



# CLEAN CLOTHES CAMPAIGN



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in the global garment industry*

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## December 2004 Update 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

On May 3rd 2004, 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. While some of the workers exited through the fire escapes, most workers took the main stairway to the front gate of the building, where they found the gate locked. These deaths and injuries were the result of violations of fire safety and building codes.

In June 2004, the CCC requested that letters be sent to the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers Exporters Association (BGMEA) to demand that it take immediate steps to improve fire safety procedures in factories in Bangladesh, and to also meet the Bangladesh Textile and Garment Workers League's (BTGWL) demands 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.

While the BGMEA has stated that it has improved fire safety training and equipment in garment factories, this has not been confirmed by union sources. This action comes after a number of fatal incidents took place in factories with insufficient fire safety training. It is important that the BGMEA continues to maintain higher standards regarding fire safety and building codes.

The BTGWL reports that the factory owners have paid 100,000 taka (US \$ 1724) to the families of the women who died while no compensation was paid to the injured workers. Furthermore, for reasons that were not explained, BGMEA decided that no charges would be brought against the factory owner for violations of the fire safety code.

Though the action taken by the BGMEA falls short of the union's demands, the BTGWL informed us on 13 December 2004 that no further action would be taken in the Misco Supermarket case.

At this time we would like to thank all those who sent letters and responded to the appeal.



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