

Your Excellency,
the Ambassador of Bangladesh,
Mr. M. Shameem Ahsan

Embassy of Bangladesh
Rue de Lausanne 65
1202 Geneva, Switzerland

31st of January 2019

Your Excellency,

On behalf of Clean Clothes Campaign (Switzerland), we are here today as part of a global week of solidarity with garment workers in Bangladesh.

We are deeply concerned about the repressive measures that followed recent wage protests and resulted in dozens of demonstrators injured, one death, hundreds of dismissals, and dozens of charges against and arrests of workers and union representatives. The workers protested the recently announced minimum wage revision, as well as the unequal treatment of workers in different pay grades. Whereas increases agreed since the start of the protests have brought some minimal improvement, we reiterate that current wages in Bangladesh amount to poverty wages. We also urge the government of Bangladesh to respect workers' rights to peaceful assembly and demonstration, to release all workers and union representatives that were arrested on trumped-up charges and to drop the charges against those involved in the demonstrations this as well as during the wage protests of 2016.

Furthermore, we would like to stress the right for workers to feel safe in their workplace. The Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh has done ground-breaking work to improve the safety situation in garment factories in Bangladesh since its establishment after the Rana Plaza collapse in 2013. Despite this progress, the work is not yet completed and the government's Remediation and Coordination Cell (RCC) does not yet have the capacity nor has it demonstrated the willingness to inspect factories to the same standards. A genuine transition plan for factory inspections, safety trainings, and a worker complaint mechanism will need much more time and genuine engagement by the government. It is vital that the Accord be allowed to continue its life-saving work until that time.

During this week of solidarity with garment workers in Bangladesh, labour rights organizations, unions, citizens and consumers around the world are showing that they care about the fundamental rights of the people who stitch our clothes. In several cities around the world, labour rights advocates are bringing their concerns directly to Bangladeshi embassies and consulates, through a delivering letters, seeking meetings, or holding demonstrations. Online, many more people are similarly raising their voices to express their solidarity with garment workers in Bangladesh and their right to living wages, factories they can feel safe in, and freedom from repression.

We kindly ask you to transmit our concerns the Minister of Labour, the Minister of Commerce, and the Prime Minister's office.

Sincerely,



Brücke · Le pont



claro fair trade



Fédération romande des consommateurs



Stiftung für Konsumentenschutz



Public Eye



SGB | USS

Schweizerischer Gewerkschaftsbund



SOLIFONDS



Gewerkschaft / Syndicat Unia



Schweizerischer Verband des Personals
öffentlicher Dienste

Syndicat suisse des services publics