



07/18/14

Jerry Stritzke
CEO, REI
6750 South 228th St
Kent, Washington

Dear Mr. Jerry Stritzke,

We are writing to you as grassroots unions and labor rights organizations in Bangladesh representing thousands of workers in the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) sector. We have read your letter to our allies in United Students Against Sweatshops, in which REI claims that The North Face/VF's refusal to sign the Bangladesh Safety Accord is "legitimate." As leading labor rights organizations in Bangladesh, we respectfully disagree with this opinion, and we urge you to cut ties with The North Face/VF as soon as possible.

We understand that you have communicated with The North Face/VF Corporation, one of the founding companies in the Alliance For Bangladesh Worker Safety and a major producer in Bangladesh. We have also read communications that discuss the company's program in Bangladesh and make numerous claims about the Alliance. Based on our experience, we must inform you that the Alliance is not considered by legitimate workers' rights organizations here to be a credible program for ensuring safe factories. We have been extremely disappointed with the Alliance's activities thus far.

As you likely are aware, deadly fires and building disasters have killed nearly 2,000 Bangladesh garment workers since 2005. In April, we commemorated the one-year anniversary of the Rana Plaza collapse, a disaster that claimed the lives of 1,137 workers. VF Corporation, which sources from 91 factories in Bangladesh employing 190,000 workers, has known for years about the safety risks in garment factories here. VF experienced a deadly fire in one of its factories, That's It Sportswear, where 29 workers were killed in a fire in December 2010. Just last month, there was another major fire in a VF factory called Medlar, which led to workers being injured and hospitalized. Despite this history, VF failed to take any real steps to address the risks in its factories.

Instead, the company has chosen to found the Alliance, another corporate-led initiative that includes the same flawed measures that have failed to protect workers in Bangladesh for the past decade. Even in the short time since the Alliance's creation, it has been clear that the program has no meaningful role for workers. When our organizations have attempted to

contact the Alliance concerning labor rights violations at their suppliers, including firings of union leaders, these complaints have fallen on deaf ears.

Most importantly, The North Face/VF, Walmart and the other leaders of the Alliance retain complete control over the program's governance, inspection, and remediation process, and legitimate worker rights organizations like ours have no say in the organization's decisions or operations. Your letter to USAS states that the Alliance has "the involvement of Bangladeshi labor organizations." However, the reality is that these Alliance unions represent almost no workers in the garment sector, and unlike the Accord, these unions have no decision-making or enforcement power under the Alliance. These are critical differences that make the Accord an effective program, while the Alliance represents a step backwards for worker safety.

As Bangladeshi worker representatives, we ask that you not be fooled by the claims made by The North Face/VF and the Alliance. Given our vast experience representing garment workers, we believe the Accord is the only way for The North Face and VF to meaningfully address worker safety in Bangladesh. Because the company has refused to sign the Accord, we ask that you immediately end your business relationship with The North Face/VF.

Sincerely,

Bangladesh Center for Workers Solidarity (BCWS)

Bangladesh Garment & Industrial Workers Federation (BGIWF)

Bangladesh Independent Garment Workers Union Federation (BIGUF)

National Garments Workers Federation (NGWF)