



June 18, 2013

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

On behalf of the 1.5 million members of the American Federation of Teachers, I write to express our appreciation for the urgency of your message to the Bangladesh government on the need to improve worker protections in the textile industry. We encourage you to be relentless in ensuring that the lives lost in the tragedy at Rana Plaza and other recent workplace disasters were not lost in vain.

The horrific building collapse at Rana Plaza brought to minds the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in New York City more than a century ago. That tragedy ushered in a period of new government safety regulations and spurred labor organizing in the United States. We now have the opportunity to stand with the men, women and children of Bangladesh, who work in dangerous sweatshops, for low wages, with no right to organize independent unions.

The series of factory disasters in Bangladesh are only the most recent in a long line of tragic events in the garment industry that serve to call attention to the absolute failure of the Bangladesh government, and of the U.S. and European corporations that work with Bangladeshi suppliers, to monitor and enforce international standards for factory safety and labor rights.

We join with others in the U.S. labor movement, in calling for our government to end, suspend, or restrict the Generalized System of Preferences program that provides duty-free privileges for Bangladeshi goods coming into the U.S., until we see real advances made in workers' rights, health and safety issues, and the right to form and join independent trade unions.

Our members require better practices from those companies not only for themselves, but for the people and communities they serve. We call for your continued leadership on this vital issue.

Sincerely,

Randi Weingarten
President

RW : bsc opeiu#2 afl-cio

cc: Seth D. Harris, Acting Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor
Miriam Sapiro, Acting United States Trade Representative
Robert Menendez, Chairman, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
Ed Royce, Chairman, House Committee on Foreign Affairs

American Federation
of Teachers, AFL-CIO

AFT Teachers
AFT PSRP
AFT Higher Education
AFT Public Employees
AFT Healthcare

555 New Jersey Ave. N.W.
Washington, DC 20001
202-879-4400
www.aft.org

Randi Weingarten
PRESIDENT

Loretta Johnson
SECRETARY-TREASURER

Francine Lawrence
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

VICE PRESIDENTS

Shelvy Y. Abrams
Mary J. Armstrong
Karen Aronowitz
Barbara Bowen
Linda Bridges
Elsie P. Burkhalter
Stacey Caruso-Sharpe
Kathy A. Chavez
Lee Cutler
Edward Doherty
Kathleen M. Donahue
Thomas A. Doober
Marietta A. English
Eric Feaver
Francis J. Flynn
Andy Ford
David Gray
Judy Hale
David Hecker
Richard C. Iannuzzi
Keith R. Johnson
Jerry T. Jordan
Dennis Kelly
Susan M. Kent
Ted Kirsch
Karen GJ Lewis
Louis Malfaro
John McDonald
Daniel J. Montgomery
Michael Mulgrew
Maria Neira
Ruby J. Newbold
Candice Owley
Andrew Pallotta
Joshua Pechthalt
David J. Quolke
Mary Cathryn Ricker
Sandra Schroeder
Phillip H. Smith
Tim Stoelb
Ann Twomey
Adam Urbanski