



April 12, 2012

Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina
Prime Minister's Office
Old Sangsad Bhaban
Tejgaon, Dhaka-1215
People's Republic of Bangladesh

Dear Prime Minister,

On behalf of the Maquila Solidarity Network, a labour and women's rights organization based in Canada, I am writing to register our concern regarding the murder and apparent torture in Dhaka of Aminul Islam, a labor rights activist affiliated with the Bangladesh Center for Workers Solidarity (BCWS). Aminul Islam's body was found on Thursday, April 5, one day after he was last seen by his family and co-workers. According to police reports, his body bore signs of brutal torture.

We ask that your government ensure a comprehensive and impartial investigation of the disappearance, torture and murder of Aminul Islam, and institute immediate protective measures for other BCWS leaders.

The killing of Aminul Islam is the latest in a series of acts of intimidation against the BCWS and those women and men who carry out its vital work of advocating for the rights of workers in the RMG sector. Some of these acts have been carried out with the open involvement of state security officials. In June 2010, Mr. Islam was detained by officials of Bangladesh's National Intelligence Service (NSI). According to Mr. Islam, he was subjected to severe and repeated beatings, which his captors said would stop only if he agreed to give false testimony against his colleagues at BCWS.

Later that year, Mr. Islam and two colleagues, BCWS leaders Kalpona Akter and Babul Akhter, were arrested and jailed on charges of fomenting riots and related acts – charges regarded as baseless fabrications by international labour and human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch (see <http://bit.ly/Htwwid>), but for which Ms. Akter and Mr. Akhter still face trials.

Canada imports an increasing quantity of garments and other products from Bangladesh, and as you may know, Canadian retailers have already expressed their concern about the crackdown on the BCWS (see <http://bit.ly/HzG3WB>). Unless the persons responsible for Mr. Islam's brutal murder and torture are held accountable, and the policies and practices that give rise to such abuses are ended, this incident cannot help but negatively impact

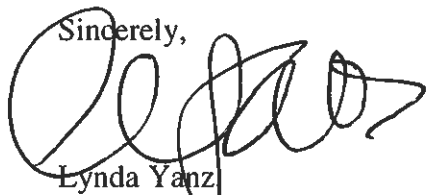
Bangladesh's standing as a location for export RMG manufacturing, in the eyes of not only labour rights advocates, but also international buyers, retailers and other governments.

Therefore, we and our network in Canada and the Americas are calling for:

1. A comprehensive and impartial investigation of the disappearance, torture and murder of Aminul Islam, and public reporting on the findings;
2. Effective protective measures to ensure the physical safety of BCWS's other leaders and activists, including Kalpona Akter and Babul Akhter;
3. Prosecution of those ultimately responsible for Mr. Islam's murder and torture, regardless of their position, and compensation for Mr. Islam's family; and
4. Immediate withdrawal of the fabricated criminal charges now pending against Kalpona Akter and Babul Akhter, restoration of BCWS's NGO registration, and an end to all other state actions that have created an atmosphere of impunity concerning intimidation and harassment of BCWS and its leaders.

We are requesting that your government inform us as soon as possible of the steps which it is taking in this regard. Thank you very much for your attention to this troubling matter.

Sincerely,



Lynda Yanz
Executive Director
Maquila Solidarity Network

cc: John Baird, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Canada
Ed Fast, Minister of International Trade, Canada
Diane Ablonczy, Minister of State of Foreign Affairs, Canada