

Labor and international fashion brands: War on Want Responds to Bangladesh Accord Settlement

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On Monday 22nd January 2018, after a two year arbitration process, unions representing Bangladeshi textile workers reached a \$2.3m settlement with a multinational apparel brand over delays to fixing hazards on factory sites. This comment comes from Thulsi Narayanasamy, Senior International Programmes Officer for Asia and the Pacific at War on Want (UK).

*“The Bangladesh Accord was welcomed as a the first legally binding agreement to hold international fashion brands to account for the safety of the workers in factories after the collapse of Rana Plaza factory killed over 1100 people. After 5 years of the Bangladesh Accord, the legally binding nature of the agreement has finally been demonstrated, with an international fashion brand being made to pay what they owed. This isn’t an occasion to pat fashion brands on the back – the fact that this needed to be taken through an arbitration process demonstrated how important it is to have legally-binding and enforceable agreements with corporations who amass profits on the back of workers in factories.”*Factory safety isn’t the only concern in Bangladesh. Last year, thousands of workers took to the streets to demand their wages be doubled to bring them a little closer to a living wage. After arrests and court cases, and thousands of workers blacklisted from working again, wages in Bangladesh for the garment industry are still too low to cover basic costs and overtime is still routinely forced on workers who still do not have the right to collectively organise in factories safely.

“With brands making billions in profit each year, it shouldn’t be optional for them to respect basic labour and human rights. We need to leave behind voluntary agreements that masks the impunity of the fashion brands and demand binding legislation to hold them to account.”

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