

January 30, 2019

Ambassador Mizanur Rahman
Bangladesh High Commission
350 Sparks Street, Suite #1100
Ottawa, ON K1R 7S8

Dear Ambassador Mizanur Rahman

I am writing to you on behalf of the over 60,000 education workers in the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation to express our deepest concern for the situation being faced by the millions of women and men that work in the Bangladesh ready-made garment sector.

Our Federation represents thousands of Ontario's educators who want to be sure that the clothes we purchase are manufactured in safe workplaces. Workplaces where women workers are free of harassment, discrimination, and violence, worker rights are respected, and fair compensation is paid.

Recent developments in Bangladesh threaten progress that has been made in garment factory building safety since the 2013 Rana Plaza disaster, and undermine commitments to worker rights. We are deeply concerned about the repressive measures taken in the last two months against workers protesting the wholly inadequate minimum wage increase announced in November 2018, as well as the unequal treatment of workers in different pay grades. Thousands of workers have been terminated by employers and dozens of charges have been filed against workers and union leaders. Many workers have been arrested and remain in custody. At least one death has been connected to the government crackdown on protesting workers.

As members of the Canadian Labour Congress, we join others around the world in urging the Government of Bangladesh to:

1. Immediately release all workers and union representatives arrested on charges and drop any charges against workers involved in demonstrations in the last months, as well as those charges that remain outstanding following the 2016 protests;
2. Request the Supreme Court lift the restraining order and ensure that the *Accord on Building and Fire Safety* in Bangladesh can continue its operations for the duration of the three-year transition agreement or until the designated oversight committee determines that the Remediation and Coordination Cell (RCC) is capable of taking over its tasks.

3. Respect the right of the women and men working in the Bangladesh garment sector to receive a living wage.

Respect of workers' rights is fundamental to building a sustainable Bangladesh garment sector into the future.

We anxiously await your response.

Yours truly



Harvey Bischof
President, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation

cc Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Hassan Yussuff, Canadian Labour Congress

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