C&A Response to Human Rights Watch regarding the labor unrest in Ashulia Bangladesh.

Firstly, we would take this opportunity to point out that C&A is deeply disturbed by the recent labor unrest in Ashulia, Bangladesh. Even though none of our suppliers have been affected by the current actions, C&A does not tolerate any form of violence or the abuse of power in the workplace.

Supporting the right of workers to organize and to bargain collectively is fundamental to improving labor conditions in apparel production countries. Therefore, freedom of association remains an important focus of our strategy to promote social dialog between workers and management and to advance the performance of our suppliers’ factories. A group of more than 20 brands and retailers sent a joint letter to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh on January 4 2017. The letter outlined:

- Our shared concern toward the recent detention of individuals with union affiliation and workers’ rights advocates in Bangladesh.
- That while we do not support any illegal strikes or violent protests, we do recognize that the root cause of the unrest must be addressed through social dialogue.
- That we believe the increased cost of living in Bangladesh may contribute to unrest among workers in the garment sector, and that we encourage the Government of Bangladesh to adopt a regular wage review mechanism would help foster stability in the Bangladeshi garment sector.
- That labor rights related to freedom of association must be fully adhered to and in compliance with the Bangladeshi Law and ILO Conventions.
- Our request that the Government of Bangladesh take steps to ensure the protection of the workers’ rights, with special attention to the legitimate representatives of the workers who have been arrested.

We will be discussing further steps amongst the signatories to the letter, including further dialogue with the Government of Bangladesh pending their response to our letter, and will keep you updated as appropriate. Below, you can read our responses to the two questions formulated by Human Rights Watch:

1. **Whether C&A has required the factories in their supply chain to withdraw all criminal complaints related to the protests in Ashulia?**

As it has been already mentioned above, **none of our suppliers have filed criminal complaints against any labour leader.** The names and locations of all our production units are publicly available in the following web site [http://materialimpacts.c-and-a.com/supplier-list/](http://materialimpacts.c-and-a.com/supplier-list/) as part of the transparency strategy that C&A has set up in 2016.

Moreover, in our Code of Conduct we require our suppliers to adopt an open and collaborative attitude towards worker representation, allow workers to form or join trade unions of their own choosing, and to bargain collectively. Adherence to these standards is regularly examined as part of our auditing process and violations are a zero-tolerance issue. Concerning this matter, we have contacted all our suppliers in
Bangladesh to emphasize the need to abide by our Code of Conduct. In the Annex 1, you can find the letter that has been sent to our suppliers as well as to the BGMEA in CC.

2. Whether C&A has required their supply chains to reinstate all factory workers suspended or fired related to the Ashulia protests?

None of our suppliers have suspended, terminated or fired any workers related to the Ashulia protests.

Based on our ongoing collaboration with the key stakeholders, we informed the Clean Clothes Campaign about the fact that none of our suppliers have suspended or filed criminal complaints against any workers. Nevertheless, C&A is closely monitoring the current developments to ensure that progress is made by all parties. We are convinced that through a joint effort by textile companies, local suppliers, political authorities, and NGOs, it will be possible to achieve comprehensive improvements.
Reminder of our Code of Conduct commitments

Dear Supplier,

We value your partnership as a supplier of C&A and because of our collaboration we are sending you this letter to reaffirm our shared responsibility in the implementation of the C&A Code of Conduct as it relates to the unrest in the Ashulia region.

C&A is convinced that workers’ rights are one of the most critical and relevant issues for our business. Therefore, we have observed the recent labour unrest with great concern.

We would like to take this opportunity to stress that C&A does not support any illegal strikes or violent protests and does not tolerate any form of violence or the abuse of power in the workplace. However, we do recognize and understand that the unrest among workers has become a reality, and that its root cause must be addressed through social dialogue.

For this reason, C&A calls upon all parties to comply with Bangladeshi law, ILO conventions and to respect labour rights and the freedom of association.

In C&A’s Code of Conduct, we require our suppliers to adopt an open and collaborative attitude towards worker representation, allow workers to form or join trade unions of their own choosing, and to bargain collectively. C&A believes that supporting these rights is fundamental to improving labour conditions and to advancing the performance of our suppliers’ factories. Thus, C&A expects all suppliers to commit to these standards.

Thus, C&A respectfully reminds you that the C&A Code of Conduct requires that in all your production units, you ensure that all employees have the freedom to associate with any group of their own choosing, in compliance with local law.

C&A will continue to work closely with you and monitor developments to ensure that progress is made by all parties. We are convinced that through a joint approach it will be possible to achieve comprehensive improvements that will benefit the industry of Bangladesh and its workers.

We thank you in advance for your attention in this matter.

Kind regards

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