

SweatFree Communities International Workers Rights Caucus Urges Companies to Protest Anti-Worker Activities in Bangladesh

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111th U.S. Congress Press Release

WASHINGTON, DC - [The International Workers Rights Caucus today sent a letter to the heads of six corporations](#) with major American operations regarding the persecution of labor activists in Bangladesh. For attempting to unionize and gain better wages and working conditions, the Bangladeshi government and major corporations have cracked down on union leaders and NGO's advocating for workers rights. Leaders of the Bangladesh Center for Worker Solidarity have had charges filed against them which have led to their harassment, torture and arrest.

"As a company with a significant purchasing operation in Bangladesh, we have no doubt that a concerted effort by the top buyers in Bangladesh will be highly effective in returning stability to the garment industry and the country," the letter to Wal-Mart, JCPenney, Cintas, VF, H&M, and Sears/Kmart reads. "It is crucial that the Bangladesh government understand that major American retailers will not be able to maintain the current level of business with Bangladesh unless the charges are dropped and persecution of labor leaders stops immediately."

"These tremendously successful companies must use their influence to help put an end to the horrific oppression of labor activists in Bangladesh," said Congressman Phil Hare (D-IL), chairman of the International Workers Rights Caucus. "They have an obligation to more than just their shareholders; as community leaders these corporations must demand that everyone's basic human rights are upheld."

"I am extremely concerned about ongoing unrest and persecution of labor leaders in Bangladesh," said Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), a member of the International Workers Rights Caucus. "The situation has become extremely critical and, in addition to ongoing action by our government, U.S. corporations that purchase goods from Bangladesh can play a key role in promoting and protecting the core rights of Bangladeshi workers."

"In the face of terrible human rights violations, and targeting of courageous human rights activists, we

cannot simply do business as usual with Bangladesh," said Bama Athreya, Executive Director of the International Labor Rights Forum.

"Wal-Mart, H&M and other retailers are linchpins of the Bangladesh economy," said Scott Nova, Executive Director of the Workers Rights Consortium. "If they stop doing business with suppliers that are behind the jailing of human rights leaders, the repression will stop."