**Ten years since Rana Plaza: we remember and continue the struggle**

**On this day ten years ago, the Rana Plaza building in Dhaka, Bangladesh, which housed several shops, a bank and five garment factories collapsed. At least 1,138 people were killed and thousands more were injured, many of them for life. On this day, our thoughts are with all those who mourn loved ones since this day and all those who lived through this tragedy that could and should have been avoided.**

All over the world, people will be commemorating this man-made tragedy through memorial events and protest. Together with the Bangladeshi unions in the Clean Clothes Campaign network, Clean Clothes Campaign enables people around the world to share their commemorative messages on ranaplazaneveragain.org.

On 23 April 2013, large cracks were discovered in the Rana Plaza building. The shops and the bank on the lower floors immediately closed. But warnings to avoid using the building after the cracks appeared were ignored by the garment factory owners on the upper floors. Garment workers were ordered to return to work the following day and forced to enter under threat of losing wages. Many lost their lives as many workers had lost their lives in countless factory incidents in the years before.

The struggle to compensate the families affected by the collapse of the Rana Plaza building took over two years, despite the massive scale of and outrage over the disaster and despite brands’ assurances that this tragedy had opened their eyes. Through the [Rana Plaza Arrangement](https://ranaplaza-arrangement.org/), which included all relevant trade unions, civil society, brands, employers and the government, the affected families were compensated for loss of income and [medical cost](https://ranaplaza-arrangement.org/TIWMC-c79efa49cea3fc17d9cc19ee5bac3f4c.pdf). This paved the way for a permanent employment injury mechanism for which a pilot has recently started, and set a precedent that was applied also for affected families of the Tazreen fire of 2012. The amounts received by the Rana Plaza survivors and dependents were substantially higher than what was disbursed by employers and/or brands in the many factory incidents of the years before 2013, but in real terms the amount still remained very low. ILO Convention 121, which the compensation was based on, prescribed compensation for the loss of income, which in case of these workers was a poverty wage. Compensation for pain and suffering, which could have increased the amount, would have required suing brands for their complicity, which in the absence of supply chain legislation was practically impossible. This means that, although medical costs are still covered, many survivors of the collapse are facing considerable financial hardship, under the eyes of the at least [29 brands](https://archive.cleanclothes.org/safety/ranaplaza/who-needs-to-pay-up) were identified as sourcing from the Rana Plaza factories.

Going forward it is paramount that the right to compensation for pain and suffering are enshrined in national and international legislation, to enable direct access without going to court, to increase wages in the garment industry, and to include the current pilot project on employment injury scheme in Bangladesh into permanent national law.

The causes of the tragedy were more than a badly maintained building with illegally added floors: it was the woefully inadequate social auditing system of brands that failed to detect the structural building issues of these factories; it was the refusal of the brands to sign the fire and buiding safety agreement that unions and CCC had been calling for, it was the lack of freedom of association that prevent workers from collectively refusing to enter the factory; it was the poverty wages that made the threat of loss of wage effective; it was the rampant harassment or even violence in factories that did the rest. While many factories are now safer, progress is lacking on most other issues. Our collective pressure will continue to be needed to push brands to signal to the just convened wage board and their suppliers in Bangladesh that they will reflect a tripling of the minimum wage in their prices paid for product. Our solidarity will be needed to face and fight the ongoing repression of freedom of association in Bangladesh. We will all be called upon to ensure that the Accord continues beyond October 2023 with the same defining features that has made its progress possible and that hold out brands finally sign on.

On this day we pledge that we won’t forget and that we will continue to fight together for workers’ rights.