Clean Clothes Campaign is disappointed with the proposal for a meager US$12 raise of the minimum wage in Cambodia, from US$128 to US$140 per month. In October, the Labor Advisory Committee (LAC) -- the country's wage-setting group comprised of 28 representatives from government, unions and employers -- voted to approve the new minimum wage.

The new minimum wage takes effect in January for Cambodia's 700,000 garment industry workers. Garment workers currently have to work overtime to sustain themselves and their families.

Ath Thorn, from C.CAWDU, an independent union in Cambodia, says: "With this proposal, the Cambodian government and employers federation GMAC forces workers to take action. They can barely survive with the current wages, and are in effect forced to do up to 12 hours a day with overtime to be able to feed themselves and their children. We can not accept this."

On Oct 7, more than 50,000 workers from 56 C.CAWDU factories demonstrated with support from actions by other workers such as construction and mixed-industry workers. The women and men demanded a rise to US$177 per month, saying it is the absolute minimum to survive.

Clean Clothes Campaign continues to support the women and men stitching clothes for major Western brands.

Carin Leffler from Clean Clothes Campaign says: "Brands sourcing from Cambodia can not expect the women and men to accept these bread crumbs and pretend it's allright. They effectively slave themselves at factories, only for the brands to make huge profits. Brands have the responsibility and power to make sure all garment workers recieve a living wage."
Since late 2013 Cambodian workers have been demanding an increase in the minimum wage in order to take crucial steps towards the payment of a living wage. In early January 2014 wage struggles escalated when police and military cracked down on wage protests and 23 workers were arrested, five died and several others injured. The Cambodian unions are joining together with a demand to raise the minimum wage to US$177 with immediate effect.

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