



Urgent Appeal for Help: Mattel Supplier Factory Female Workers Committed Suicide

Wednesday, June 29, 2011

In response to the tragic suicide of Hu Nianzhen (胡年珍) at the Tai Qiang factory in Shenzhen, China, China Labor Watch has been urgently working with other labor rights organizations to secure fair and adequate compensation for Hu Nianzhen's family, press for factory reform, and further emphasize the need for Mattel to take an active and serious role towards improving working conditions of those factories they do business with in China. Hu Nianzhen, the mother of two children, worked 7 days a week, for 11 hours a day under abhorred conditions to simply earn a living wage that would provide for her family and children's future. The pressure to fill production quotas under a strict schedule established by Mattel placed enormous pressure on Hu Nianzhen and expended all of her energy and strength. Asking for a few days leave from the factory, Hu Nianzhen was scolded by her workshop managers, who refused to give her even one day off to rest. This relentless and mounting pressure, combined with an absence of any hope for a better life, ultimately led Hu Nianzhen to believe that suicide was the best way to escape from this cycle of torment. Despite numerous appeals and the evidence available, Mattel still refuses to take any responsibility for Hu Nianzhen's death and believes there is no connection between their business practices and her suicide.

China Labor Watch, in conjunction with "Stop Toying Around" and Peoples Solidaires have continued to press Mattel to take responsibility for their role in Hu Nianzhen's death through a letter writing campaign directed at Mattel's CEO, Robert Eckert. The letter writing campaign has so far succeeded in sending over 10,000 letters, but we still need your help! We urge all our supporters and those individuals that continue to buy Mattel products to send Mattel CEO Robert Eckert an email stating your disgust with the way Mattel has handled the death of Hu Nianzhen and urge them to uphold their corporate social responsibilities. Furthermore, we urge any and all Mattel employees to bring up the issue of Hu Nianzhen's suicide with Mattel's management and urge them to reform the way Mattel conducts business in China. Below is a letter template in English and French you can use. Only through a concerted public effort that holds Mattel accountable for the abhorred working conditions that led to Hu Nianzhen's death can any labor reform begin to take place.

Hu NianZhen's family Statement

Hu Nianzhen worked as female worker in the injection department of the Taiqiang Products factory. With production demands continuously increasing, it is clear workers had to deal with a large amount of work related stress. If they were unable to complete production quotas, they would be reprimanded by factory management. If you accidentally manufactured a product incorrectly, you would not only have to reassemble it, but would also have to pay a fine. Because Hu Nianzhen was comparatively old, her eyes were not so good and she was often chided by her manager. This high-intense labor, in addition to the criticism received by factory management, placed a lot of physical and mental stress on her.

On May 13, 2011, Hu Nianzhen called her husband in Foshan after being reprimanded by her manager. She explained to her husband that she did not want to go to work the next day and was worried that she would be fired from the factory. On May 16, 2011, Hu Nianzhen got into an argument with her manager over her request for leave. Her manager would not agree to give her time off and further refused to give her any scheduled work. After being so humiliated by her manager, Hu Nianzhen cried alone in the materials room, the end result of the unbearably high level of labor intensity and unfair treatment by factory managers she dealt with everyday. Around 12:40pm that same day, forces beyond her control persuaded Hu Nianzhen to end her own life and leave forever her husband and three children.

We, the deceased's loved ones of Hu Nianzhen, have been immersed in extreme grief ever since her death. We have been thoroughly dissatisfied with the amount of compensation offered and attitude the factory has taken our discussions. As migrant workers, we have no protection when confronted with difficulties in our lives. We were all forced to leave our low income jobs, in order to arrange Hu Nianzhen's funeral and return home to bury her body as quickly as possible. After failing on 6 different occasions to reach an agreement with the factory, we lacked the energy to continue discussions with the factory over compensation matters and were forced to accept the factory's unfair and unreasonable compensation package. It was very upsetting to have to sign this agreement. In this statement, as Hu Nianzhen's immediate family members we remain committed to pursuing our right to fair and reasonable compensation with Taiqiang's Shenzhen Products Factory.

June 4, 2011

robert.normile@mattel.com

Dear Mr. Eckert,

I have been informed by Peoples Solidaires, "Stop Toying Around!", and China Labor Watch (CLW) that Hu Nianzhen, a female worker at your Chinese supplier Tai Qiang in Shenzhen committed suicide on May the 16th, 2011. Hu Nianzhen was heavily abused by factory management and had to deal with a large amount of work related stress due to the continuous rise of production demands.

This tragic death emphasizes the need for Mattel to take an active and serious role towards improving the working conditions at its supplying factories in China.

I am extremely concerned by the worker's situation and urge you to meet Nianzhen Hu's family's and CLW's demands, and in particular:

- Secure fair compensation for Hu Nianzhen's family, at least 250,000 RMB, who has now only received 90,000 RMB
- Secure fair compensation and ensure an official excuse to the deceased's family for having being beaten up on May the 20th, 2011
- Take immediate and effective measures to prevent any further suicides and rectify worker's rights violations of underpayment, excessive overtime, and forced overtime at Tai Qiang factory
- Enable your suppliers to respect core labor rights (provided for both by Chinese labor law and Mattel's own code of conduct) anywhere in Mattel's supply chain by ensuring that Mattel's ordering practices contain realistic lead times and fair unit prices.

Sincerely, _____

Monsieur Eckert,

J'ai été informé-e par Peoples Solidaires, la campagne européenne « C'est pas du jeu ! » et le China Labor Watch (CLW) du suicide, le 16 mai 2011, de Nianzhen Hu, employée de l'usine Tai Qiang, un de vos fournisseurs en Chine. Les pressions subies par cette employée, et dont sont également victimes les autres ouvrières de Tai Qiang, semble être responsable de ce tragique évènement.

Je suis extrêmement préoccupé-e par la situation de ces ouvrières, et vous prie de répondre aux demandes de la famille de Nianzhen Hu et du CLW, et en particulier de :

- vous assurer que le montant des indemnités reçues par la famille de Nianzhen Hu, jugé insuffisant (90 000 yuan, soit 9 600 euros), soit réévalué à hauteur d'au moins 250 000 yuan, soit 26 660 euros ;
- vous assurer que la famille de Nianzhen Hu obtienne une juste indemnisation ainsi que des excuses officielles pour les violences qu'elle a subie le 20 mai 2011 ;
- mettre en place immédiatement les mesures effectives qui permettront de prévenir de nouveaux suicides et de mettre un terme à toutes les violations des droits des travailleurs-euses constatées chez Tai Qiang, dont le recours aux heures supplémentaires forcées et excessives et le versement de salaires au dessous des minimums légaux ;
- permettre à vos fournisseurs de respecter la législation chinoise du travail et le code de conduite de Mattel sur l'ensemble de votre chaîne d'approvisionnement en modifiant vos pratiques d'achat (délais de livraison trop court, prix à la commande trop bas).

Sincèrement, _____

A letter From China Labor Watch to Mattel June 2, 2011 China Labor Watch

Relative Blames Suicide At China Factory For Mattel Toys On Dispute With Supervisor June 3, 2011 The Wall Street Journal



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