

The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Home Secretary
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

18 July 2020

Dear Home Secretary

Protecting people being exploited in UK garment factories

We are writing as a broad coalition of parliamentarians, businesses, investors and civil society organisations about our concerns regarding the unethical labour practices taking place in garment factories across the UK. We request that urgent action is taken by the Government to implement a 'Fit to Trade' licensing scheme that ensures all garment factories are meeting their legal obligations to their employees.

As we have seen in the media over the last month, a concerning number of garment workers in key hubs in the UK, such as Leicester, have continued to work in factories throughout lockdown without adequate PPE or social distancing measures in place. These reports on the terrible working conditions people face in UK garment factories add weight to concerns which have been raised over the last five years by academics and Parliamentary Committees about the gross underpayment of the national living wage and serious breaches of health and safety law in these workplaces. Unless action is taken now, thousands more people will likely face exploitation.

Responsible retailers and brands have made significant efforts to improve labour practices in garment factories, but whilst this has supported improvements in a handful of factories, it has not led to the desired system-wide changes needed. Most leading fashion retailers have therefore significantly scaled down their UK supply. There is now an opportunity for the UK to become a world-leading, innovative, export led, ethical fashion and textile manufacturing industry, delivering better skilled jobs, that in times of crisis can also be utilised for PPE production. If the right steps are taken, fashion retailers and brands will seek to source more production from the UK, which will provide new decent jobs in areas like the East Midlands and North West, and improve the country's competitiveness and balance of trade.

We therefore support the proposals of the British Retail Consortium and others on the need to implement statutory licensing of garment factory owners and managers to ensure they are 'Fit to Trade'. This would protect workers and provide an incentive for retailers and brands to invest in the UK. As a minimum, this should cover protection of workers from forced labour, debt bondage and mistreatment, ensuring payment of National Minimum Wage, VAT, PAYE, National Insurance, Holiday Pay and Health and Safety. These measures will also raise tax revenues for the Treasury and create a

barrier that prevents rogue businesses from accessing the market and undercutting legitimate fashion manufacturing companies, creating a level playing field for businesses to compete fairly.

We would welcome your support for this proposal and look forward to discussing it with you.

Yours sincerely



Dr Lisa Cameron MP, Chair of the APPG for Textiles and Fashion
Baroness Young of Hornsey OBE, Chair of the APPG for Ethics and Sustainability in Fashion
Helen Dickinson OBE, Chief Executive of the British Retail Consortium

Supportive signatories:

Claudia Webbe MP	Gavin Robinson MP	Fashion Revolution
Rushanara Ali MP	Jim Shannon MP	Fashion Roundtable
Paula Barker MP	Virendra Sharma MP	Fast Forward
Apsana Begum MP	Tommy Sheppard MP	Focus on Labour Exploitation (FLEX)
Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP	Richard Thomson MP	Hope for Justice
Sarah Champion MP	Derek Twigg MP	International Organization for Migration UK (IOM UK)
Jon Cruddas MP	Mick Whitley MP	Recruitment & Employment Confederation
Rt Hon Sir Ed Davey MP	Munira Wilson MP	Slave-Free Alliance
Martyn Day MP	Mohammad Yasin MP	Stronger Together
Allan Dorans MP	Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe	TISCreport
Margaret Ferrier MP	Baroness Jolly	The Reassurance Network
Andrew Gwynne MP	Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb	UN Global Compact Network UK
Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP	Lord Judd	UK Fashion & Textile Association
Rt Hon Sir John Hayes MP	Baroness Meacher	TEAM (The Employment Agents Movement)
Mike Hill MP	Lord Navnit Dholakia PC, OBE, DL	
Wera Hobhouse MP	Lord Young of Norwood Green	
Darren Jones MP		
Christine Jardine MP	ASOS	Allianz Global Investors GmbH
Dame Diana Johnson DBE MP	George at Asda	Brewin Dolphin
Ben Lake MP	Joules	CCLA Investment Management
Clive Lewis MP	M&S	Columbia Threadneedle Investments
Tony Lloyd MP	Matalan	Fidelity International
Caroline Lucas MP	Missguided	Generation Investment Management LLP
Kenny MacAskill MP	Morrisons	Investor Forum CIC
Angus MacNeil MP	Mountain Warehouse	Jupiter Asset Management
Shabana Mahmood MP	N Brown	Kames Capital
Catherine McKinnell MP	New Look	Schroders Investment Management
Stuart McDonald MP	Next	USS
John McDonnell MP	River Island	
John McNally MP	The Very Group	
Layla Moran MP		
Grahame Morris MP	Association of Labour Providers	
John Nicolson MP	Ethical Trading Initiative	
Sarah Olney MP		
Liz Saville Roberts MP		