Workers increasingly desperate: Companies sourcing at Spectrum-Shahriyar must take action now!

Dear Friends,

The CCC is distressed that to date no concrete action has been taken by the companies who were sourcing from the Shahriyar owned Spectrum factory that collapsed on April 11 to meet the outstanding demands on compensation of factory workers and their families. Scores of workers were severely injured when the factory building collapsed and the death toll has now reached 74, the number of wounded is estimated to be more than 100 and over 5000 workers were left unemployed.

It is now almost two months since the factory collapsed and many of the victims' families and survivors tell of how they have been left homeless since, without any source of income, they can no longer pay their rent or pay for food. This situation could have been prevented had companies acted in time. The CCC feels that this delay is totally unnecessary and given the desperate situation of the workers and their families, we now call upon consumers and citizens to directly pressure Karstadt Quelle, (Germany), Steilmann and its group companies (Germany), Scapino (Netherlands), Cotton Group and B&C (Belgium), Carrefour (France) and Zara/Inditex (Spain) as well as the BSCI (Business Social Compliance Initiative), an industry controlled code of conduct initiative of which most of the companies sourcing at Spectrum/Shahriyar are members) to take action immediately.

Please see the action requests and sample letters at the end of this update, and also check the website of the CCCs in Germany, Spain, Belgium, France and the Netherlands for information and action requests in national languages.

In this update you can further find information on actions and protests in Bangladesh and Europe since our last update of May 12, the latest information regarding the situation in Bangladesh and the responses of brands and the BSCI.

For earlier updates and more background information on Spectrum-Shahriyar, please check our website at:

- Activities Bangladesh
- Current state of affairs
- BSCI member companies to visit Bangladesh
- Activities Europe and brand responses
ACTIVITIES BANGLADESH

On May 12th, the Bangladeshi trade union organisations National Garment Workers Federation (NGWF) and Bangladesh Garment Independent Workers Federation (BGIF) jointly organized an action outside the courthouse where the bail application for the two arrested owners was heard. They reported that the bail application was denied and this decision was referred to as an 'historic decision' in the Bangladeshi labour movement. On May 17th several hundred workers were blocked by police as they marched to the offices of the Labour Ministry in Dhaka. After talks with the police, four workers were permitted to hand over a three-point memo to the Labour secretary in his chambers.

On May 27th hundreds of garment workers, together with their colleagues from the Spectrum/Shahriyar factory and their families organised a sit-in strike at the Spectrum/Shahriyar building site. Relatives of the dead and injured workers spoke to the rally and told of how they no longer can provide for their basic necessities such as food and shelter. Protestors' demands included payment of monthly wages and overtime payment for the all workers, legal compensation for the workers of the 2 factories and compensation for the families of the Killed and Injured workers under Fatal Accident Compensation Act-1955 (which stipulates a higher compensation than under the Workers Compensation Act now being used to determine compensation).

The strike was organised by the NGWF together with its Savar zone committee. Please click here [weblink Photo] for photographs of some of the protests that were held in Bangladesh.

In the first two weeks of May a CCC researcher visited Bangladesh to gather first-hand accounts from workers and document facts pertaining to the disaster and the response of the Bangladeshi authorities, factory owners and brands sourcing at Spectrum. The information collected will be compiled in the form of a public report that will contain all relevant information documenting the Spectrum disaster, including the responses of the sourcing companies thus far. A preliminary report has already been sent to the brands concerned and the report will appear on our website shortly. For more information on this please contact the CCC International Secretariat.

CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS

According to the CCC investigations, and to information received from our trade union and NGO partners and through the Bangladeshi media, the BGMEA is only haphazardly paying some of the families of the dead workers an amount of 79,000 Tk. They will then receive a further 21,000 Tk through the labour courts. The amount of The 21000Tk. is according to law only for accidents which result in serious injury, not for fatal accidents resulting in death. However, a total amount of 100,000 Tk., or 1250 Euro, is clearly insufficient to compensate for loss of life and income for families. NGOs and trade unions locally are calling for much higher amounts, up to one million Tk. to families of workers killed, which would be the amount awarded under the Fatal Accident Act. Legal action is being taken by the unions and NGOs concerned calling for compensation according to this act.

BGMEA and the authorities are refusing to pay compensation to the wounded survivors. Many of these workers have spent days buried under the rubble, others are now invalids handicapped for life, and families have lost their only source of income. It is beyond comprehension that the authorities, as well as industry and buyers, are now refusing to ensure financial compensation to these workers/families, which in our view is the
extreme minimum first step they should take. To 
make matters worse, we have also received reports that in many cases injured 
workers are not receiving proper treatment and/or are left to take care of their 
own medical costs. A special medical board should be established to take 
responsibility to see that workers receive proper treatment, expenses for which 
should be fully paid (not by the workers).

As a result of the factory collapse, over 5000 workers have been left unemployed. Many of 
these workers are owed substantial amounts for 
outstanding wages and overtime pay (we have 
confirmed reports that wages are outstanding 
for most of the workers for April of this year, but 
it is possible that workers are owed even more). 
None of their contracts have officially been 
terminated, and therefore their wages should 
continue to be paid. If these contracts are 
officially ended, according to the law, notice should be given 4 months in 
advance and the workers should get 4 months salary plus one month for each 
year worked. They should be assisted in finding new jobs: the owners of 
Spectrum-Shahriyar continue to operate nine other factories, all of whom are 
still running. Many of the brands sourcing from Bangladesh workers have 
substantial numbers of suppliers in that Bangladesh. Clearly there is scope to 
find jobs for these people, and it is unclear to us why this effort is not being 

With respect to the issue of an independent and 
transparent investigation: 
The BGMEA and the RAJUK (Government body) 
each have finalized their reports, as have the 
police. All seem to point in the direction of a 
construction fault as well as an illegal structure 
(9 floors instead of the permitted 4 floors), but 
so far none of these reports have been made 
public. The central and urgent problem presently 
is that there is still no exact number or 
comprehensive public list of dead, missing and surviving workers (those 
employed and working that night, and those employed who were not working). 
This is unacceptable and of course also creates great obstacles in terms of 
issuing compensation funds.

A high-powered investigation committee with 
legal local standing should be established to find 
out the actual number of dead, wounded, 
missing persons and bodies officially recovered, 
and to specify which authority should follow up 
on those findings. The brands and the BSCI 
should officially request from the BGMEA and 
Bangladeshi authorities that this happens. They 
should also request that the investigation 
reports from BGMEA and RAJUK be made public.

With respect to the issue of structural prevention measures we have yet to 
receive a response from the brands or from the BSCI to our proposals for a 
program to take up safety issues, including a structural review of multi-story 
buildings and workers’ access to safe channels to communicate their concerns 
on health & safety. We want to stress once more the importance and urgency 
to undertake such a program: the Spectrum/Shahriyar building is definitely not 
the only recently build factory in an area prone to flooding. In addition to an 
international oversight committee (including a role for the ILO) our Bangladeshi 
partners underline the need for a permanent tripartite high-powered committee 
government, employers and trade unions) to be set up as part of the program.

BSCI MEMBER COMPANIES TO VISIT BANGLADESH

A delegation consisting of the BSCI and several of its member companies that 
were sourcing from Spectrum/Shahriyar (KarstadtQuelle, Inditex, The Cotton 
Group) as well as the ITGLWF, are traveling to Bangladesh this week for the 
‘investigative mission’ that was originally scheduled for early may, and now will 
take place from June 6th to June 8th. While they have revealed that they will 
meet with workers, visit the disaster site, they have not revealed the findings 
of the German Consultancy that was commissioned to conduct an independent 
investigation of the disaster. The delegation is scheduled to meet ministries and 
participate in the ‘roundtable meeting’ organized on June 8 by GTZ (the German 
ministry of development assistance). Though CCC was originally informed this 
roundtable meeting, part of the regular BSCI code of conduct process, would 
be the forum in which BSCI members would consult with local stakeholders, we 
now understand that it is not even confirmed that the Spectrum/Shahriyar 
tragedy follow-up will be on the official agenda. CCC International and CCC
Germany are distressed and confused about this, and committed to following this up directly with all concerned. For this mission to be credible we believe it must include individual consultations with the trade unions that had membership at Spectrum/Shahriyar and those presently actively involved in supporting the workers and mobilizing legal action on the case. We expect the members of the BSCI mission to also directly meet hospitalised workers and family members of dead workers to pay their respects.

The CCC sent a letter to the BSCI on May 24th expressing its dismay regarding the slowness of the process and the intransparency of the mission which increasingly becomes a smokescreen to divert from the real facts: no action has been taken to meet the needs of the injured workers who can no longer work, their families, the families of dead workers and the thousands of workers who are left with no source of income since April 11th. The BSCI has to date not responded to this letter. A copy of this letter can be found on our website.


ACTIVITIES EUROPE AND BRAND RESPONSES

National CCCs have continued to pressure the brands based in their countries. The German CCC presented information about Spectrum-Shahriyar at the May 24th KarstadtQuelle Shareholders’ meeting. They reported that while the shareholders themselves responded positively and even asked for more background information, KarstadtQuelle Supervisory Board did not issue any statement at the time indicating how or if they planned to help the workers in Bangladesh.

CCC reps raised the issue of Spectrum at several occasions at workshops and in the plenary of the Ethical Trading Initiative conference that was held in London on May 12th and 13th. The conference, where Shirin Akther from Karmoijbi Nari was also present, was attended by over 350 representatives from businesses, unions, NGO’s and governments, including from the BSCI, GTZ, the ILO with whom we had also several informal meetings. There were many other brands sourcing from Bangladesh like H&M and the GAP, we approached these last brands to ask for their support for the call for structural preventative measures (see further down for ways for you to do the same). European parliament member Richard Howitt was a keynote speaker, and he spoke at some length about the Spectrum case, reminding those present that the ethical trade movement would ignore this at its peril, and called upon European brands and retailers to make sure that the surviving workers and the families of the workers who died would receive their rightful compensation.

The Belgian CCC met with the Cotton Group company (Belgium) whose orders ready for shipments were stocked in the Spectrum factory at the time of the collapse and that was sourcing at the Shahriyar next door building damaged by the collapse of Spectrum and whose workers are without jobs for this moment. The company stated that they will take steps to help the workers and their families. Payment for product shipment completed just before the factory collapsed will be used to priority to contribute to pay compensations and wages to workers. The Cotton Group is also awaiting the result of an audit on the structural security of the Shahriyar factory before continuing any production at that factory already in progress. Cotton Group orders that are not yet in production will be canceled pending the release of the findings. Cotton Group has requested construction plans and building authorizations from all its suppliers in Bangladesh.

Carrefour has requested audits where a systematic review of construction permits and legal authorisations will be conducted. Carrefour intends to ask its suppliers in Bangladesh to provide it with documentary evidence of construction permits for the buildings in which they operate, but to date it has not made any commitment to help workers with compensation, to enable them in obtaining necessities such as food and shelter. The Trades Unions who are members of the Belgian CCC also started a letter campaign towards Carrefour and on June 9th the Spectrum-Shahriyar issue will be on the agenda at the works council meeting where management will also be present.

The Dutch CCC met with the Dutch company Scapino (part of the KarstadtQuelle group). Scapino stated that they recognised that help for the Spectrum-Shahriyar workers had experienced unnecessary delays and they would inform the BSCI about this in writing. Scapino also stated that they supported the demands related to compensation regarding payment of back wages and compensation for injured workers and their families as well as compensation for families of the workers who were killed. However, in this meeting, no actual amounts or concrete steps to make good on this were named. Scapino also announced that they would commission audits with their suppliers to ensure that their suppliers complied with legal safety standards.

Following the example of the Maquila Solidarity Network (MSN) in Canada, the CCC International Secretariat distributed a sample letter to the National CCCs...
calling on them to contact brands in their countries who are sourcing in Bangladesh but not at Spectrum-Shahriyar to also take appropriate action. They are asked to urge the BGMEA to work with local trade unions and NGOs to conduct a transparent investigation and ensure adequate compensation, to contact all their Bangladeshi suppliers to instruct them to review safety codes and ensure that they meet the legal requirements for occupational health and safety, and to pledge support for a structural safety program. Member companies of the Ethical Trading Initiative in the UK are presently discussing this proposal. This is an important action to take in addition to pressuring the brands who were sourcing at Spectrum-Shahriyar. Please take action now to identify brands in your own country who are sourcing from Bangladesh, and call upon them to take these steps. You can find the sample letter below.

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**ACTION REQUEST**

*Please first read the updates on this appeal*

It is essential that all brands who were sourcing at Spectrum/Shahriyar at any given point in time over the last 4 years, as well as the BSCI act immediately to provide compensation to the workers and their families, and they should initiate a review of the implementation of their occupational health and safety codes in garment factories in Bangladesh. Please find below the following sample letters, in which also the outstanding demands can be found.

1. Sample letter to the BSCI
2. Sample letter to companies sourcing at Spectrum/Shahriyar
3. Sample letter to companies sourcing in Bangladesh (though not from Spectrum/Shahriyar).

Please send these letters to the addresses provided to protest their lack of response to this tragedy.

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**1. Send a letter to the BSCI**

**Sample letter to the BSCI**

BSCI  
168, Av. De Cortenbergh  
B-1000 Brussels  
Tel.: 0032-2-762 05 51  
Fax: 0032-2-762 75 06  
Email: info@fta-eu.org

Jan A. Eggert  
BSCI Secretary General  
Email: jan.eggert@fta-eu.org  
Tel.: 0032-2-741 64 02  
Fax: 0032-2-762 75 06

Lorenz Berzau  
BSCI Project Coordinator  
Email: lorenz.berzau@fta-eu.org  
Tel.: 0032-2-741 64 07  
Fax: 0032-2-762 75 06

Date:

Re.: Support for victims of the Spectrum-Shahriyar disaster

Dear Mr. Eggert and Mr. Berzau,

I am writing to you to express my concern regarding the BSCI’s lack of response to the plight of the victims and families of the Spectrum-Shahriyar factory in Bangladesh. I have been informed by the Clean Clothes Campaign that while 74 workers were killed, more than a hundred injured (some severely)
and more than 5000 workers lost their jobs, the BSCI has not taken any steps to help these workers and their families. The CCC reported that these workers and their families had lost their homes and could not even provide for their most basic needs due to the loss of income.

I also understand that the Clean Clothes Campaign contacted you specifically asking for you response in reply to the demands presented in that letter and that the BSCI failed to issue a response. At this time I call upon you to immediately respond to the demands below by taking concrete measures to ensure that Spectrum-Shahriyar workers receive timely assistance, that a transparent investigation of the causes of the collapse is conducted and that structural measures are put in place to prevent a tragedy like this from ever happening again. These demands, that apply to both the BSCI as well as the brands, have been formulated as follows:

OUTSTANDING DEMANDS PER May 24th 2005

1. Compensation

All brands sourcing at Spectrum-Shahriyar at any given point of time in the past 4 years should ensure that appropriate compensation is paid to all families of the dead workers (according the the fatal accident act, up to one million taka) as well as to the injured workers (at least the same amount if not higher, including expected loss of income over future working life, damages and all costs of treatment). A special medical board should be established to take responsibility to see that workers receive proper treatment, expenses for which should be fully paid (not by the workers).

All outstanding wages and overtime payments should be paid immediately, and the circa 5000 workers who lost their jobs at Spectrum/Shahriyar should continue to receive wages, and be assisted in finding alternative employment. If officially terminated they should receive payment at least the maximum amount allowed by law in case of factory closure.

A public statement of intent to this effect should be made by each brand and/or by the BSCI immediately to assure the workers, their families and concerned consumers that action will be taken.

2. Regarding the investigation:

Support for high-powered investigation committee with legal local standing should be established to find out the actual number of dead, wounded, missing persons and bodies officially recovered, and to specify which authority should follow up on those findings. The brands and the BSCI should officially request from the BGMEA and Bangladeshi authorities that this happens. They should also request that the investigation reports from BGMEA and Rajuk be made public.

Many of the European companies producing at Spectrum Sweaters have codes of conduct including the right to a safe and healthy workplace, and claim to regularly audit their suppliers to ensure that these standards are met. These programs have been clearly insufficient to prevent, detect, or remediate violations of construction rules and labor laws, and this dramatic failure has cost these young women and men their lives. Companies should publicly disclose their audit reports of this facility. The BGMEA should publicly disclose reports on their fire safety program at Spectrum Sweater.

The code implementation schemes of all brands sourcing at Spectrum/Shahriyar (and the scheme of the BSCI itself) -- none of whom identified the safety risks to the workers, nor addressed any of many other violations to almost every element of the code -- should all be reviewed.

3. Regarding preventative measures:

Call upon industry, along with public authorities (at the local and international levels) must commit to launch an immediate initiative to take on the safety issues that plague the garment industry in Bangladesh, including a structural review of multi-story buildings and facilities inspection mechanisms. Such an initiative should examine occupational health and safety regulations and their implementation (including emergency regulations). A permanent tripartite high-powered committee (government, employers and trade unions) should be set up as part of the program, as well as an independent international oversight committee. Such a committee should be composed of people with expertise in civil engineering, health and safety, and international labor standards in the garment industry.

In addition to addressing technical matters, workers' access to safe channels by which they can communicate their concerns on issues such as health and safety to their employers must also be addressed. The initiative should be given a multi-year assignment in order to ensure that follow-up takes place on any recommendations that will be made.
The brands and the BSCI should issue a statement indicating their support for such an initiative.

This call for immediate action on health and safety issues comes in addition to ongoing demands that the right to organize, the right to collective bargaining, the right to one day off per week (Friday) and a 48 hour working week with no forced overtime, the right to earn a living wage, and the right to security of employment (appointment letter) and regular payment of salaries and benefits (health, maternity) be respected throughout the sector. Brands, industry and government should individually and collectively take credible steps in this regard. Experience has demonstrated that the implementation of basic labour rights is interconnected and for any attempt to make sustainable progress on health and safety issues action has to be taken on these other issues as well.

I hope that the BSCI appreciates the urgency of attending to this matter and that there will be no further delays in taking concrete measures to help the Spectrum/Shahriyar workers.

I look forward to hearing your response, including the action you have taken in this matter.

Yours Sincerely,

[name]

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2. **Send a letter to companies sourcing at Spectrum/Shahriyar**

To:

**ZARA INDITEX**
Inditex (Industria de Diseño Textil S.A.),
Edificio Inditex, Av. de la Diputación s/n, 15142 Arteixo.
A Coruña, Spain.
E-mail: politicadatos@inditex.com

**KARSTADTQUELLE AG**
Corporate Headquarters
Theodor-Althoff-Str. 2
D-45133 Essen
Phone: +49 - 201 - 727 - 1
Fax: +49 - 201 - 727 - 5216
E-mail: info@karstadtquelle.de

**Klaus Steilmann GmbH & Co. KG**
Feldstraße 4
44867 Bochum
Tel. +49-(0)2327-940-0
E-mail: ute_steilmann@steilmann.com

**Carrefour**
Mr Roland Vaxelaire
Quality and Sustainable Development Director
6 avenue Raymond Poincaré
BP 2123
75771 Paris Cedex 16
Tel. +33 1 53 70 19 00
E-mail: roland_vaxelaire@carrefour.com

Date:

Re.: Support for victims of the Spectrum-Shahriyar disaster

Dear

I am writing to you to express my concern regarding your company’s lack of response to the plight of the victims and families of the Spectrum-Shahriyar factory in Bangladesh. I have been informed by the Clean Clothes Campaign that while 74 workers were killed, more than a hundred injured (some severely) and more than 5000 workers lost their jobs, your company, that was sourcing at this factory, has not taken any steps to help these workers and their families. The CCC reported that these workers and their families had lost their homes and could not even provide for their most basic needs due to the loss of income.

To date your company has not made any public commitment to help the workers who made your products. At this time I call upon you to immediately respond to the demands below by taking concrete measures to ensure that...
Spectrum-Shahriyar workers receive timely assistance, that a transparent investigation of the causes of the collapse is conducted and that structural measures are put in place to prevent a tragedy like this from ever happening again. These demands apply to all brands sourcing at this factory and are formulated as follows:

OUTSTANDING DEMANDS PER May 24th 2005

1. COMPENSATION

All brands sourcing at Shahriyar/Spectrum at any given point of time in the past 4 years should ensure that appropriate compensation is paid to all families of the dead workers (according the the fatal accident act, up to one million taka) as well as to the injured workers (at least the same amount if not higher, including expected loss of income over future working life, damages and all costs of treatment). A special medical board should established to take responsibility to see that workers receive proper treatment, expenses for which should be fully paid (not by the workers).

All outstanding wages and overtime payments should be paid immediately, and the circa 5000 workers who lost their jobs at Spectrum/Shahriyar should continue to receive wages, and be assisted in finding alternative employment. If officially terminated they should receive payment at least the maximum amount allowed by law in case of factory closure.

A public statement of intent to this effect should be made by each brand to immediately assure the workers, their families and concerned consumers that action will be taken.

2. REGARDING THE INVESTIGATION

Support for high-powered investigation committee with legal local standing should be established to find out the actual number of dead, wounded, missing persons and bodies officially recovered, and to specify which authority should follow up on those findings. The brands officially request from the BGMEA and Bangladeshi authorities that this happens. They should also request that the investigation reports from BGMEA and Rajuk be made public.

Many of the European companies producing at Spectrum Sweaters have codes of conduct including the right to a safe and healthy workplace, and claim to regularly audit their suppliers to ensure that these standards are met. These programs have been clearly insufficient to prevent, detect, or remediate violations of construction rules and labor laws, and this dramatic failure has cost these young women and men their lives. Companies should publicly disclose their audit reports of this facility. The BGMEA should publicly disclose reports on their fire safety program at Spectrum Sweater.

The code implementation schemes of all brands sourcing at Spectrum/Shahriyar (and the scheme of the BSCI itself) -- none of whom identified the safety risks to the workers, nor addressed any of many other violations to almost every element of the code -- should all be reviewed.

3. REGARDING PREVENTATIVE MEASURES:

Call upon industry, along with public authorities (at the local and international levels) must commit to launch an immediate initiative to take on the safety issues that plague the garment industry in Bangladesh, including a structural review of multi-story buildings and facilities inspection mechanisms. Such an initiative should examine occupational health and safety regulations and their implementation (including emergency regulations).

In addition to addressing technical matters, workers’ access to safe channels by which they can communicate their concerns on issues such as health and safety to their employers must also be addressed.

The brands should issue a statement indicating their support for a such an initiative.

This call for immediate action on health and safety issues comes in addition to ongoing demands that the right to organize, the right to collective bargaining, the right to one day off per week (Friday) and a 48 hour working week with no forced overtime, the right the earn a living wage, and the right to security of employment (appointment letter) and regular payment of salaries and benefits (health, maternity) be respected throughout the sector. Brands, industry and government should individually and collectively take credible steps in this regard. Experience has demonstrated that the implementation of basic labour rights is interconnected and for any attempt to make sustainable progress on health and safety issues action has to be taken on these other issues as well.

I hope that your appreciates the urgency of attending to this matter and that there will be no further delays in taking concrete measures to help the Spectrum-Shahriyar workers.
I look forward to hearing your response, including the action you have taken in this matter.

Yours Sincerely,

The CCC calls upon trade unions, labour organisations, human rights organizations and NGOs to identify companies sourcing in Bangladesh and send this letter urging them to act on the demands outlined therein.

3. Sample letter to other companies sourcing in Bangladesh.

DATE:

To:

Re: Factory Collapse in Bangladesh April 11, 2005-05-11

We are writing to you and to a number of other retailers and manufacturers sourcing apparel products from Bangladesh to request your assistance to help ensure that garment workers in that country have safe and healthy working conditions.

Most likely you are well aware of the terrible tragedy that occurred in Savar Dhaka, Bangladesh at 1:00 a.m. on April 11, 2005, when the nine-story, illegal garment factory that housed Spectrum Sweater Industries and Shahriyar Fabrics Industries collapsed, killing 74 workers, injuring at least 80 and leaving many others missing, trapped under the debris. This catastrophic loss of life should, and could, have been avoided had the employers, the government, and the retailers sourcing from the factory acted responsibly and responded to warning signs that there were serious problems in the factory.

The factory was built on a swamp and originally had only four stories. However, to accommodate large orders that the manufacturers did not want to refuse, five additional floors were added, and subsequently filled with heavy machinery, despite the fact that the building lacked an adequate foundation. Reports indicate that violations of health and safety regulations were rife within the factory, and that accidents were all too common.

Three days before the building collapsed a worker died as a result of burns from the boiler. Another worker is still in the hospital, three months after being electrocuted when her clothing became entangled in wires. Just sixteen hours before the building crumbled, workers' complaints that there were cracks in the structure's supporting columns fell on deaf ears. Labour rights violations were also routine. Workers, including 15-year-olds, were not even paid the minimum wage and often worked seven days a week, through the night.

What is most disturbing about this disaster is that it is by no means an anomaly in the Bangladeshi garment and textile industry. For example, in recent years factory fires alone have claimed hundreds of lives. Such events are a sobering indication that the drive to be a competitive player in the global trade of garments and textiles often leads to a complete disregard for adequate working conditions, basic rights and safety regulations.

That is why we are writing to ask that you take immediate and concerted action on these issues. Please note that we are not requesting you to cease sourcing from Bangladesh, especially given predictions that the elimination of quotas could lead to significant job loss and socio-economic turmoil as the industry restructures. Closing factories and/or terminating contracts with suppliers will not deal with the root causes of these problems. Instead, we urge you to work with your suppliers in Bangladesh, as well as industry associations and the local authorities to ensure that safe and healthy working conditions are the norm, so future tragedies can be prevented. However, if a supplier is unwilling or unable to provide safe working conditions, ending the business relationship may be the only option.

It appears that at the time of the tragedy many European retailers, such as Zara, Karstadt Quelle of Germany, Carrefour of France and Cotton Group of Belgium, were sourcing from Spectrum Sweater. Unions and NGOs have taken the case up directly with them however; the implications from this disaster are relevant to all companies sourcing from the garment industry in Bangladesh. Despite the fact that this factory was an appalling accident waiting to happen, it had passed factory audits conducted to satisfy its customers' codes of conduct. None of these retailers' monitoring programs managed to serve their intended purpose by sounding alarm bells over any number of these breaches. Obviously, current audit models are severely flawed and need to be subjected to intense scrutiny by a variety of stakeholders.
With these facts in mind, the Clean Clothes Campaign and others are calling upon all companies sourcing from Bangladesh to do the following:

1. Urge the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) and the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA) to work with trade unions and NGOs ensure that investigations into the cause of the buildings collapse are transparent, include a full list of all dead, missing, injured and survivors, and importantly that the injured workers and the families of those who were killed are adequately compensated and workers left unemployed receive adequate compensation and alternative employment.

1. Take immediate steps to ensure that any factory your company sources from in Bangladesh is not at similar safety risk and verify that:

   - The owner has received all necessary building permits, and the building is structurally sound and pay special attention to factories around Dhaka city constructed in low-lying or marshy areas (which would include most areas to the West, South and East).
   - The plant and machinery are safe, emergency exits are unlocked and unobstructed, and there is adequate access and exit routes so that emergency equipment can be brought quickly to the site;
   - Workers receive adequate health and safety training and have secure channels to raise concerns on health and safety issues with management and the government.

2. Call upon local authorities and industry leaders to launch an immediate review of structural and health and safety issues that plague the garment industry in Bangladesh, including a structural review of multi-story buildings and of current inspection programs and practices. Such a review should include the participation of an independent international oversight committee that is charged with examining structural and occupational health and safety regulations and their implementation (including emergency regulations). Such an oversight committee should be composed of people with expertise in civil engineering, health and safety, and international labour standards in the garment industry, including the ILO. In addition to addressing technical matters, workers’ access to secure channels by which they can communicate their concerns on issues such as health and safety to their employers and the government must also be addressed. The committee should be given a multi-year assignment in order to ensure that follow-up takes place on any recommendations that are made as a result of the review process.

This call for immediate action on health and safety issues comes in addition to ongoing demands that the right to organize, the right to collective bargaining, the right to one day off per week (Friday) and a 48 hour working week with no forced overtime, the right the earn a living wage, and the right to security of employment (appointment letter) and regular payment of salaries and benefits (health, maternity) be respected throughout the sector. Brands, industry and government should individually and collectively take credible steps in this regard. Experience has demonstrated that the implementation of basic labour rights is interconnected and for any attempt to make sustainable progress on health and safety issues action has to be taken on these other issues as well.

We look forward to receiving your response regarding the actions your company will take to help ensure that workers in Bangladesh supply factories enjoy safe and healthy working conditions.

Yours Sincerely,

Name: