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Three years after Rana Plaza

The fight continues for workers' rights

A blog from MEP Jean Lambert Have you ever thought how much power you have? It might sound surprising, but as a consumer, even the smallest choices have a massive impact across the world. The choice of your clothes can have a global positive change. Every year we buy 73 million tonnes[1] of clothing – that's the weight of 200 Empire State buildings! And each of these garments has most likely traversed multiple continents before reaching your local shop. Millions of people work across the globe harvesting materials or sewing the clothing that the fashion industry fills our shop floor with. Most of these people work in unacceptable conditions. This week, actions will take place around the world to mark three years since the collapse of the Rana Plaza factory in Bangladesh - one of the worst ever industrial accidents to hit the garment industry. The 1,134 people that died that day, most of them women, as well as the more than 2,500 who were injured, are unacceptable victims of a system that needs urgent reform. This is not an isolated case in Bangladesh. This week is also about the 254 people who died in a factory fire in Pakistan in 2012, the thousands of Cambodian workers who have had their peaceful demonstrations calling for a decent minimum wage met with violence and inaction, and the women seamstresses in Bulgaria, who in addition to not being paid a living wage, are further subject to a gender pay gap.. Together, consumers and the fashion industry have the power to change the exploitative nature of this industry. We as consumers need to ask whether the price we pay for our clothing is providing a decent living for the people who make them, and the fashion industry must be able to give us the answer. EU institutions also have an important role to play in leading the needed change. The European Union has the potential to be a much stronger positive force. So the Greens are joining this week's actions to demand a safer, fairer, accountable and transparent industry that respects the environment. Our main demands are:

- Empowering women: Women make up most of the work force in the textile and fashion industry, yet gender discrimination and harassment is endemic across the supply chain. According to the Global Slavery Index[2], 36 million people are living in some form of slavery today; many of these make the clothes you might be wearing today. Women are an especially vulnerable group.
- Provide a living wage across the supply chain: The legal minimum wage in most countries is rarely enough for workers to live on. That is why we demand a living wage, one that is decided in consultation with workers, and a wage that allows them to support their family and allow their children to go to school rather than the factory.
- Ensure labour rights are protected, especially freedom of association and trade union membership as well as collective bargaining: workers cannot negotiate better and safer work conditions if their basic labour rights are not protected.
- Factory compliance with internationally recognised standards on health and safety. It is the job of

the companies, factory owners, and governments to ensure these buildings are not death traps for workers.

Together we are powerful. Join the actions this week and ask manufacturers directly who made my clothes? #whomademyclothes Also this week remind your decision makers that it is their job to regulate to ensure companies implement policies that guarantee workers are not exploited or in danger of losing their life at work. ------- Notes:
See your MEP joining the Who Made My Clothes campaign

[1] How to be a fashion revolutionary
http://fashionrevolution.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/HowToBeAFashionRevolutionary.pdf [2]
http://www.globalslaveryindex.org/

Recommended

Press release

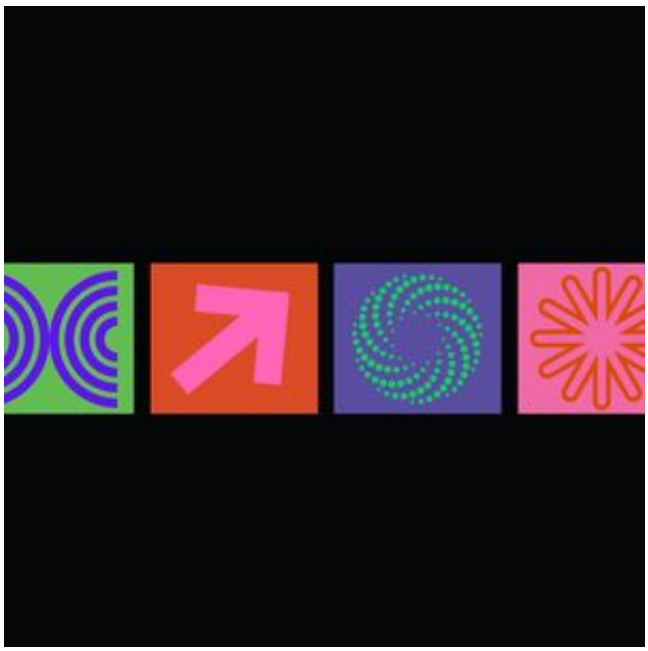
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