



Asia Floor Wage Alliance

Asia Floor Wage Alliance Statement on the Thirteenth Anniversary of the Rana Plaza Collapse

April 2026

Thirteen years have passed since the Rana Plaza factory complex collapsed in Savar, Bangladesh, crushing the lives of 1,134 workers and injuring thousands more. Today, Asia Floor Wage Alliance (AFWA) does not merely commemorate this tragedy; we confront the reality that the conditions which led to one of the deadliest industrial disasters in the history of Bangladesh and the region remain largely intact.

The spectre of that tragedy returned with devastating clarity on October 14, 2025, when a fatal fire and chemical explosion tore through a garment factory and adjacent warehouse in Mirpur, Dhaka, claiming at least 16 lives and leaving many more injured. Workers – many who were children – were trapped on the third floor, suffocated by toxic gases from illegal chemical storage, because the roof exit door was locked—a chilling echo of previous tragedies, including the 2012 fire at Tazreen Fashions that claimed over 100 workers' lives.

Despite improvements in safety for export factories since 2013, the 2025 fire proves that the most vulnerable workers—those in smaller, unregistered, or unmonitored units—remain trapped in the same deadly cycle.

The Failure of Voluntary Measures

For decades, fashion brands have relied on empty gestures: brand-led audits that exclude workers, voluntary codes of conduct that vanish under pressure, and "compliance" programs that sideline the very trade unions capable of enforcing safety. These mechanisms have proven ineffective. They are not solutions; they are delays.

Voluntary commitments have failed. The era of self-regulation must end.

We reaffirm that Rana Plaza was not an isolated accident but the predictable outcome of a global garment supply chain model that externalises costs, suppresses labour rights, and prioritizes production targets and profits over human life. The root causes remain unsafe factories and infrastructure; subcontracting practices that shield brands from accountability; weak safety standard inspection and enforcement; anti-union practices that silence workers and repress the right to Freedom of Association; a system of exploitation and violence that disproportionately affects a predominantly female workforce and brand purchasing practices that transfer risk and cost onto suppliers and workers.



A Mandate for Enforceable Action

The legacy of Rana Plaza cannot be reduced to a moment of remembrance; it is a mandate for enforceable action. AFWA rejects any attempts to dilute employer accountability or revert to business-as-usual.

Thirteen years later, many survivors continue to be denied full compensation, access to essential services and safe working conditions. Across supply chains many factories remain unsafe; insecure jobs, exploitative purchasing practices continue to put workers at risk.

We stand in continued solidarity with survivors, the families of the deceased, and all workers whose lives were devastated by these preventable tragedies. To secure a future where no worker's life is sacrificed for profit, decisive, sustained action is required. Such measures include:

1. Binding commitments are mandatory. Legally binding frameworks that place trade unions at the centre must replace voluntary codes of conduct.
2. Brands must immediately cease reliance on audits that exclude workers. Monitoring systems must be co-designed and led by unions and workers, ensuring that those who know the dangers best are the ones empowered to fix them.
3. Brands must accept full responsibility for worker safety throughout their supply chains, including mandatory human rights due diligence with legal liability for harm caused. This includes covering long-term support for survivors and comprehensive remediation of unsafe infrastructure, regardless of whether a factory is registered or unregistered.
4. Protect Freedom of Association. Brands must take decisive action to end anti-union practices in their supply chains. Freedom of association is the line between danger and dignity. Without the collective strength of organized workers to demand safety, there is no meaningful prevention.

AFWA remains committed to centring the voices and leadership of survivors and affected workers. We will continue to campaign for binding accountability, support worker-led union organising, worker and union-led safety initiatives and demand a fundamental re-orientation of global garment production toward human dignity, decent work and living wages.

Let the memory of Rana Plaza compel concrete change: no garment order is worth a human life.