UNITED STEELWORKERS
USW
MÉTALLOS

Ken Neumann
National Director/ Directeur national

January 29, 2019

Ambassador Mizanur Rahman
Bangladesh High Commission
350 Sparks Street, Suite #1100
Ottawa, ON K1R 7S8

Dear Ambassador Mizanur Rahman:

We are writing to express our deepest concern for the situation of the millions of women and men that work in the Bangladesh ready-made garment sector.

The United Steelworkers represents thousands of Canadian workers that want to be sure that the clothes we purchase are manufactured in safe workplaces, where women workers are free of harassment, discrimination, and violence, worker rights are respected, and fair compensation is paid.

Recent developments in Bangladesh threaten progress that has been made in garment factory building safety since Rana Plaza, and undermine commitments to worker rights. We are deeply concerned about the repressive measures taken in the last two months against workers protesting against the wholly inadequate minimum wage increase announced in November 2018, as well as the unequal treatment of workers in different pay grades. Thousands of workers have been terminated by employers. Dozens of charges have been filed against workers and leaders. Many workers have been arrested and remain in custody.

We join others around the world in urging the Government of Bangladesh to:

1. Immediately release all workers and union representatives arrested on trumped-up charges and drop charges against workers involved in demonstrations in the last months, as well as those charges that remain outstanding following the 2016 protests.

2. Request the Supreme Court lift the restraining order and ensure that the *Accord on Building and Fire Safety in Bangladesh* can continue its operations for the duration of the 3-year transition agreement or until the designated oversight committee determines that the Remediation and Coordination Cell (RCC) is capable of taking over its tasks.

3. Respect the right of the women and men working in the Bangladesh garment sector to living wages.

Respect of workers' rights is fundamental to building a sustainable Bangladesh garment sector into the future.

Sincerely yours,



Ken Neumann
National Director for Canada

cc Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Hassan Yussuff, Canadian Labour Congress