiliates to reach out to their suppliers in Bangladesh to determine whether workers have been punished by firing or arrest for speaking out for higher wages, and to confirm that suppliers have proper grievance mechanisms in place to address any violations of workers' rights.

We understand that protesting workers have expressed that current minimum wage levels are not sufficient to meet their basic needs – a finding supported by independent FLA research. Therefore, we also wish to express our concern about the current level of worker's wages as compared to the cost of living in Bangladesh. As organizations committed to fair compensation for workers, we support objective, inclusive, and productive national wage-setting negotiations that result in a minimum wage that is fair for workers. To this end, companies affiliated with our organizations commit to purchasing practices that help build sustainable supply chains, such as working with suppliers to adjust prices to account for locally negotiated wage increases.

Thank you for your consideration of the issues addressed in this letter. We welcome any opportunity to discuss with you the fundamental importance of workers' right to freedom of association, and our commitment to fair compensation for workers in Bangladesh.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sharon Waxman".

Sharon Waxman
President and CEO
Fair Labor Association

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Erica van Doorn".

Erica van Doorn
Director
Fair Wear Foundation