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### Remarks by Liana Foxvog, International Labor Rights Forum

Thank you to the jury of the Public Eye Awards for raising the profile of workers' urgent demands for workplace safety and labor rights in the garment industry by bestowing this award on Gap. The Public Eye Jury Award will support our campaign for workers' rights by making the company's irresponsible business practices even more well-known around the world.

In planning our nomination, International Labor Rights Forum, SumOfUs and United Students Against Sweatshops, thought: What's the worst kind of irresponsible company? *One that portrays a public image of being a leader in responsibility while actively undermining real corporate responsibility.* That's how we decided to nominate Gap.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Guidelines call on multinational enterprises, like Gap, to "take adequate steps to ensure occupational health and safety in their operations," including in their supply chains. After 29 workers were killed three years ago trapped inside a Gap supplier factory while a fire raged, ILRF, Clean Clothes Campaign, Worker Rights Consortium, Maquila Solidarity Network and a group of unions started negotiating with Gap and a number of other companies for a factory safety program to make sure that such a preventable tragedy would never happen again in the Bangladesh garment industry. Gap was consistently the one company that spent a lot of time talking with us and gave us numerous promises that they would do the right thing. But there was a deal-breaker: Gap didn't want to be legally-accountable to upholding commitments to safety.

Not long after Gap broke away from negotiations, two factory disasters of unparalleled scale occurred in Bangladesh: the Tazreen fire and the Rana Plaza building collapse, leaving 1,250 garment workers dead and thousands injured. But these horrific results of corporate negligence still weren't enough for Gap to finally listen to garment workers. Instead the company did what they do best, they published a website called "wearecommitted.com" to hone their image as a model corporate citizen. And then they corralled some other companies into a safety program that is unaccountable to organized workers and their unions, that does not provide meaningful protection for workers' right to refuse dangerous work, and that does not require Gap to stick it out with their suppliers to ensure financing is available for factory renovations.

When seven workers were killed at a Gap supplier a few months later, Gap expressed sorrow for the victims but was then quick to deny a relationship with the Aswad factory. But here are the documents showing Gap's presence (*hold up documents*). The Aswad workers are still waiting for Gap to pay compensation. And the garment workers in Cambodia – where Gap and its brand Old Navy are by far the largest American buyers – are still waiting for Gap to recognize its responsibility for the unconscionably low wages, which are the root cause of the worker strikes and labor unrest, and act to improve wages by paying higher prices to factories.

Gap, when workers are being *killed* in your supply chain, by armed forces that are shooting at them at protests and when workers are trapped inside a factory during a fire, something is very wrong. This will not be fixed by a fancy website or a program that is hardly more than a facelift of the corporate-controlled programs that have failed workers and sidelined their unions in the past.

Gap, it's time to listen to the workers who sew your clothing. Their hopes are but for a wage that will enable them to pay for their basic expenses without going into debt, so they can put nutritious food on the table for their families and not have to pull their kids out of school. They want their human rights, civil rights, and labor rights respected. It's incredible that in 2014 we have to talk about ensuring workers' right to refuse dangerous work, but Gap is not mentioning that anywhere in its shiny PR, so we will keep bringing it up until Gap finally signs onto the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh.

Gap, we look forward to bringing this award directly to you in San Francisco.

**Liana Foxvog** is the Director of Organizing and Communications at the International Labor Rights Forum. Liana has ten years of experience organizing for workers' rights in the apparel industry, from training SweatFree Communities activists to take action for sweatshop-free government procurement to coordinating corporate campaigns. In the wake of the Tazreen factory fire and the Rana Plaza building collapse in Bangladesh, Liana has been raising awareness in the international media and with consumers around the United States, urging American companies to pay the compensation they owe to the victims of the tragedies and to sign onto the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh, a legally-binding agreement that the International Labor Rights Forum participated in developing with unions and non-governmental organizations in Bangladesh and globally. Liana holds a Master's Degree in Labor Studies from the University of Massachusetts.