



Asia Floor Wage Alliance

AFWA Statement on the 12th Anniversary of the Rana Plaza Collapse

April 2025

Asia Floor Wage Alliance (AFWA) commemorates the 12th anniversary of Rana Plaza not only as a day of remembrance, but as a testament to the enduring power of worker solidarity. As we mourn those we lost, we also celebrate the strength of the garment workers and unions who continue to fight for a future where no worker's life is sacrificed for profit.

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Twelve years ago, the Rana Plaza factory complex collapsed in the Savar district of Dhaka, Bangladesh, killing over 1,100 mainly female workers and injuring thousands more. This was not a tragic accident but a preventable disaster – enabled by an industry that prioritizes profits over human lives.

Prior to the collapse, the warning signs were clear. The day before, large cracks appeared in the structurally compromised building, which was dangerously overcrowded. Within hours, the building collapsed—along with the illusion that brand audits and codes of conduct could ever protect workers.

This catastrophe followed just five months after the Tazreen factory fire killed at least 112 garment workers in Dhaka. These were not isolated incidents but predictable outcomes of a global supply chain model that systematically endangers and exploits workers while extracting maximum profit.

This exploitation is profoundly gendered. With women forming the majority of the garment workforce, poverty wages, unsafe factories, and retaliation for organizing are not incidental—they are instruments of control. Freedom of association is the line between danger and dignity. Yet brands and suppliers continue to repress it, denying women workers the collective strength that comes with organizing. Without freedom of association, there is no meaningful prevention, delayed responses to the next crisis.



We must not wait for another tragedy to compel action. The lives lost at Rana Plaza and Tazreen should have marked a turning point. Brands and suppliers have a responsibility to act **before** harm occurs, not after. Binding commitments that center trade unions and protect freedom of association are essential to preventing future loss. Women workers have long borne the brunt of delay. Their safety and dignity must no longer be contingent on crisis.

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Asia Floor Wage Alliance (AFWA) stands in solidarity with the survivors, the families of the victims, the workers and trade unions in Bangladesh and across the globe who continue to fight for supply chains that prioritize worker rights, safety, dignity, and power.

We demand change grounded in binding agreements with trade unions at the center—because it is clear what does not work: brand-led audits that exclude workers, programs that sideline unions, and voluntary compliance systems that fail when they are needed most.

The legacy of Rana Plaza cannot be reduced to a memory. It is a mandate for action. The conditions that made it possible will persist until workers and their unions—who have long organized for safer workplaces—are at the center of how supply chains are governed.

We carry the memory of Rana Plaza not as passive witnesses, but as a movement determined to never let it happen again. We demand change—real, enforceable, union-led change.

As Md Arifur Rahman of AFWA Bangladesh reminds us: “Rana Plaza is not just a memory—it’s a mirror reflecting the deep-rooted injustices of global supply chains. As we mark 12 years, we call on brands to commit to binding agreements that center workers’ voices, safety, and dignity. Without justice, remembrance is hollow.”