

Spectrum collapse: eight years on and still little action on safety



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April 11 marks the eighth anniversary of the tragic collapse of the Spectrum garment factory. In 2005 the illegally built extra floors within the building collapsed, killing 64 workers and injuring 80 others. The tragedy set the standard for worker compensation, yet workers of recent fatal accidents remain without compensation.

Almost a decade after Spectrum, buildings in Bangladesh remain structurally unsafe: buildings are illegally converted into factories and factories run day and night in order to meet production targets. Keeping costs low is prioritized while widespread fatal health and safety faults remain. Faulty electrical circuits, unstable buildings, inadequate escape routes and unsafe equipment are a major cause of death and injury.



Only four months ago, the fire at Tazreen - a factory close the former location of Spectrum - cost the lives of 112 workers and injured scores of others. Again, the high death toll was linked to illegally built constructions. Meanwhile, the garment industry in Bangladesh continues to grow at record rates to become the second largest export of apparel after China.

Unless there is a real game-change, workers keep risking their lives for our clothes. That is why CCC, together with labour organisations all over the world, has been pushing brands to start working directly with workers to clean up their supply chain.

To prevent factory fires and collapses, brands sourcing from Bangladesh should join the Bangladesh Fire and Building Safety Agreement, signed last year by the US company PVH Corp (owner of Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger) and the German retailer Tchibo. This agreement, which was designed with Bangladesh unions and other labour groups, will mean fewer factory deathtraps. The Safety Agreement allows for independent building inspections, worker rights training, public disclosure and a long-overdue review of safety standards. It is

transparent as well as practical, and unique in being supported by all key labour stakeholders in Bangladesh and internationally.

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