



Dr Wali Tasar Uddin
Honorary Consul
Bangladesh Consulate
312, Lanark Road
Edinburgh, EH14 2LJ

Sent via email to: waliuddin@aol.com

13 February 2019

Dear Honorary Consul Dr Wali Tasar Uddin,

We are writing from Labour Behind the Label, UNISON Scotland and Global Justice Now to support the recent global actions showing solidarity with garment workers in Bangladesh and to kindly ask you to transmit our concerns, detailed below, to the Minister of Labour, the Minister of Commerce and the Prime Minister's office.

Our letter follows and supports the letter sent on 30 January to High Commissioner Ms. Saida Muna Tasneem by Labour Behind the Label (Clean Clothes Campaign UK), the TUC, War on Want and UNISON, signed by General Secretary Dave Prentis. UNISON is the UK's largest trade union, with more than 1.3 million members. Many public sector employees will be using materials such as hospital bedding and towels or wearing uniforms made in Bangladesh. Most would be concerned that many items they use daily have been produced by people who are exploited and have no union to speak up for them. We urge public sector employers to think more ethically when purchasing equipment and supplies.

As highlighted in that letter, we want you to know that 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.

We also urge the government of Bangladesh 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, as well as during the wage protests of 2016.

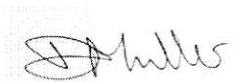
Furthermore, we would like to stress the right for workers to feel safe in their workplace. The Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh has done ground-breaking work to improve the safety situation in garment factories in Bangladesh since its establishment after the Rana Plaza collapse in 2013. 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. **It is vital that the Accord be allowed to continue its life-saving work until that time.**

During the recent week of solidarity with garment workers in Bangladesh, labour rights organisations, unions, citizens and consumers around the world showed that they care about the fundamental rights of the people who stitch our clothes. In at least eight cities around the world, labour rights advocates took their concerns directly to Bangladeshi embassies and consulates, through delivering letters, seeking meetings, or holding demonstrations. Online, many more people have been 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 pass on our concerns and we look forward to hearing back from you about what the government will do to address these issues.

Please address any response to us all to Mike Kirby, at UNISON Scotland, UNISON House, 14 West Campbell Street, Glasgow G2 6RX.

Sincerely,



Dominique Muller
Policy Director
Labour Behind the Label



Lilian Macer
Convener
UNISON Scotland



Mike Kirby
Scottish Secretary
UNISON Scotland



Liz Murray
Head of Scottish Campaigns
Global Justice Now