

CLEAN CLOTHES CAMPAIGN



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in the global garment industry*



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Push BGMEA for action in death of Bangladesh workers

June 2004

Please take action to support union demands in the wake of another garment factory tragedy occurred in Bangladesh. On May 3rd nine women were trampled to death and 50 others injured when they ran for their lives after a false fire alarm, at a building housing several garment factories in Bangladesh.

- Please read the December 2004 Update of the [Misco Supermarket fire Bangladesh](#)



The main stairway from where the workers tried to escape but found the gate locked. The force of people broke down part of the railing.

BACKGROUND

Source: Bangladesh Textile and Garment Workers League (BTGWLF) and Bangladesh Labour Welfare Foundation (BLF)

May 3rd started out as any normal workday for an estimated 3,000 to 5,000 workers from five garment factories jam-packed in the Misco Supermarket complex in Dhaka, Bangladesh. A couple of hours later a transformer near the building burst and sparks could be seen flying in all directions. A fire broke out in the very busy alley outside the factory where a religious program took place. Workers thought there was a fire in the factory and made a run for the narrow stairway, while some workers went through the emergency exits located behind the building. Most of them rushed through the main stairway where they found the gate locked. This caused the death of nine young women who were trampled to death in the ensuing stampede. Fifty others were injured.



Crying for the dead. The stampede at the Misco Supermarket building left seven crushed to death and fifty injured.

The disaster took place at a time when at least on paper most factories claim to adhere to safety directives set out by the BGMEA. The BGMEA list of safety measures each garment factory must adhere to include fire drills and minimum safety measures like keeping fire extinguishers and training fire fighting teams. The BGMEA claims to have a safety cell with a monitoring team that provides training to factory staff and workers on fire safety methods and regularly inspects factories. But despite these measures workers who tried to flee from the Misco Supermarket complex found the gate locked and nine workers were crushed to death.



The voice of rights and reason: Will anyone pay attention?

The BGMEA has taken the above measures after several tragedies over the last years in which workers died needlessly.

Dec 2000 [53 die in Garment Factory fire Bangladesh](#)

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

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



The deaths of garment workers is soon forgotten until the next tragedy

Obviously the measures taken by the BGMEA are far from sufficient. Many garment factories are using buildings that are primarily built either for residential or commercial use. Landlords and factory owners just break down walls to turn a building into a garment factory. The Building Construction Rules 1996, which were enacted eight years ago are also quite vague.

The National Garment Workers Federation (NGWF) brought out a mourning procession in the city and held a rally where speakers blamed negligence of the garment authorities. According to the NGWF there were no arrangements for emergency exits or fire extinguishing equipment at the factory building.



Most factories have flimsy emergency exits

The BGMEA president said that the association would give 100,000 Taka to the families of each of the victims of the Misco tragedy.

The Bangladesh Textile and Garment Workers League is demanding that:

- 200,000 taka should be paid as compensation to the families of the workers who have died;
- 50,000 taka should be paid as compensation to the workers who were injured in the accident;

charges should be pressed against the owners of the building.



Builders continue to grossly violate construction codes. Two buildings connected by an illegal corridor.



Barely one person can go at a time through the narrow corridor

Please read the December 2004 Update of the [Misco Supermarket fire Bangladesh](#)



TOP



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