

Garment Workers in Bangladesh Deserve a Living Wage

Tuesday 31 October 2023, by [No Sweat](#) (Date first published: 26 October 2023).

On 1st November the Minimum Wage Board in Bangladesh will make its decision on the new minimum wage rate for garment workers. Trade unions and labour organisations are calling for an increase to at least 23,000 taka per month, which is roughly £172. Bangladeshi garment workers deserve a living wage, now is the time to support them.

No Sweat is joining Labour behind the Label, War on Want and trade unions across the UK in supporting calls by garment workers to raise the Bangladesh minimum wage to at least 23,000 taka per month and we call on international brands to support this increase.

Many brands have supported the move for greater building safety since the tragedy of Rana Plaza, but the wages workers are paid have remained low. The people that make our clothes deserve a wage they can live on.

Despite working in one of the largest and most important sectors in the country, the rising cost of basic food items means garment workers in Bangladesh are suffering from poor nutrition, as consuming things such as fish, meat and fruit have become luxuries they cannot afford. When things such as housing costs, medicine and basic bills are factored in, workers are struggling to survive.

In 2018 the minimum wage in the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) sector was set at only 8,000 taka per month, even at the time this was considered below the amount needed to meet the basic cost of living. Since then, there has been severe inflation, pushing up the cost of basic goods while wages have been stagnant, the result of this has meant the minimum wage has been a poverty wage.

Wages in Bangladesh lag behind other similar garment producing countries. Garment workers in China make the equivalent of 24,890 taka per month, in Malaysia it's 25,935 taka, and in the Philippines around 23,180 taka. Recently, the wage in Cambodia was set at 22,587 taka. Even in Vietnam, garment workers earn the equivalent of 15,660 taka, despite the size of Bangladesh's garment exporting industry far surpassing that of Vietnam.

The demands of the workers for a 23,000 taka minimum wage are justified. The demands of the workers for a 23,000 taka minimum wage are justified. According to the Bangladesh Institute for Labour Studies (BILS), 33,368 taka is needed to cover the basic costs of living in Dhaka. The union demand for 23,000 taka is a bare minimum. Any wage below 23,000 will force workers to either work excessive overtime, continue taking out loans, or continue to compromise on their nutrition to be able to pay bills. It is also well-known that insufficient income forces garment workers to pull their children out of school and into work, therefore perpetuating child labour. It is time that garment workers in Bangladesh were given the wages they deserve, a *living wage*.

We urge all brands sourcing from Bangladesh to do the right thing and publicly support the call for a 23,000 taka minimum wage before the wage review board announces its decision on 1st November.

If you would like to take action, [sign the open letter](#) to the Bangladesh High Commission that will be handed to them in London on 30th October 2023.

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