Asia Floor Wage Alliance

Release Sultana Begum, Md Elias, and All Detained Garment Workers and Trade Union Leaders in Bangladesh — Stand with the Garment Workers and the Green Bangla Garments Workers Federation

20 November 2026

We, the undersigned trade unions, labour and human rights organizations, and allies across Asia, and around the world, stand in anger and solidarity with the garment workers of Bangladesh and the Green Bangla Garments Workers Federation (GBGWF), whose leaders have been taken by police simply for doing the work of a union: standing with workers demanding a wage they can live on.

On 17 November, Sultana Begum, President, and Md. Elias, General Secretary, of the GBGWF, were taken by Detective Branch (DB) police from their Federation office with a heavy police presence deployed outside at the time. We are deeply concerned for their safety, security, and wellbeing, and we hold the authorities fully responsible for ensuring that they are treated with dignity and released without delay.

These leaders committed no offense. They were seized for nothing other than representing workers demanding a meaningful revision of the minimum wage. This is not an isolated act. It is part of an escalating campaign of arrests, fabricated criminal cases, surveillance, intimidation, and violence against garment workers and trade union leaders engaged in the ongoing minimum wage struggle – a struggle rooted in a just demand, and one that calls for dialogue and resolution, not repression.

Workers who stitch clothes for some of the world's most profitable brands are being criminalized for asking to be paid enough to survive. Union leaders who dedicate their lives to dignity at work are being treated as enemies of the state. This is a violation of Bangladesh's own Constitution, of the ILO Conventions on Freedom of Association (No. 87) and Collective Bargaining (No. 98) that Bangladesh has ratified, and of every principle of decency that this industry claims to uphold.

We – including our comrades in the Asia Floor Wage Alliance (AFWA), who work shoulder to shoulder with GBGWF and garment workers across Asia – make the following demands of the Government of Bangladesh:

1. **Release Sultana Begum, Md Elias, and every garment worker and trade union leader detained for exercising their right to organize – immediately and unconditionally.**
2. **Withdraw all unfounded criminal charges** filed against workers and union leaders in connection with the minimum wage struggle, and end all police violence, surveillance, harassment, and intimidation against them.
3. **Guarantee the full and unhindered exercise of freedom of association and collective bargaining**, and ensure that no worker or unionist faces retaliation for lawful wage-related advocacy in their workplaces, in the streets, and in their union offices.
4. **Engage in good-faith negotiation with genuine worker representatives on a minimum wage that provides a life of dignity for garment workers and their families**.

To the 65,000 workers of GBGWF and our brothers and sisters in the garment factories of Bangladesh: you are not alone. Your demand for a fair minimum wage is just, and it is shared by workers everywhere. Unions and labour organizations around the world are watching, mobilizing, and standing with you.

To the brands that profit from Bangladeshi workers' labour: silence is complicity. You cannot build sustainability reports on the backs of workers whose union leaders sit in police custody. Speak up, intervene with the Government of Bangladesh, BGMEA, BKMEA and back your commitments with action.

An attack on the Green Bangla Garments Workers Federation is an attack on every worker who dares to raise their voice. We will not look away, and we will not stand down. **Release them now. Drop the charges. Respect workers' rights.**

In solidarity,

1. Aliansi Gerakan Reforma Agraria (AGRA), Indonesia
2. Alokito Garments Shromik Federation (AGSF), Bangladesh
3. Amnesty International Indonesia, Indonesia
4. Anarchosyndicalist Initiative Rocinante, Greece
5. Asia Monitor Resource Centre (AMRC), South Korea
6. Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law, and Development (APWLD), Asia Pacific
7. ASR Resource Centre Lahore, Pakistan
8. Bangladesh Garments and Industrial Workers Federation (BGSSF), Bangladesh

9. Bangladesh Garment and Sweaters Workers Trade Union Center (GSWTUC), Bangladesh
10. Bangladesh Garments Labor Congress (BGLC), Bangladesh
11. Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha (BNPS), Bangladesh
12. Bangladesh Textile & Garments Workers Federation (BTGWF), Bangladesh
13. Building and Wood Workers Trade Union Federation of Cambodia (BWTUC), Cambodia
14. Cambodian Alliance of Trade Unions (CATU), Cambodia
15. Cambodian Food and Service Workers' Federation (CFSWF), Cambodia
16. Cambodia Independent Trade Union Federation (CITUFED), Cambodia
17. Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO), Cambodia
18. Cambodian Tourism Workers Union Federation (CTWUF), Cambodia
19. Cambodia Transportation Workers Federation (CTWF), Cambodia
20. Cambodian Youth Network Association (CYNA), Cambodia
21. Cambodian Youth Power Union Federation (CYPUF), Cambodia
22. Center for Alliance of Labor and Human Rights (CENTRAL), Cambodia
23. Center for Business and Law Organization (BHRE Center), Cambodia
24. Clean Clothes Campaign - International Office
25. CNV Internationaal, The Netherlands
26. Coalition of Cambodian Apparel Workers Democratic Union (C.CAWDU), Cambodia
27. Commercial and Industrial Workers' Union (CIWU), Sri Lanka
28. Committee For Free and Fair Election in Cambodia (COMFREL), Cambodia
29. FEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNION OF WORKERS OF THE KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA (FTUWKC), Cambodia
30. Federation Union of Free and Independent (FUFI), Cambodia
31. FEDERASI PERSATUAN GERAKAN SERIKAT PEKERJA - SENTRAL GERAKAN BURUH NASIONAL (PROGRESIP - SGBN), Indonesia
32. Federasi Serikat Buruh Garmen, Tekstil dan Sepatu - Gabungan Serikat Buruh Indonesia (FSBGTS-GSBI), Indonesia
33. Federasi Serikat Buruh Garmen, Kerajinan, Tekstil, Kulit Dan Sentra Industri (FSB GARTEKS), Indonesia
34. Federasi Serikat Buruh Indonesia (FSBI), Indonesia
35. Federasi Serikat Buruh Karya Utama-Konfederasi Serikat Nasional (FSBKU-KSN), Indonesia
36. Federasi Serikat Buruh Perjuangan Indonesia (FSBPI), Indonesia
37. Federasi Serikat Buruh Sejahtera Indonesia 1992 (SBSI 1992), Indonesia
38. Federasi Serikat Pekerja Bandara Indonesia (FSPBI), Indonesia
39. FEMNET, Germany

40. Frente Auténtico del Trabajo, Mexico
41. Gabungan Serikat Buruh Indonesia (GSBI), Indonesia
42. Garment and Allied Workers' Union (GAWU), India
43. Garments Sramik Karmachari Federation (GSKF), Bangladesh
44. Garments Sramik Unity League (GSUL), Bangladesh
45. Gender and Development for Cambodia, Cambodia
46. Green Bangla Garments Workers Federation (GBGWF), Bangladesh
47. HomeNet Pakistan, Pakistan
48. Hosiery Workers Unity Centre, India
49. Independence Democracy of Informal Economy Association (IDEA), Cambodia
50. Independent Trade Union Federation (INTUFE), Cambodia
51. Independent Workers Union of Great Britain (IWGB) – Universities of London Branch, United Kingdom
52. Initiatives for Workers Solidarity in Asia Pacific (IWASP), Asia-Pacific
53. Karnataka State Garment & Textile Workers Union (KSG&TWU), India
54. Koalisi Buruh Sawit (KBS), Indonesia
55. Konfederasi Kongres Aliansi Serikat Buruh Indonesia (KASBI), Indonesia
56. Konfederasi Serikat Nasional (KSN), Indonesia
57. Komunitas Jaya Bersama (KJB), Indonesia
58. Labor Rights Supported Union of Khmer Employees of Naga World (LRSU), Cambodia
59. Lembaga Informasi Perburuhan Sedane (LIPS), Indonesia
60. Lembaga Studi dan Bantuan Hukum Nusa Tenggara Barat, Indonesia
61. Lingkaran Advokasi dan Riset (Link-AR Borneo), Indonesia
62. Marsinah.id, Indonesia
63. Mil Mazdoor Panchayat (MMP), India
64. Muttahida Labour Federation, Pakistan
65. Pakistan Food Workers Federation (PFWF), Pakistan
66. Pakistan National Textile Leather Garment General Workers Federation (PNTLGGWF), Pakistan
67. Pakistan Textile Workers Federation (PTWF), Pakistan
68. Partai Hijau Indonesia (PHI), Indonesia
69. Partnership for Environment and Development Organization, Cambodia
70. Penkalsanthippu, International
71. Perempuan Mahardhika, Indonesia
72. Perkumpulan Pegiat Kesehatan Masyarakat/SAFETY, Indonesia
73. Perpustakaan Patani, Indonesia
74. Persatuan Perjuangan Rakyat Indonesia (P2RI), Indonesia
75. Persatuan Rakyat Anti Imperialisme (PERISAI), Indonesia

76. Pride Foundation, Pakistan
77. Pusat Studi Hukum dan Kebijakan Indonesia (PSHK), Indonesia
78. Rana Plaza Solidarity Collective, United Kingdom
79. Rasamala Hijau Indonesia (RHI), Indonesia
80. RB Advogado, Portugal
81. Revolutionary Existence for Human Development (RED Organization), Sri Lanka
82. Ruang Arsip dan Sejarah Perempuan Indonesia (RUAS), Indonesia
83. SAWERA FOUNDATION, Pakistan
84. Sentral Gerakan Buruh Nasional (SGBN), Indonesia
85. Serbukindo, Indonesia
86. Serikat Gerakan Buruh Katering (S GEBUK), Indonesia
87. Serikat Pekerja Angkutan Indonesia (SPAI), Indonesia
88. Serikat Pekerja Kampus, Indonesia
89. Serikat Pekerja Media dan Industri Kreatif untuk Demokrasi (SINDIKASI) Yogyakarta, Indonesia
90. Serikat Pekerja Nasional (SPN), Indonesia
91. Serikat Pengemudi Angkutan Roda Dua (SERDADU), Indonesia
92. Serikat Tahanan Politik (SETAPOL), Indonesia
93. Shramabhimani Kendraya, Sri Lanka
94. SINDIKASI (Media and Creative Industry Workers Union for Democracy), Indonesia
95. Sommilito Sramik Federation (SSF), Bangladesh
96. South Asia Partnership Pakistan, Pakistan
97. Stand Up Workers Union, Sri Lanka
98. Textile Garment Clothing Workers Union (TGCWU), Sri Lanka
99. Textile Garments Workers Federation (TGWF), Bangladesh
100. Textile Powerloom Garment Workers Federation (TPLGWF), Pakistan
101. Textile, Powerloom and Garment Workers Union of Punjab (TPGWUP), Pakistan
102. The Freelancers' Collective, Malaysia
103. Trade Union Rights Centre (TURC), Indonesia
104. Transnational Palm Oil Labour Solidarity (TPOLS), Indonesia
105. UNISON, West Midlands England
106. United Union of Garment Workers (UGW), India
107. Venetia La Manna, United Kingdom
108. Women Action Forum, Pakistan
109. Women in Struggle for Empowerment, Pakistan
110. Women Workers Unity, Pakistan
111. Worker's Heart Union Federation (WHUF), Cambodia
112. Yayasan Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Indonesia (YLBHI), Indonesia

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