



Statement Concerning the Release from Jail of BCWS Leaders

September 10, 2010

We have received confirmation that Kalpona Akter, Babul Akhter, and Aminul Islam of the Bangladesh Center for Worker Solidarity (BCWS) were released from the Dhaka Central Prison by the Bangladeshi authorities at about 10pm Dhaka time September 10th, at the start of the Eid Festival which marks the end of Ramadan. Their release was secured following the granting of bail on all charges during a special hearing by a magistrate judge on Wednesday, September 8. Upon their release, the BCWS leaders expressed a "heartfelt thanks" to all who have supported them. We are heartened by their release.

U.S. Congressional pressure was key to convincing the Bangladeshi government to take this step. We would like to thank all members of Congress who signed the letter urging U.S. brands and retailers to put serious economic pressure on Bangladesh to ensure justice for BCWS and their leaders. Many, many thanks to all organizations and individuals who have participated in so many actions from contacting your members of Congress to writing companies to donating to the bail fund.

However, although bail has been granted in all cases, Kalpona, Babul, and Aminul still face prosecution on all charges filed against them. Furthermore, BCWS' NGO registration has still not been restored following its cancellation in early June and the organization is not permitted to function. Additionally, several other prominent Bangladeshi labor leaders continue to face criminal charges, including Mr. Montu Ghosh, legal advisor to the Garment Sramik Trade Union Kendra, who is named in at least five of the cases against BCWS leaders and remains in prison since his arrest on July 30, 2010.

It is imperative that brands sourcing from Bangladesh use their influence to press the government and local manufacturers to drop the charges that have been filed against the BCWS leaders, restore BCWS's NGO registration, and cease all repression of legitimate labor organizing and advocacy. Additionally, and most importantly, those brands that source from Nassa Group and Envoy Group, two local manufacturers that played a key role in precipitating the criminal charges against the BCWS leaders, should immediately cease all pending and future orders with these companies – until and unless the charges are dropped. We commend Philipps-Van Heusen, whose Tommy Hilfiger brand has already taken this crucial step.

On behalf of:

SweatFree Communities
International Labor Rights Forum
Worker Rights Consortium
United Students Against Sweatshops