



Improving working conditions in the global garment industry

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## Kidnapped Union Leader Released



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**Take action now to condemn the kidnapping of a trade union leader at a Marks & Spencer supplier factory in India. The union leader was abducted on August 25 by a gang at the factory grounds where he works. The kidnapping was part of a brutal attack against 60 workers, mostly women. It took place as they arrived for work at the Viva Global factory in Gurgaon, India.**

UPDATE (11 may 2011): The workers of Viva Global have reached a (partial) agreement. Therefore the appeal is closed now

The workers were attacked by thugs brandishing hockey and lathi sticks as they arrived for their shift at 9:30am Delhi time. One of the thugs has been identified as the labour contractor used by Viva Global to recruit workers for the factory. Sixteen women were severely beaten and a union leader was kidnapped.

The orchestrated attack on the workers follows months of their campaigning to improve working conditions at Viva Global. The workers complain of targeted and irregular dismissals, excessive and forced overtime, wages below the minimum wage, verbal and physical abuse, failure to pay mandated social security, lack of drinking water and a host of other serious violations.

Harassment of union members, including threats to life, dismissals and threatening with dismissals, and physical violence has been increasing at the factory in recent weeks. On Monday August 23, Viva Global officials attempted to prevent workers from entering the factory and made threats against union leaders and workers.

The same day a tripartite meeting was held between the Viva Global management the Labour Department and the Garment and Allied Workers Union (GAWU). An agreement was reached that all dismissed workers would be reinstated and the threats of violence against workers would immediately cease.



**Labour leader was kidnapped, workers were attacked at a Marks & Spencers supplier**

After Wednesday's violence and the abduction of Mr. Ansari, Viva Global workers and a large number of supporters are holding an ongoing demonstration outside the factory. The President of the union, Ms. Anannya Bhattacharjee, has ended a hunger strike she had initiated after the abduction of her colleague.

Updates will be posted on the Twitter feed and Facebook pages of our UK member organisation 'Labour behind the Label' as news comes in. Sign up to receive these updates at [www.twitter.com/labourlabel](http://www.twitter.com/labourlabel) or <http://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Labour-Behind-the-Label/149595231718129>

Please send an email today to the Viva Global management to demand that:

- all violence and intimidation against union members is stopped immediately
- workers locked out from the factory are reinstated as per the agreement with the Labour Department.

By filling in the form below you'll send the letter below to Viva Global management

## Letter to Viva Global

Dear Mr Vohra and Mr Hundal,

I am writing to express my shock and outrage at the attack on workers at the Viva Global factory on August 25th 2010.

Although relieved to hear of the return of Mr Anwar Ansari I am horrified to hear of the ordeal he was subjected to.

Such action plays no part in an industry that claims to be so vital in the economic life of India. Nor should it take place in the supply chains of multinational brands who claim to respect the rights of their workers around the world

I hope that this incident will finally lead to the improvements demanded by your workers and that this will open a new chapter of mature and civilised industrial relations at your company, where workers are able to negotiate their pay and conditions and where all those associated with Viva Global can benefit from its success.

Therefore I am writing today to urge you both to take steps to

- ensure the immediate arrest of those responsible for Ansari's kidnapping;
- immediately stop the hiring of gangsters and physical violence against workers;
- reinstate locked out workers in the same position and provide back pay for the days missed.
- hold a tripartite meeting between M&S, Viva Global and GAWU and begin negotiations on freedom of association, pay and conditions;
- take immediate steps to ensure that workers are able to freely join the union of their choice without fear of reprisal
- immediately stop the outsourcing of work to non unionised subcontractors.

(name, location)

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