



Asia Floor Wage Alliance - Bangladesh

AFWA Stands in Solidarity with Workers in Mirpur and Chittagong: Accountability Must Be Binding

October 2025

Asia Floor Wage Alliance (AFWA) stands in deep sorrow, outrage and solidarity with the workers and families affected by the devastating factory fires in Mirpur (Dhaka) and Chittagong in Bangladesh. These tragedies once again expose a system built on the exploitation and neglect of workers' safety that values profit over human lives in the garment sector.

Mirpur: Unregistered Factory Fire Kills 16 Workers

On October 14, a fire tore through Road No. 3 in Shialbari, Mirpur, killing at least 16 people — many of whom were children.

The blaze began in an unlicensed chemical warehouse and quickly engulfed the adjoining building — that housed three unregistered garment printing factories — Smart Design & Print, R.N. Fashion, and Bismillah Fashion. Preliminary investigations revealed that toxic fumes from the chemical warehouse caused workers to lose consciousness within minutes, while the factory's locked rooftop exit, preventing any escape. None of the factories had fire safety certifications. All were operating without registration or oversight.

The workers had no warning, no safety equipment, and no way to escape.

“Sixteen lives are gone — some of them children who should have been in school, not trapped inside factories that operate in violation of every law and standard. These factories were unregistered, subcontracted, and hidden from oversight. We demand accountability — from factory owners, from the government, and from all those who profit from this system of neglect. What kind of progress allows children to burn for profit? We will not rest until there is justice for every child and every worker.”

— Sultana Begum, President, Green Bangla Garments Workers Federation and Co-Chair, AFWA Bangladesh

Chittagong: Fire in a “Compliant” Export Zone



Just two days later, on October 16, a massive fire erupted at Al Hamid Textile in the Chittagong Export Processing Zone (CEPZ). Around 500 workers were inside the nine-storey building when the fire began at approximately 2:10 p.m. While most workers escaped, the cause of the fire and the extent of damage remain under investigation.

That a fire of such scale could erupt inside a so-called “compliant” zone reveals a crisis of oversight, enforcement and accountability. Whether in hidden subcontracting units or export zones governed by formal compliance systems, garment workers remain unprotected from preventable industrial disasters.

A System That Refuses to Learn

These fires are not accidents – they are a predictable result of a system that treats workers’ lives as disposable. From Rana Plaza to Mirpur and Chittagong, the pattern is the same: voluntary audits before the tragedy, investigations after, and impunity in between.

Safety mechanisms in Bangladesh’s garment industry remain hollow when laws are not enforced and impunity prevails. The use of child labour, the absence of safety certification, and the recurrence of fires in “compliant” factories expose the deep rot in a global supply chain that prioritises profit over protection.

AFWA stands in unwavering solidarity with the survivors and families of the victims and calls for the following:

1. **A transparent public investigation** into both fires, with full disclosure of factory ownership and sourcing brands.
2. **Comprehensive compensation and rehabilitation** for survivors and the victim’s families.
3. **Enforcement of child labour, building safety, and fire safety laws**, backed by binding safety mechanisms with trade unions at the center.

The Struggle for Justice and Accountability is Just Beginning

Enough is enough.

No more workers should die for profit.

AFWA stands in solidarity with the survivors, the families of the victims, and with workers and trade unions in Bangladesh and across the world who continue to fight for supply chains that prioritise safety, dignity and accountability. The conditions that made such tragedies possible persist because of a crisis in governance and accountability in garment global supply chains. Trade unions are essential to ensuring that workers’ safety comes first.



The only acceptable change is change grounded in binding, enforceable agreements with trade unions at the centre. Brand-led audits compliance programs, and voluntary codes of conduct that collapse the moment they are tested, while purchasing practices drive suppliers to cut costs and subcontract to unregistered, unsafe factories. This is not a failure of oversight – it is the direct result of a system designed to protect profits, not people.

We carry the memory of every fire, every disaster and every life lost – not as passive witnesses, but as a movement that will continue to fight so that it never happens again. The global fashion industry must confront its responsibility to workers and usher in real, binding, and union-led change.

Anything less is complicity.