

ACCORD

on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh

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12 January 2017

The Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina
Office of the Prime Minister
Old Sangsad Bhaban
Tejgaon, Dhaka-1215, Bangladesh

Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina,

We write as the Steering Committee members of the Accord on Fire & Building Safety in Bangladesh to express our great concerns regarding the Government's response to the recent RMG industry unrest and wage protests in Ashulia. The Accord is an agreement of nearly 220 global apparel companies and retailers with global and Bangladeshi trade unions representing garment manufacturing and retail workers. The Accord was signed in May 2013 in the aftermath of the fatal Tazreen Fashions Ltd. fire and Rana Plaza building collapse and is designed to make RMG factories in Bangladesh safe.

In our 3 plus years of operations in Bangladesh, the Accord has made significant progress in advancing RMG industry safety while supporting the National Plan of Action of the Government of Bangladesh with the national industry and trade union social partners. The Accord is proud to be contributing to the goal of achieving a safety compliant and sustainable RMG industry in Bangladesh.

We are deeply concerned, however, by recent detentions and termination from employment of individuals with union affiliation and who promote workers' rights. We have received credible reports that since late December 2016 at least fourteen such persons have been detained or arrested; that eleven of these remain in police custody; that 2-3 of have been subject to beatings and/or threats; and that approximately 1500 workers have been terminated from their employment at several Ashulia located RMG factories. Accord signatories are concerned that as many as 700 more persons face court allegations and potential arrest allegedly under the auspices of the Ashulia unrest.

We respectfully request that your good Office take immediate action to ensure that RMG workers' rights are protected and that any associated cases of unjust detention, employment termination, and/or fundamental rights violations be urgently rectified consistent with the law and ILO conventions. We ask also that the industry, particularly BGMEA and BKMEA, be approached to engage their members in the Ashulia area who are reportedly and questionably using the industry unrest as a basis for mass termination of union supportive RMG workers. The Accord shall support such efforts in all ways possible.

The Accord Steering Committee strongly encourages the Government of Bangladesh to convene a wage board for the garment sector with the firm belief that adopting a regular wage review mechanism will help foster needed stability in the Bangladeshi garment sector and address root causes that have led to similar undesirable and unacceptable situations in the Bangladesh RMG industry in the recent past. Such situations damage the industry's reputation and confidence levels which we, together with the Government and social partners, are all working so hard to bolster.

The Accord supports the RMG industry in the goal of a \$50 billion RMG industry by 2021 and in achieving the safety and rights commitments made via the July 2013 Compact. Upholding and enforcing safety and labour rights protections is essential for these ambitions to be achieved.

We thank you in advance for considering our request with the high priority it warrants and for the Bangladesh Government to take appropriate action to urgently remedy the reported violations.

Respectfully and on behalf of the Accord Steering Committee,



Rob Wayss, Executive Director
Stichting Bangladesh Accord Foundation
Accord on Fire & Building Safety in Bangladesh

CC: Honourable State Minister Md. Mujibul Haque, Ministry of Labour and Employment
Siddique Rahman, BGMEA President
A.K.M. Salim Osman, BKMEA President, MP
Accord Steering Committee Members