

up front

**LOVE
FASHION
HATE
SWEATSHOPS**

We love fashion. But the clothes we buy in the UK come at a terrible human cost. Millions of workers around the world suffer poverty wages and dire conditions, producing cheap fashion for sale in our high street shops. This can't go on.

War on Want has launched Love Fashion Hate Sweatshops, the biggest ever call for the British government to regulate fashion companies and guarantee decent working conditions for the people who make our clothes. It's an ambitious goal, but together we can end sweatshop exploitation once and for all. November 2009



It's time we put an end to the scandal of sweatshops.

Sweatshop shame

Across the developing world, the people who make our clothes are struggling to survive. Earning well below a living wage and subjected to horrendous conditions, workers in developing countries suffer in order to supply high street shops with cheap tops, skirts and trousers. As these women and men slave away in sweatshops, British corporations amass enormous profits selling the clothes they make.

Research from War on Want has exposed how sweatshop conditions abroad are a direct consequence of the business practices of high street shops like Asda, Primark and Tesco, to name just a few. To obtain cheap garments in bulk that can be sold to UK consumers at bargain prices, these companies squeeze suppliers in countries like Sri Lanka, China and India. The net result is a vicious race to the bottom in which workers are hit the hardest.

The conditions in factories supplying UK shops are scandalous. In garment sweatshops across Bangladesh, workers make as little as 7p an hour and face up to 80-hour weeks. Abuse at the hands of factory owners and managers is endemic, with women workers particularly at risk. Denied trade union representation, sweatshop workers have no way to petition for better wages or challenge the harassment they face on a daily basis.

Enough is enough

Sweatshop exploitation is not a new issue. For years campaigners have been exposing labour abuses in factories producing the clothes that wind up on the shelves of bargain-basement chains. Our groundbreaking *Fashion Victims* reports, the first of which was published in 2006, uncovered shocking conditions in factories supplying top UK brands. Thanks to these reports and the front page press coverage they generated, members of the public are increasingly aware of where and how their clothes are produced. And what they've learned has provoked outrage.

But despite growing public knowledge of the issue, the best approach to ending sweatshops has not always been clear. Boycotts carry the risk of shutting down factories which, in spite of their draconian conditions, are a crucial source of employment. These jobs are backbreaking and offer paltry wages, but they're better than having no work at all.

By the same token, trusting companies to clean up their act simply isn't working. By signing up to voluntary codes of conduct, some companies have pledged to improve the conditions of their suppliers. Such measures, however, are unenforceable. Clothing companies continue to source from sweatshops around the globe, skirting their own rules for the sake of their profits.

50,000

- 1. Join the Love Fashion Hate Sweatshops campaign**
- 2. Add your photo to our supporter gallery**
- 3. Write to your MP**

Regulation is the answer

War on Want has launched Love Fashion Hate Sweatshops, a campaign to end sweatshop exploitation once and for all. Its goal is government regulation of the fashion industry, with firm provisions to guarantee basic rights for workers at the bottom of the supply chain, including a living wage and the right to join a trade union.

To make this happen, War on Want is organising a nationwide call to the UK government, with a goal of having 50,000 people sign up in support. Once we've reached that target, we'll take a petition to 10 Downing Street to demand a commitment to action from the Prime Minister. Backed by many thousands of people, we can put real pressure on the government to protect the rights of the workers making our clothes.

Making your voice heard

Since our well-publicised launch at London Fashion Week, thousands of people have joined the Love Fashion Hate Sweatshops call. The campaign has secured key endorsements from people within the fields of fashion, entertainment and human rights. Parliamentarians have also signed on to the campaign, as have many leading charities and trade unions.

Love Fashion Hate Sweatshops takes its lead from grassroots organisations on the front line of the struggle against exploitation.

War on Want's partners include trade unions, social movements and workers' collectives based in those countries where sweatshop exploitation is widespread, such as Bangladesh, Honduras, China and Sri Lanka. By joining forces with these groups, the campaign has ensured that its reach is truly global.

Love Fashion Hate Sweatshops is now a dynamic movement, representing people from around the world who are unwilling to tolerate sweatshops any longer. Yet we need more support if we are to end this grave injustice.

Below are three things you can do right now to help the campaign.

1. Join the campaign today. Become part of the Love Fashion Hate Sweatshops campaign, the largest ever call for government regulation of the garment industry. Visit www.lovefashionhatesweatshops.org to sign up now.

2. Add your photo to our gallery. We've created a photo montage of people committed to our campaign for a world without sweatshops. This gallery will be delivered, along with the petition, to 10 Downing Street. Upload your photo at www.lovefashionhatesweatshops.org/photos

3. Write to your MP. Sign the card to your MP on the page overleaf to demand that the UK government take immediate action to end sweatshop exploitation.

With 50,000 people behind the campaign, we can put real pressure on the government to protect the rights of garment workers.



Building a trade union movement in Bangladesh

A leading Bangladeshi trade union, the NGWF supports branches across the country and represents over 22,000 garment workers

Fatema knows she cannot miss a day of work. At the factory in Dhaka where she sews garments for a living, all workers must show up every day, no matter how ill they feel, or face the consequences. “If you are absent for one day, they dock your wages by three full days,” she explains.

This is just one of the many ways in which Bangladeshi workers are cheated out of hard-earned pay, which already falls well short of a living wage. “We are supposed to be paid Tk 1662 a month (roughly £15), but our wage is always less than it should be,” says Fatema.

Without children to care for, Fatema is better off than most garment workers, whose paltry income must be stretched even further to meet the needs of an entire family. As well as being deprived of their pay and crucial benefits, many female garment workers also face constant abuse. As Fatema explained, it is common for workers not to speak out for fear of harsh reprisals: “We have to stay silent and listen to the abuse.”

Despite these hardships, Bangladesh’s garment workers have built a powerful movement to defend their rights. The National Garment

Workers’ Federation (NGWF) is a leading trade union with over 22,000 members across Bangladesh. A War on Want partner, the NGWF campaigns on behalf of all Bangladesh’s 2.5 million garment sector workers, demanding basic rights like a living wage, employee benefits and an end to abuse in the workplace. With a track record of effecting change, the NGWF has given a voice to the country’s disenfranchised workers – and represents their best hope for a better life.

War on Want is proud of the NGWF’s endorsement of the Love Fashion Hate Sweatshops campaign. Amirul Haque Amin, President of the NGWF, believes strongly that consumers can play a role in protecting the rights of Bangladeshi workers. “We are all part of the same process – it begins here in Bangladesh, and ends at a shop in Britain. By bridging that gap, this campaign has helped sustain our struggle.”

With partners like the NGWF, we can help ensure that Fatema, and all garment workers in Bangladesh, no longer have to remain silent when faced with injustice.

Dear _____ MP

Millions of workers around the world suffer poverty wages and exploitation to make cheap clothes for shops in the UK. This is unacceptable. The UK government must act now to introduce measures to stop the abuse of garment workers producing clothes for UK companies.

War on Want has launched Love Fashion Hate Sweatshops, the biggest ever call for the government to regulate companies and end sweatshop exploitation. The campaign is already supported by many thousands of people across the UK, with the goal of reaching 50,000 signatures demanding firm government action to protect the rights of garment workers.

I am asking you to urge the Prime Minister to take immediate action to guarantee overseas workers a living wage, decent working conditions and the right to join a trade union. I also encourage you to join thousands of other UK citizens by adding your name to War on Want's Love Fashion Hate Sweatshops campaign.

Yours sincerely

Name in full _____
Email _____
Address _____

_____ MP
Freepost RSAH-CUAZ-RRBS
War on Want
56-64 Leonard Street
LONDON
EC2A 4LT

We will deliver this card to your MP.
You can find the name of your MP at
www.theyworkforyou.com/mp



War on Want relies on the generosity of its supporters to continue its work empowering poor people around the world. Every pound counts in our fight against injustice and inequality and we are grateful for your support. Please fill in the whole form using a ball point pen and send to:

Freepost, RSAH-CUAZ-RRBS, War on Want,
56-64 Leonard Street, LONDON EC2A 4LT

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www.waronwant.org

