



Schone Kleren
Campagne

Clean Clothes
Campaign



Hon. Sheikh Mohammed Belal
Ambassador of Bangladesh to the Netherlands

29 January 2019

Honorable Ambassador,

On behalf of the Dutch trade unions FNV and CNV, Clean Clothes Campaign/Schone Kleren Campagne, The Dutch Labour Party/Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA), Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations (SOMO) and the India Committee of the Netherlands (ICN), we are here today as part of a global week of solidarity with garment workers in Bangladesh to express our deep concern about key matters of interest for ready-made-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. Freedom of Association and assembly are fundamental rights which have already been under pressure for several years in Bangladesh. Bangladesh has ratified the ILO Conventions 87 (Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise) and 98 (Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining). We call upon your government 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. We strongly believe 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 organisations, unions, citizens and consumers around the world are showing that they care about the fundamental rights of the people who stitch our clothes. In many cities around the world, labour rights advocates are bringing their concerns directly to Bangladeshi embassies and consulates, through 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 to the Minister of Labour, the Minister of Commerce, and the Prime Minister's office.

Yours sincerely,



Coen van der Veer
Treasurer, FNV



Arend van Wijngaarden
President, CNV



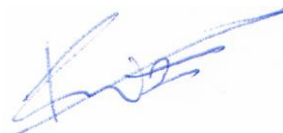
Christa de Bruin
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Pauline Overeem
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Kirsten van den Hul
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