

Geneva, 9 November 2023

The Honourable Sheikh Hasina,
Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh,
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Calling on the Bangladesh government to stop police crackdown on workers' minimum wage protests in Dhaka and reconsider the minimum wage demand of BDT23,000

Dear Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina,

I am writing to you as the General Secretary of [IndustriALL Global Union](https://www.industrialall-union.org), which represents more than fifty million workers in mining, energy and manufacturing sectors across the world, including Bangladesh, to point your attention to the recent attacks on trade union rights and workers' rights in Bangladesh, and to call on your government to reconsider the minimum wage for garment workers to BDT23,000.

As you may be aware, trade unions in Bangladesh, including IndustriALL's affiliates have been protesting for an increase in garment workers' minimum wage. Unions are demanding that the minimum wage of an-entry level garment worker be fixed at BDT23,000 with a yearly increment of ten per cent. Several protest demonstrations have been held in this regard, especially after the fourth meeting of the wage board on 22 October, in which garment factory owners proposed to increase the minimum wage to BDT10,400.

On 7 November, your government announced the new minimum wage as BDT12,500. The new wage is much less than what workers have been demanding and more in line with what the owners of garment factories had proposed. It is not enough to reach a living wage. Brands should question their sourcing if the minimum wages are kept at such low levels and the violations of the right to organize and to bargain collectively are not dealt with.

Workers' protests have continued because of the inadequate increase in minimum wage and the Dhaka police has been trying to violently suppress them. Rasel Howlader, who worked at the Design Express garment factory in Gazipur, was shot dead while Amirul Islam, a worker at Columbia Garments, was injured in police shooting on 30 October 2023. On 8 November, a female worker of Islam Garment in Gazipur, named Anjuman Ara, was killed while several others were injured by police personnel.

Additionally, organisers from IndustriALL's affiliates have been arrested. Our affiliates informed that police have filed cases against several other organisers and workers alleging vandalism and assault. Since the announcement of the new minimum wage, IndustriALL's affiliates' central as well as local leadership is being harassed through repeated phone calls and threats of arrests from police and the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence.

The brutal police action against workers in Bangladesh coincides with the ILO Governing Body meeting which will be examining the latest progress report submitted by your government on the implementation of the ILO Roadmap. It is unfortunate that this is the state of affairs in reality, considering that one of the priority areas of the Roadmap for which the Bangladesh government needs to show it has taken measures is on stopping anti-union discrimination and violence against workers.

IndustriALL requests you to ensure that police do not use force against protesting workers and threat of arrest against trade unionists. Workers need unions who can fight for higher wages. We also call upon your government to reconsider the minimum wage for garment workers to BDT23,000.

We look forward to your immediate action and reply.

Yours sincerely,



Atle Høie
General Secretary