



On the Seventh Anniversary of the Rana Plaza Factory Collapse

On April 24, 2013, the eight-story Rana Plaza factory building in the Savar district of Dhaka, Bangladesh, collapsed, killing 1,134 persons, most of them young women garment workers, in the deadliest garment industry disaster in history. Many more workers were injured in the collapse, and the factory collapse has had an impact on the industry often compared to the impact of the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire in the history of the US apparel industry.

The Rana Plaza disaster gave rise to powerful demonstrations by tens of thousands of Bangladesh garment workers, and to intense public outrage the world over. As a result, multinational clothing brands like H&M, Zara, Tommy Hilfiger, The Children's Place and many others came under pressure to provide compensation to the victims and families. In addition, brands were pressured to sign a binding agreement to upgrade buildings in which their goods were produced, and eventually the Bangladesh Accord on Building and Fire Safety was signed by over 200 apparel brands. The Accord established a factory inspection program, staffed by recognized building and fire safety experts, and requirements that factory owners and brands correct any deficiencies found. In the seven years since the disaster, over 2,000 factories have been inspected, over 150,000 safety hazards identified, with over 90% of the hazards corrected. The Accord also gave workers the right to refuse unsafe work, provided training for worker safety committees, and protected their right to organize unions.

Today, seven years after the Rana Plaza factory collapse, millions of garment workers around the world face an even greater disaster, the collapse of the industry's supply chains due to the Coronavirus and COVID-19. Many brands and retailers, faced with little demand and closed stores, are cancelling orders and refusing to pay their supplier factories for completed work and work in progress, leaving no way for workers to be paid for their labor. Factories are closing too, sending many migrant workers home to their villages and trapping others in their factory dormitories or rented rooms. Literally millions of workers in countries like Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Pakistan and Cambodia are facing the loss of wages and jobs, with no way to put food on the table for themselves and their families. Those workers fortunate to continue working often face the risk of contracting the virus, without adequate safety equipment or the ability to social distance.

Workers United has been working with unions (including [IndustriALL Global Union](#)) and worker rights organizations (like [United Students Against Sweatshops](#), the [Worker Rights Consortium](#) and [Clean Clothes Campaign](#)) across the globe to find solutions to these serious problems. We will inform our members of opportunities to take action to support solutions.