

FIDH-UNI Press Release: 2 years after the Rana Plaza disaster, victims still awaiting adequate compensation

Paris, 22 April 2015 - The Rana Plaza disaster on 24 April 2013 is a chilling example of the labour and human rights violations to which workers at the end of global supply chains are subjected. Two years after the Rana Plaza disaster, victims of this tragedy still await adequate compensation.

The [Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh](#), a legally-binding agreement created as a consequence of the catastrophe, has brought some improvements on the ground in relation to fire and building safety and labour rights. However, accidents of this kind are still a recurrent problem and unions continue to face obstacles to register and operate. In particular, the financing of corrective action plans aimed at improving fire and building safety remains a contentious issue. ***“The Accord has been a game changer in the global supply chain for the garment industry but it will only achieve its ultimate goal to prevent another Rana Plaza and create sustainable decent work, if companies pay fully into the compensation fund,”*** said UNI Global Union’s Head of Commerce, Alke Boessiger.

Today, the survivors of the Rana Plaza collapse and the families and dependants of deceased workers are still waiting to be fully compensated. The [Rana Plaza Donors Trust Fund](#), a compensation fund created in January 2014 by the International Labour Office, is still **6 million US dollars short** to allow for the adequate compensation of the 5,000 people recognised as due beneficiaries. ***“For two years now, FIDH, Odhikar (FIDH's member organisation in Bangladesh) and long-time partner UNI Global Union have been calling on global brands and retailers sourcing in Bangladesh to contribute to the fund, regardless of whether they had sourced from Rana Plaza garment factories or not. Victims mustn't wait any longer to be adequately compensated.”*** says Karim Lahijdi, FIDH president. Notably, in the framework of its work with the Carrefour Group to promote respect for human rights in its supply chains, FIDH has been encouraging Carrefour to make a contribution to the Rana Plaza Donors Trust Fund in line with Carrefour's competitors.

“There must be impartial investigations of all man-made factory disasters that have occurred in Bangladesh and victims must be able to obtain justice,” declared Adilur Rahman Khan, Odhikar Secretary. “In order to prevent future tragedies such as Rana Plaza, independent trade unions must be allowed to freely organize and represent workers' interests. As of today, their activities remain largely restricted.”

The Rana Plaza anniversary is an opportunity to remind the world that in the vast majority of cases of human rights violations perpetrated by business enterprises, impunity prevails and victims do not obtain justice.

Efforts to address such accountability gaps are beginning to bear fruit. In France and Switzerland, legislative reforms on mandatory human rights due diligence are being debated. In Europe, the [European Coalition for Corporate Justice](#) (ECCJ), of which FIDH is a member, calls on the European Union to urgently reform its legislative framework to address the responsibilities of companies in their supply chains. At the United Nations, an intergovernmental working group will meet for the first time in July 2015 to kick-start the process of developing an [international treaty](#) regulating the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises. Governments and brands must act now and take all necessary measures at the national, regional and international level.

Background information :

On 24 April 2013, the Rana Plaza building in Bangladesh collapsed, killing over 1,130 garment workers and injuring more than 2,000 others. The building was host to five garment factories which supplied major western brands.

In May 2013, FIDH and its member organisation in Bangladesh, Odhikar, submitted a [request](#) to the United Nations Working Group on Business and Human Rights to look into the working conditions and labour rights of garment workers in Bangladesh.

In a [Q&A](#) published a year after the Rana Plaza disaster, FIDH denounced the lack of adequate compensation and regretted the slow progress on the ground with regard to workers' health and safety and labour rights.

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The International Federation for Human Rights, known by its French acronym FIDH, is an international human rights NGO representing 178 organizations from close to 120 countries. Since 1922, FIDH has been defending all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights as set out in the Universal Declaration for Human Rights.

UNI Global Union is the global union representing 20 million workers from over 900 trade unions worldwide in the skills and services sectors. UNI's mission is to build power for working people in service sectors world-wide through the growth of unions and expansion of collective bargaining; to improve the working and living conditions for workers; and support decent jobs for all and sustainable economic growth.