The Clean Clothes Campaign has launched an appeal on jeans producers to stop sandblasting their products. Sandblasting can cause an acute form of the deadly lung disease silicosis. The practise puts the lives of thousands of sandblasting operators at serious risk. It's often performed in small workshops in the informal sector in jeans-producing countries like Bangladesh, Egypt, China, Turkey, Brazil and Mexico. Almost all of the jeans sold in Europe are produced in these countries. In Turkey alone, 46 documented cases of sandblasters contracting silicosis and dying have been registered. This is likely to be only the tip of the iceberg.

In other countries, there are no statistics available, but the numbers of casualties and potential future victims are estimated to be very high. The Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC), working together with the Solidarity Committee of Sandblasting Labourers in Turkey, demands from jeans producers that they guarantee that sandblasting is not part of their supply chains. A number of fashion companies and retailers have already banned the sale of such jeans, or publicly announced that the would phase it out over the next months. Amongst them are Levi-Strauss & Co. and Hennes & Mauritz (H&M).

The CCC also calls on the governments of jeans-producing countries to outlaw denim sandblasting, ensure that occupational health and safety rules are enforced, and provide disability pensions to sandblasters who contracted silicosis. Consumers in the importing countries can also contribute by assuring themselves that the jeans they buy have not been treated with the deadly process. From January onwards, the CCC will start a consumer action whereby all owners of a pair of
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jeans can send messages to jeans companies that refuse to ban sandblasting.

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