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HTUR/JSV

10 April 2012

Murder of Aminul Islam

Dear Prime Minister,

On behalf of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), which represents over 175 million workers worldwide, I write to express our shock and outrage at the recent murder of Mr Aminul Islam, senior organizer with the Bangladesh Centre for Worker Solidarity (BCWS). For many years, the BCWS has promoted the rights of workers in Bangladesh's massive readymade garment (RMG) industry, which produces for some of the world's best-known apparel brands. For their efforts, BCWS leaders and staff have been repeatedly harassed by government representatives and employers, including the June 2010 deregistration of the organization and the August 2010 arrest of its two leaders.

In June 2010, Mr Islam was also arrested and severely beaten by police and national intelligence service officers. These officers reportedly attempted to coerce from him a statement implicating BCWS in the recent unrest in garment sector which he refused to provide. The government argued that Mr Islam was engaged in illegal activity though they failed to produce any evidence to that effect despite repeated demands from human rights organizations. No one was ever held accountable for the human rights violations perpetrated against Mr Islam while in detention.

From the information so far available, it appears likely that Mr Islam was not the victim of random violence but rather targeted for his labour rights advocacy. His murder is no doubt meant to send a clear message to trade unions and NGOs not to protest the low wages, gruelling hours and poor working conditions that characterize the RMG industry. We demand that a full and impartial investigation be undertaken immediately and that all material and intellectual authors of the crime be identified, tried, and if found guilty, appropriately punished.

I look forward to an update on the measures taken by your government to investigate this crime and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Ram', with a stylized flourish at the end.

General Secretary

cc:

Juan Somavia, Director General
International Labour Organization (ILO)

Noriyuki Suzuki, General Secretary
ITUC-AP

Bangladesh Centre for Worker Solidarity (BCWS)