



8 Dec 2000

Action now concerning factory fire Bangladesh

Dear people,

As you also must have been shocked by the recent report from Bangladesh about the recent fire in CHOUDURY KNITWEAR in NARSINGDI where 53 people died. This was obviously not the first time in Bangladesh. As was communicated to us, in the last 10 year there were more than hundred fires in factories in Bangladesh. More than 5000 workers were injured in these fires and 246 workers were killed. We are shocked and angry that today workers still have to work under unsafe and hazardous working conditions. This is a situation that needs to be worked on from all sides, the government in Bangladesh should take measures, the factories should make improvements, the buyers should make sure that the factories they are sourcing from are a safe place for the workers to work in. In Bangladesh itself the unions and NGOs are protesting; organising rallies etc directed at the government and producers. They have requested support, by getting the buyers involved as well.

Aug 2001 , [24 Garment workers die in Bangladeshi fire alarm](#)

June 2004 , [50 Die in garment factory tragedy Bangladesh](#)

April 2005, [350 Bangladeshi Garment Workers Buried Alive](#)

On the moment we do not have information on the buyers in this specific factory in Bangladesh. As this is however a concern for all and we should make sure this will not happen in the future, immediate action can be taken towards all companies that buy in Bangladesh.

A lot of companies that buy their garments in Bangladesh have a code of conduct, in which safe and healthy working conditions are an important element. Companies claim that they are especially working on improvement of the safe and health conditions in the factories where they are sourcing, as this is one of the easiest improvements to make (easier than for example a living wage...) and that they are actually making improvements in the factories they are buying their products from. We should confront these companies with the situation in Bangladesh and ask them what they have done and are doing concretely to make sure that the factories they are buying from are safe and healthy places to work in. We should ask for evidence, evidence on what they have been doing regarding safe and healthy working conditions.

We are proposing now that every organisation takes on retailers in their country and ask them what they have done so far in regard to health and safety measures in factories where they source from in Bangladesh. To get this good documented we feel it would be good to ask them a list of specific questions. I've asked the Asian network for the rights of Occupational Accident Victims for a list of a questions and added some to it:

• How many suppliers does the retailer have in Bangladesh

Questions for every factory:

- Is there any safety code in place? Is there any fire prevention code and regulation at factories and workshop level?
- How frequent are the factories open to state inspection? Is there any state inspection? Did the factories receive a warning or compliance order? Has there been any follow up? Any concrete examples? Are the factories open to audits or own inspection of the retailers?
- Were the factories/dormitories inspected or examined by state authorities; did they pass the state requirements? Did the retailer inspect, either self or by an audit company, the factory? What were the findings, e.g. include report, did they pass the state and retailers

requirements? If yes, send the evidence or credentials. If no, why not and why are the factories still operating without implementing the requirements?

- What is the proportion of number of workers and number of emergency exits
- Is there any clear sign leading to the emergency exits and marking the emergency exits, are they really safe and workable? · Are all emergency exits accessible?
- How many fire extinguishers and/or sprinklers are there (proportion of fire extinguishers to the number of workers) are they regularly checked?
- Is there any emergency drilling, how frequent? Is there any training for new comers?
- Are the regulations on fire prevention in place and for every worker accessible in the factory? How do you ensure that workers and management understand and follow these regulations? Give examples.
- Is there any clear regulation on the storage of flammable materials in place? Is any clear instruction given? Are workers mandated to refuse to follow an order that is obviously violating the safety code? Do workers know the safety code? If not, why not? If yes, how do you ensure this, what are the experiences? Did the storage follow or violate national and local law? Is there a national or local law/regulation in place?
- Is there any regulation on electricity equipment usage and maintenance? Are electricity technicians mandated to refuse to follow an order that is violating the safety code?
- Can you give us the names of the persons in the factories responsible for fire prevention, are they qualified? Do you have any evidence of this qualification? When did s/he receive follow-up training, can you give concrete date and details of trainers or on the organization that certified him/her.

In the Netherlands we will send the questionnaire to our largest retailers. We will also send out an urgent appeal for consumers to send letters concerning this matter. Please let us know what you are planning to do. Also let us know if you have any addition to the questionnaire.

From the National Garment Workers Federation we heard that: They have issued a press release on 26th November and organised a protest demonstration with 9 other garments workers federation also on the 26th of November. On the 27th of November a protest and condolence rally was held. A condolence meeting on the 1st of December. A Press conference on 4 December. 10,000 poster are distributed covering all the major fires were people got killed in the last 10 year. In general everyone is called upon to make resistance.

There will be:

- A prayer for the killed workers on 8 December.
- Blockade of the Office of Chief Inspector of Factories on 10 December.
- More actions will be declared on 10 December.
- An extra 50,000 posters and 100,000 leaflets will be printed.

The NGWF and Bangladeshi garments workers need solidarity, support and also financial contributions.

Send your solidarity message to: NGWF Fax : 88 02 9562562 or NGWF, G.P.O. Box:864, Dhaka,Bangladesh

For Protest: Send a protest letter to the Bangladesh Embassy in your country and to the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Employers Association, fax 88 02 8113951

For Contributions: contact NGWF, e-mail: unity@bdmail.net

Greetings, Clean Clothes Campaign in the Netherlands info@cleanclothes.org



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