



Comment on “John Lewis and Habitat withdraw granite worktops over slavery concerns” as published by The Guardian on 3 September 2017 which is invoked as a of point reference by the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre to associate nobilia-Werke GmbH & Co. KG, Germany with child and forced labor violations in the Indian granite and mining industry

1. The Guardian on Sunday, 3 September 2017 published the article “John Lewis and Habitat withdraw granite worktops over slavery concerns”. The article illustrated that India was the largest global producer of granite and that an investigation of quarries and waste stone processing sites by the *Dutch organisations India Committee of the Netherlands (ICN)* and *Stop Child Labour* had revealed and reported major human rights and labour rights violations at those locations. One particularly problematic product was identified as the star galaxy granite. An ICN director stated in the article that given the complexity of global supply chains, and the scale of abuses outlined in the report, it would be “almost impossible” to ensure that any star galaxy granite is free of labour or human rights irregularities.
2. Because of the ICN-report, The Guardian had previously inquired with Habitat UK and nobilia Germany about their sourcing of granite worktops sold in Habitat stores in connection with nobilia kitchens. At that time, Habitat UK housed two Kutchenhaus franchise stores as a shop-in-shop concept. Those two Kutchenhaus stores were operated by independent entrepreneurs using the Kutchenhaus franchise concept as provided for by the franchisor organization Kutchenhaus UK Ltd., a subsidiary of nobilia Germany. The two Kutchenhaus franchise stores sourced their kitchens cabinets exclusively from nobilia Germany but they were contractually free to source items like solid surface worktops from alternative third party suppliers as nobilia Germany did (and does) not offer solid surface, stone, granite or similar worktops to its customers.
3. Although the two Kutchenhaus franchise stores operated independent of nobilia Germany and nobilia Germany had no contractual rights to issue instructions to this effect, nobilia Germany effected a stop of any further sale of (star galaxy) granite worktops by those two Kutchenhaus franchise stores based with Habitat.
4. As the article published in The Guardian is still to date referenced by the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre to associate nobilia Germany with child and forced labor violations in the Indian granite and mining industry, nobilia Germany would like to reject any association of this kind to the greatest extent and stress the following:
 - nobilia Germany (including its subsidiary Kutchenhaus UK, Ltd.) takes its global social and environmental responsibilities very serious. We are continuously improving our risk management to identify and prevent human rights and environmental violations along our supply chain.
 - At no point in time has nobilia Germany (including its subsidiary Kutchenhaus UK, Ltd.) manufactured, sourced, offered, sold to or asked a franchisee or customer to purchase, offer or sell (star galaxy) granite worktops or other solid surface worktops (whether from India or any other country). nobilia Germany exclusively manufactures and sells worktops made from wood-based materials.
 - Regardless of its lack of legal leverage, as soon as nobilia Germany (through The Guardian’s inquiry) became aware that its products were displayed together with star granite worktops of (potentially) questionable origin, nobilia Germany used its utmost efforts to stop the sale and offering of those granite worktops through the Kutchenhaus franchise system.

..*

nobilial-Werke GmbH & Co. KG, Germany