



6 Multinational Brands Acknowledge Labor Abuses at Supplier Factory

Sunday, August 21, 2011

The factory footage 

Six American clothing companies, including American Eagle and Gap, have confirmed the results of a China Labor Watch (CLW) investigation that uncovered violations of Chinese labor laws and worker rights at a factory that produces accessories for them. A factory of the Jiangsu Ningbo Hesheng Headwear Company (henceforth "the Ningbo Hesheng factory") was investigated in August, 2011 by CLW investigators. The investigators discovered the following conditions at the Ningbo Hesheng factory, which we have outlined in detail in an investigative report:

- Since the factory is understaffed, it employs many students between 16 and 18 years old who are on summer vacation. These students work the same hours and have the same responsibilities as normal workers.
- Workshop conditions are extremely poor, and include high temperatures and toxic gases.
- Workers regularly work more than 12 hours a day.
- Workers work 30 days a month during the busy season.
- The base salary for a factory worker is significantly lower than the legal minimum wage of Cixi County, where the factory is located.
- The resignation process is very difficult for workers and many workers are fined for resigning if they have worked at the factory for less than a year.

We sent this report to the Ningbo Hesheng Headwear factory's principal clients, and while August Accessories, GMA and Betmar Hats did not reply to our request for a response, American Eagle, GAP, J. Crew, Liz Claiborne, Talbots and Target jointly responded that they took these allegations seriously and would conduct their own investigation of the Ningbo factory. On November 11, they sent a letter to us stating that they had confirmed many of our report's findings and were working with factory management to create a safer and fairer work environment for its employees.

CLW director Li Qiang said that he was pleased with this news and eagerly awaited further news of improvements at the Ningbo Hesheng factory. However he added, "We hope that in the future multinational companies will establish a system for improving conditions in their Chinese factories, rather than making improvements on a case-by-case basis."

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