

Press statement

PILER (Pakistan) condemns Rana Plaza incident in Bangladesh

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Pakistan Institute of Labour Education & Research (PILER) considers the latest garment factory accident in Bangladesh on 24th April 2013 a matter of grave concern and an abominable act of violation of labour laws. The collapse of the eight-story building in which approximately 400 garment workers died, over two thousand injured and over one thousand workers are still missing has revealed complete failure of the state over compliance of labour laws, workplace safety and the ILO conventions in the country. There was a complete violation of building control and related laws in designing and construction of the building. The vulnerable work force was compelled to work in the premises well aware of the danger that the building might collapse a day in advance. The management of the factories had threatened the workers with dismissal and wage cut in case they refused to work on the day of accident.

The ready-made garment factories in Rana Plaza were the major producers of the well known international brands Primark, Matalan and Mango and were certified with the international auditing companies. The series of disastrous industrial accidents in Pakistan and Bangladesh in the last few months need to be taken into account seriously. There is an urgent need for a collective voice from the political parties, the civil society and concerned citizens to expose the brutal attitude of the employers towards the workers and to compel the states to ensure workplace safety and rights of the workers. Also, the fraud of the certification business worldwide must be exposed and the greed of the corporate sector curbed.

PILER expresses its feeling of solidarity and grief for the affected workers in Bangladesh and demands immediate audit of the certification companies which work as a tool for making huge profits for the brands and its local producers at the cost of the lives of poor workers who are bound to work under inhuman circumstances to feed their children and families.

PILER also demands immediate relief and full financial compensation, including lost wages for the dead and the surviving workers of this accident from both the employers and the international brands. PILER also calls for a serious and timely response from the state to bring the culprits to the justice. The government of Bangladesh and other South Asian countries should come up with a strategy for compliance of workplace safety conventions and core labour rights to prevent accidents like the garment factory fire accidents in 2012 in Bangladesh and Pakistan and the recent factory collapse in Bangladesh to be happened again in future.
