



Improving working conditions in the global garment industry

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[The Scenes](#) [Issues](#) [Resources](#) [About us](#)

Statement Regarding Gap's Refusal to Agree to a Fire Safety Program in Bangladesh



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Gap Inc. has refused to participate in a comprehensive fire safety program, to which two other major apparel brands have already committed, to address the deadly working conditions at its supplier factories in Bangladesh.

Instead, Gap has announced that it will go it alone with the same self-regulatory approach utilized by Gap and other brands for two decades that has failed to protect the safety of workers in Bangladesh: factory monitoring controlled entirely by Gap, with no transparency, no role for workers or their trade unions, no commitment to pay prices to suppliers that make it feasible for them operate responsibly, and no binding commitments of any kind.

This is the same approach Gap utilized when its monitors repeatedly gave a clean bill of health to That's It Sportswear, the factory that burned in December 2010, killing 29 workers, many falling to their deaths from the upper floors of the building because locked stairway doors barred their escape. It is the same discredited approach that has failed to prevent hundreds more apparel workers from dying in preventable factory fires in Bangladesh in recent years.

The elements of an effective fire safety program are well understood and are the central components of the comprehensive fire safety program that Gap rejected:

- Independent inspections by trained fire safety experts not controlled by the brands or the factories being inspected;



Gap logo: taken from Brands of the Wo

- Public reporting of the results of all inspections;
- Mandatory repairs and renovations to address all identified hazards – meaning that brands cannot continue to do business with factories whose owners refuse to ensure workers' safety;
- A central role for workers and unions, including worker-led safety committees in all factories and access to factories for unions to educate workers on how they can protect their rights and their safety, including their right to refuse unsafe work;
- Contracts with suppliers that ensure sufficient financing and adequate pricing to cover the cost of eliminating deadly hazards and operating in a safe manner; and
- A binding contract between the brands and worker representatives that make these commitments enforceable – so the brands have to follow through, even if it means increased costs or longer turnaround times on orders.

Gap refuses to make any of these commitments, even though other major buyers, including PVH Corp. (which owns Tommy Hilfiger, Calvin Klein, Van Heusen, IZOD, ARROW, G.H. Bass, Eagle) and Tchibo, have agreed to do so. Gap's behavior is extremely irresponsible given the workers who have already died in their supplier factories and the risks faced by workers who still do work for them.

As the global union federation representing the workers in the sector and as labor rights groups committed to supporting workers and unions, we call on Gap to act responsibly and accept its duty to protect the lives and safety, and respect the basic rights, of the workers in Bangladesh who sew its clothes.

IndustriALL Global Union Federation

Clean Clothes Campaign

International Labor Rights Forum

Maquila Solidarity Network

Workers Rights Consortium

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Mission
How We Work
Local CCC's

At a glance

The Issues
FAQ
Get Active
Stay Informed



Living Wage

Why a living wage?
Asia Floor Wage
Sign the Living Wage petition

Contact

Contact Information
For the Press
About this site

