



Fifth Anniversary of the Rana Plaza Collapse: Bangladesh at a Crossroads

- Bangladesh has the world's second largest garment industry [after China](#), generating around [\\$24 billion in 2014](#). The industry employs [4 million workers, 80 percent](#) of whom are women.
- Garment shipments to the United State—Bangladesh's single largest export destination—totaled [\\$5.2 billion in 2016-17](#).
- More than [3,000](#) garment factories operate in Bangladesh for export, according to the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA).
- Wages are the [lowest](#) among major garment-manufacturing nations, while the cost of living in Dhaka is [equivalent](#) to that of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Luxembourg and Montreal.
- The Rana Plaza building, which housed five garment factories outside Dhaka, Bangladesh, collapsed April 24, 2013.
- 1,134 garment workers—most of them young women—were killed when the multistory building pancaked on top of them.
- Approximately 2,500 people were injured—many of them losing limbs and thousands more severely traumatized.
- A [massive fire](#) tore through the Tazreen Fashions factory in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on November 24, 2012, killing more than 110 garment workers and gravely injuring hundreds more. In the six years since the deadly Tazreen Fashions fire, at least 88 workers have died in 23 garment factory fire incidents in Bangladesh, hundreds were injured, and thousands of workers were put at risk.
- The Rana Plaza collapse and Tazreen fire were preventable, but workers did not have a union or other organization to represent them and help them fight for a safe workplace.
- Without a union, garment workers often are harassed or fired when they ask their employer to fix workplace safety and health conditions.
- Five years after the collapse of Rana Plaza, the world's deadliest garment factory disaster, Bangladesh garment workers have seen workplace improvements.
- Today, 445 factories with more than 216,000 workers have unions to represent their interests and protect their rights.
- The Solidarity Center has trained more than 6,000 union leaders and workers in fire safety, helping to empower factory-floor-level workers to monitor for hazardous working conditions and demand safety violations be corrected.
- Since Rana Plaza, a variety of efforts to prevent unnecessary deaths and injuries due to fire or structural failures—including the [Bangladesh Accord on Building and Fire Safety](#)—have remedied dangers at more than 1,600 factories.
- However—Bangladesh's garment workers still must surmount significant challenges to earn a decent living in a safe workplace:
 - The labor law falls grossly short of international standards, and the Bangladesh government has failed to enact meaningful legal reforms.
 - Despite garment workers' desire to join a union, they increasingly face [barriers to do so](#), including employer intimidation, threatened or actual physical violence, loss of jobs and government-imposed barriers to registration.
 - The vast majority of workers do not benefit from union protections and collective bargaining agreements and so cannot negotiate worker safety with their employers.