

To: Buyers at International Textiles, Pakistan

By Email



Date: 11 February 2022

Regarding: Action required to stop labour law violations and union discrimination and at your supplier International Textile in Pakistan

Dear Company,

I am writing on behalf of the Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC) concerning regarding the dismissal of 8 workers from your supplier International Textile Ltd ('the supplier') located in the Korangi Industrial Area of Karachi, Pakistan. International Textile produces towels, linen and apparel products for international buyers, including your company. The workers were illegally dismissed for their participation in union activities and for demanding their legal rights, in clear violation of their right to freedom of association.

Case summary

The workers' union at the supplier, the National Trade Union Federation (NTUF) Pakistan, has provided the following information regarding International Textile's violations of workers' basic rights:

- On 30 October 2021, 25 workers from the International Textile Ltd facility Unit #2 were forcibly retrenched without any show cause notices. These workers had recently participated in union organising at the factory relating to underpayment of wages and benefits. Following a worker-led protest against these dismissals on 2 November 2021, 18 of the workers were reinstated. However 7 workers, who were leading union organising in the factory, have still not been reinstated. An additional worker was dismissed for union activities on 21 January 2022.
- The 8 retrenched workers appear to have been blacklisted by International Textile for their union organising and are unable to find any jobs in other factories within the Landhi Korangi industrial zone.
- All of the fired workers were employed as 'contractors' through the labour agent Mr Zaheer Ahmed. This arrangement is not permitted under the *Sindh Factories Act 2015* and, therefore, the retrenchment of these workers remains the legal responsibility of International Textile. The factory employs more than 3000 workers, 1000 of whom are permanent employees and the remainder are hired illegally through third party contractors.
- Widespread labour violations in the factory led to worker unionization efforts. These violations include: non-payment of the double rate for overtime, non-payment of double overtime rate for working on gazetted holidays, forced overtime beyond legal limits, pay discrimination against women workers and general underpayment of wages in violation of the Supreme Court's order to pay PKR 19000 per month with effect from July 2021.

- The workers have followed the appropriate grievance mechanisms under law. A grievance notice was sent to International Textile in December 2021, but they have not yet received a reply. Additionally, a complaint was lodged with the Labour Department seeking reinstatement for the 7 workers. The Labour Department has held 3 hearings on the complaint, most recently on 24 November 2021. However, to date, the complaint remains unresolved and no remedy has been secured for the workers. International Textile asserts that the 7 workers are not employees of the factory, however they have admitted that they have a contract with Mr Zaheer Ahmed. Mr Ahmed has accepted that he hired and dismissed the workers from their positions in the factory. This arrangement is unlawful under *Sindh Factories Act 2015*, which requires that these workers are direct employees of the factory and must be given an appointment letter by International Textile.

We call on your company as a buyer from the International Textile Ltd to urgently take action to prevent and remedy your supplier's unlawful union busting activities. As international conventions like UN Principles on Business and Human Rights make clear, as a transnational company you have an obligation of vigilance regarding human rights and the environment throughout your whole supply chain. Thus we urge you to call on your supplier to respect workers' rights defined by local and international laws, and ensure that the union's demand that the 8 workers be reinstated with back pay for wages and benefits covering the period since their dismissal be met, as defined by local law. We further urge you to ensure the International Textile enters into dialogue with NTUF to address the other documented labour rights violations as identified above, and to negotiate the terms of workers' return.

Please reply within 10 business days to inform us of the steps you will be taking.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this urgent situation in your supply chain. We look forward to your positive action on this matter.

Yours Sincerely,



Anna Bryher
Labour Behind the Label