

Trial against Bangladeshi labour rights advocates approaches



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Just recently a judge in the case against Kalpona Akter and Babul Akhter from the Bangladesh Workers Solidarity Center (BCWS) and other labour leaders decided that the accused will have to appear in court next month under a system designed to speed up the trial process.

In the summer of 2010 multiple factory owners supplying major garment retailers such as Walmart, H&M and Carrefour, filed fabricated criminal charges against workers and labour leaders following huge worker protests for better wages.

All cases consist of a range of charges with punishments ranging from three months to ten years to life in prison. Some of the charges are punishable by death.

That summer Kalpona Akter and Babul Akhter spent 30 days in jail, during which they were threatened and tortured. BCWS organiser Aminul Islam was also imprisoned and beaten by National Security officials. All three are now free on bail; however, the falsified charges against them remain in a total of 11 cases filed by separate factories including Nassa, a major Walmart supplier. Hundreds of workers and activists face trial, including Mushrefa Mishu from the Garment Workers Unity Forum who was arrested and detained for more than 4 months and who still suffers from health problems due to police maltreatment.

As the largest buyer of Bangladeshi-made clothing, US based Walmart has the power to ensure that Bangladeshi garment workers facing poverty wages and abusive conditions can stand up for their rights without risking harassment, imprisonment and torture. Although Walmart has claimed their supplier Nassa has withdrawn their charges, this is not the case.



Kalpona Akter

Ask Walmart to tell its suppliers that have instigated false charges against Kalpona Akter, Babul Akhter, Aminul Islam, and other labour leaders that those charges must be dropped; that the police and security officials responsible for the alleged torture and mistreatment be investigated and held accountable; and that labour rights defenders like the Bangladesh Center for Worker Solidarity be allowed to operate freely.

Sign the petition:

http://action.laborrights.org/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=2033

Filed under: [union repression](#) [Bangladesh](#)

About CCC

- Mission
- How We Work
- Local CCC's



At a glance

- The Issues
- FAQ
- Get Active
- Stay Informed

Living Wage

- Why a living wage?
- Asia Floor Wage
- Sign the Living Wage petition

Contact

- Contact Information
- For the Press
- About this site