

REVOLUTION IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY

It's time to reform the fashion industry! Did you know that many of the people who make our clothes work in shameful and dangerous conditions for very low pay?

Three years ago on 24 April 2013, the clothing industry's worst industrial disaster occurred.

Fast facts:

- The *Rana Plaza*, an eight-storey building, constructed on swampy soil just outside Dhaka, Bangladesh, suddenly collapsed
- 1,136 people were killed
- More than 2,500 people were injured
- The day before the accident, workers had pointed out large cracks in the building, but their concerns were ignored
- Most of the casualties were poorly paid female garment workers
- 41 people, including the building's owner, have subsequently been charged
- At the time, 29 global brands had recent or current orders with at least one of the five garment factories in the building

Coming just months after a fatal fire at *Tazreen Fashions*, also in Bangladesh, which killed 112 workers, this tragedy galvanised public interest, bringing worldwide attention to the death-trap workplaces within the clothing industry across the world.

The Industrial Labour Organisation (ILO) acted swiftly to establish a Trust Fund to pay compensation to the survivors and victims' families. Most of the brands with ties to *Rana Plaza* have now made voluntary payments into this fund, although some, such as Benetton, have done so reluctantly in response to vigorous campaigning. www.ranaplaza-arrangement.org/donor

The Bangladeshi Government has worked with the ILO, employers, workers, unions and others to improve the safety and working conditions in its factories, producing a National Plan of Action and an Accord on Fire and Building Safety. Since the collapse, more than 190 companies have signed onto the Accord including Australian companies Cotton On, Kmart, Target, Forever New, Millers, Katies, Rivers, Woolworths, Bonds, Berlei and Pretty Girl. <http://bangladeshaccord.org/>

While progress has been made in Bangladesh, much more needs to be done to ensure that workplaces across the world are safe and that workers are paid a just, 'living' wage. Companies that have been slow to make improvements in this regard include H & M, Just Jeans, Portmans, Best and Less, Peter Alexander and Lowes.

Actions

- Find out how your clothes are made. Who grows the cotton, spins the thread, dyes the fabric and sews the garment?
- Consult **Oxfam's Guide** to ethical shopping <https://www.oxfam.org.au/2015/12/naughty-or-nice-the-aussie-brands-dodging-workers-rights/> and the **Baptist World Aid Fashion Report 2015** <http://www.baptistworldaid.org.au/assets/Be-Fair-Section/FashionReport.pdf>
- Show that you believe fashion can be created in a safe, clean and just manner by joining in **Fashion Revolution Week** 18-24 April 2016. <http://fashionrevolution.org/>

- Wear your clothes inside out during Fashion Revolution Week, so that everyone can see what clothing brands you support.
- Use your voice and your power to transform the fashion industry into a force for good.

