

Resolution on recent casualties in textile factory fires, notably in Bangladesh

2012/2908(RSP) - 17/01/2013 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted 569 votes to 1 with 61 abstentions, a resolution on recent casualties in textile factory fires, notably in Bangladesh.

The resolution was tabled by the ECR, ALDE, EPP, Greens/EFA, S&D and GUE/NGL groups.

Recalling that at least 112 people died at the Tazreen factory fire, in the Ashulia district, Dhaka, Bangladesh on 24 November 2012 and 289 people perished in a blaze in Karachi, Pakistan in September 2012, Parliament expresses **its sorrow at the loss of life** suffered in these recent factory fires. It calls on the Governments of Bangladesh and Pakistan to put in place **measures to prevent a recurrence of the tragedies**, including full compliance by all manufacturers with health and safety legislation (notably the Labour Act (2006) in Bangladesh) and the establishment of an effective and independent system of labour inspections and inspections of industrial buildings.

Members note that hundreds of workers are killed every year in similar accidents all over South Asia, with an estimated 600 garment workers having died since 2005 in factory fires in Bangladesh alone, many of which could have been prevented. They welcome the Bangladesh Fire and Building Safety Agreement between a number of trade unions, NGOs and multinational textile retailers, aimed at improving safety standards, in particular by establishing an **independent inspection system** and actively supporting the creation of 'health and safety committees' involving workers' representations in each factory, which are obligatory by law but rarely operational. All relevant textile brands to support this effort. Furthermore, Parliament urges all stakeholders to combat the **corruption in the supply chain**, which is apparent in many South Asian nations, including **collusion between safety inspectors and factory owners**. Major international garment brands are asked to critically investigate their supply chains and to cooperate with their subcontractors to improve occupational health and safety standards. Members call on retailers, NGOs and all the other actors involved, including the Commission, to work together to look at **developing a voluntary labelling standard certifying that a product was manufactured in accordance with the ILO's core labour standards**.

The Commission is also asked actively to promote **mandatory responsible business conduct among EU companies operating abroad**, with a special focus on ensuring strict compliance with all their legal obligations, in particular international standards and rules in the areas of human rights, labour and the environment. The European External Action Service, for its part, is asked to ensure that EU trade officers, if based in EU delegations, are given regular training on corporate social responsibility issues, in particular with respect to the implementation of the UN 'Protect, Respect and Remedy' Framework, and that EU delegations function as EU contact points for complaints concerning EU companies and their subsidiaries.

Lastly, Parliament points to recent tensions between the Bangladeshi Government and labour activists, with workers denouncing their low salaries and poor working conditions. It notes, however, the **important role that can be played by workers and trade unions**, for example through the continued development of worker-led safety committees in all factories, and the importance of access to factories for unions in order to educate workers on how they can protect their rights and their safety, including their right to refuse unsafe work.