



September 03, 2023

Dear Linda Schraml, Bianca Weis and Thilo Liedlbauer,

We are writing on behalf of the undersigned Bangladeshi union federations to strongly urge PST intervention to support an urgently needed increase to the legal minimum wage for garment workers in Bangladesh. In April 2023, the government of Bangladesh constituted the Minimum Wage Board for the first time in five years, in order to review the minimum wage for the RMG sector. The Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS) has conducted an extensive cost of living study, to which different experts and organizations have provided their input. This study was used to formulate a minimum wage demand of 23,000 Tk, which is the minimum required to support the basic needs of a worker and their dependents.

To determine their proposed minimum wage, several leading organizations like the IndustriALL Bangladesh Council, Sramik Karmochari Okkaya Parishad (SKOP) an umbrella organization of the leading national centers, and Garment-Sramik Karmochari Okkaya Parishad (G-SKOP) and the National Coordination Committee for Workers' Education (NCCWE) also conducted their own research and consultation. Those organizations are also in consensus to demand a 23,000tk minimum wage for the RMG sector workers.

The labour rights movement is already severely constrained in Bangladesh and the recent retaliatory murder of trade union leader Shahidul Islam over a minor wage dispute is illustrative of how dangerous the work of rights defenders is. The last minimum wage negotiation saw a severe, violent backlash against workers and we do not want history to repeat itself and believe you can play a role by supporting the workers who make your clothes. In Bangladesh, the process of minimum wage revision is highly politicised, and disproportionately skewed in favour of industry over trade unions. In fact, although legally qualified, none of our unions are given a place on the Minimum Wage Board. The GoB nominated the current member in the MWB despite the fact that his union does not have the highest representation among the RMG workers. The fact that elections are taking place this year further politicizes the wage negotiation process.

Since the introduction of the absolutely insufficient current minimum wage of 8000 BDT in 2019, consumer price inflation, currency devaluation and lack of adjustments have seen real wages shrink substantially. Garment workers in Bangladesh earn less than their counterparts in Cambodia, Indonesia, India, China, Malaysia and Vietnam. Workers and their families are living in debt and poverty while working to produce for your member brands, many of which have made a public commitment to providing a living wage to garment workers.

Employers and the government have not come forward with a suggested new minimum wage, however, based on previous wage setting processes, we believe that they will suggest a lower, unreasonable proposal. Anything lower than 23,000 BDT simply will not be enough to support a worker's basic needs. The link between reluctance to increase the minimum wage and brand pressure to lower production costs is clear. Fear of international brand relocation and international brand failure to increase payments in line with increased labour costs are repeatedly cited as reasons not to ensure workers earn enough to live on.

As your organization is committed to bringing stakeholders together to promote socially and environmentally responsible business practices, we call on PST to publicly:

- express support for the minimum wage to increase in line with calls being made by workers and their representatives for a minimum of 23,000 BDT per month;
- make a long-term commitment to continue sourcing from Bangladesh after the wage increase;
- agree to increase your purchasing prices paid to suppliers in line with the labour cost increase;
- Express your concern at the ongoing repression and harassment of trade union leaders and of your support for trade unions, freedom of association, and the right to protest.

Given that living wages and purchasing practices is one of the focus areas for PST, we believe that the demand for a 23,000 Tk minimum wage is in line with PST's commitments with regards to workers' pay.

We would like to ask you to get back to us no later than September 10, 2023 and send us a link to or a copy of your statement in support of our demands.

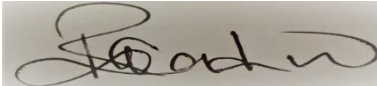
Yours sincerely,



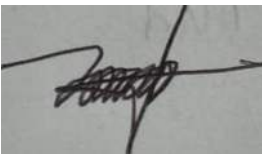
Kalpona Akter, President  
Bangladesh Garment & Industrial Workers Federation- BGIWF



Kamrul Hasan, General Secretary  
Akota Garment Workers Federation- AGWF



Rashedul Alam Raju, General Secretary  
Bangladesh Independent Garment Workers Union Federation- BIGUF



Salauddin Shapon, President  
Bangladesh Revolutionary Garment Workers Federation- BRGWF



Aminul Haq Amin, President  
National Garment Workers Federation- NGWF