



Riaz Pari showing photo of her son Ubidullah who was burnt alive in Ali Enterprises.

# DEADLY SAFETY HAZARDS IN FACTORIES SUPPLYING MAJOR INTERNATIONAL BRANDS SHOW AN IMMEDIATE NEED FOR ACCORD EXPANSION TO PAKISTAN

**Clean  
Clothes  
Campaign**



September 2022

***Clean Clothes Campaign and allies have identified potentially deadly safety hazards at factories in Pakistan supplying H&M, C&A, Bestseller, and Inditex. These life-threatening hazards demonstrate the need for an immediate expansion of the International Accord to Pakistan. Clean Clothes Campaign and allies call on brands in the International Accord Steering Committee to stop delaying expansion of the Accord programme and to immediately bring it to Pakistan and initiate independent inspections of their Pakistani supplier factories under the Accord's oversight.***

## **10 YEARS AFTER FROM ALI ENTERPRISES AND GARMENT WORKERS IN PAKISTAN IN DANGER**

11 September 2022 marks 10 years since the catastrophic Ali Enterprises factory fire in Baldia town, Karachi, Pakistan claimed the lives of more than 250 garment workers due to egregious safety violations in the factory that were ignored by brands and their auditors. It was the worst fire in the history of apparel production, anywhere in the world.

Survivors and family members of the deceased recall the devastating fire vividly. Noor Nahar, mother of Shafi Ul Islam, a young worker who died in the fire, states: *"My son was my universe and also he was main earner of my family. After his death, I die every day, I will never forget him for my entire life."*

While it has been a decade since the disaster, life-threatening risks persist for Pakistani garment workers. Apparel brands have failed to improve working conditions in most garment factories in Pakistan, placing most workers in virtually the exact same conditions that led to mass death at Ali Enterprises.

A [new report from Clean Clothes Campaign and the Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research and Data \(WISERD\) at Cardiff University](#) identified deficiencies in some of the most basic provisions for factory safety in garment production in Pakistan, including those mandated by law. 85% of interviewed workers reported no access to properly enclosed exit stairwells in the case of a fire. One in five workers reported that their workplace lacked fire drills and was unaware of emergency escape routes and exits. Additionally, the survey found that independent factory inspections were not taking place in Pakistan.

Widespread calls to expand the International Accord for Health and Safety in the Textile and Garment Industry have come from [trade unions and labour organisations](#) in Pakistan as well as from global unions, human rights organisations and advocacy groups internationally, and even some brands. When brands finally signed the new

International Accord last September after lengthy negotiations, they agreed to an expansion of the Accord programme to at least one new country within the course of the agreement (i.e. by October 2023). However, nearly a year later – 10 years after the Ali Enterprises fire and 9 years after the first Accord was implemented in Bangladesh – factory workers in Pakistan remain unprotected.

## THE ROLE OF THE ACCORD STEERING COMMITTEE

The International Accord is governed by an Accord Steering Committee which is comprised of 50% brand representatives and 50% union representatives. Labour rights NGOs (including Clean Clothes Campaign) are signed on as witnesses and participate in the Steering Committee as observers.

The International Accord is current in operation in Bangladesh, and has been in various forms since 2013. When the International Accord was resigned in 2021, there was an agreement that it would be expanded to at least one country. The Accord's Steering Committee [shortlisted](#) four priority countries for potential expansion at the beginning of 2022. After various feasibility studies, the committee was in agreement that Pakistan was the most suitable country for Accord expansion.

As the current International Accord is up for renegotiation in early 2023, it is vital that the expansion is agreed upon in 2022.

## HOW ARE BRANDS DELAYING THE EXPANSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL ACCORD TO PAKISTAN

On the surface, it seems that all representatives in the Steering Committee are in favour of the expansion to Pakistan, as highlighted in the [meeting held on July 5](#), *"There is general support to expand the Accord's work to Pakistan. Not a single brand questioned this."* **However, although the Accord's senior staff have recommended the initiation of a programme in Pakistan, the brand representatives on the Steering Committee have refused to join their labour counterparts in supporting initiation. The brand representatives have instead insisted on delay after delay, to the point where their posture suggests not caution, but willful obstruction.** This fits a pattern of the brands' negotiation tactics with regard to the Accord. Although the previous Bangladesh Accord agreement was set to expire in June 2021, it had to be expanded by three months at the

very last minute, just to protect existing standards while negotiations about the new terms continued to drag on.

Now, brands are attempting to delay the expansion of the International Accord to Pakistan apparently to avoid taking responsibility, including financially, for the safety of more of the workers who sew their clothes. The current situation, in which workers are at risk with no binding mechanisms to protect their safety, greatly benefits brands, as they are able to turn a blind eye to safety violations that they know are occurring in their supply chain.

With lives still at risk, this complacent attitude by brands must stop. Recently, the International Labour Organization (ILO) emphasized the importance of occupational health and safety by adding the principle of a safe and healthy working environment to the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. According to the UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights, companies have a responsibility to “Seek to prevent or mitigate adverse human rights impacts that are directly linked to their operations, products or services by their business relationships, even if they have not contributed to those impacts.” This includes the supply chains of fashion brands.

## **INCIDENTS IN FACTORIES IN PAKISTAN THAT SUPPLY ACCORD STEERING COMMITTEE BRANDS (AUGUST 2021 - JULY 2022)**

**During the last 12 months alone, based on publicly available reporting of factory incidents, we have recorded over 10 deaths and more than a dozen injuries of workers in garment factories in Pakistan.** Further to this, based on a survey of almost 600 factory workers in Pakistan by Clean Clothes Campaign, Labour Education Foundation (Pakistan), National Trade Union Federation (Pakistan), and the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research and publicly available reports of factory incidents from newspapers, **we have recorded multiple safety violations at facilities that supply brands that are represented in the Accord’s Steering Committee including Bestseller, C&A, H&M, and Inditex. These violations throw into question why a binding safety programme has not already been implemented in Pakistan and demonstrate the need for immediate expansion of the International Accord.**

Workers supplying C&A, H&M, and Bestseller consistently reported exits being blocked in their factories. Workers at factories producing for H&M and Bestseller also reported witnessing explosions and being exposed to electrical discharge and harmful

substances. Workers at Inditex and H&M factories reported witnessing a fire in their factories. This is on top of public reports of [gas leaks at an H&M factory](#).

### **ARTISTIC FABRIC & GARMENTS**

<b>Sourcing Brands</b>	H&M Group, <sup>1</sup> Inditex
<b>Incident</b>	Workers reported witnessing a fire at Artistic Fabric & Garments.
<b>How the Accord would've prevented it</b>	The Accord regularly inspects all covered factories for fire safety, including immediate safety risks like blocked fire exits, to ensure that workers can make a safe escape in case of fire. Regular electrical safety inspections and remediation plans also reduce the risk of short-circuit incidents, one of the main causes of factory fires.

### **ARTISTIC MILLINERS**

<b>Sourcing Brands</b>	H&M Group, PVH
<b>Incident</b>	<a href="#">Four workers died at Artistic Milliners</a> Unit 5 in Karachi, Pakistan, after inhaling poisonous gas in January 2022. The brands above are also sourcing from other units in Artistic Milliners.
<b>How the Accord would've prevented it</b>	A workers' health and safety committee, in conjunction with the Accord's Safety and Health Complaints Mechanism, could well have played a vital role in preventing the incident. In preparation of expansion to another country, the Accord should also consider expanding the scope of its inspections to include safety risks such as this one.

---

<sup>1</sup> Inditex's most recent publicly available disclosure, from 2018, lists the factory as a supplier

**DENIM CLOTHING COMPANY, SC, STREET 01, SECTOR 19**

<b>Sourcing Brands</b>	Bestseller, H&M Group
<b>Incident</b>	Workers at Denim Clothing Company reported multiple incidents including witnessing an explosion and being exposed to electrical discharge and harmful substances.
<b>How the Accord would've prevented it</b>	Under the Accord program, the factory would be regularly inspected for electrical, fire, and building safety. Workers would learn to identify and report Occupational Health and Safety risks. The factory would be required to develop a plan to remediate safety hazards, with support from the sourcing brands.

**NISHAT MILLS LTD.**

<b>Sourcing Brands</b>	H&M Group
<b>Incident</b>	Workers reported incidents of exits being blocked at Nishat Mills Ltd.
<b>How the Accord would've prevented it</b>	The Accord regularly inspects all covered factories for fire safety, including immediate safety risks like blocked fire exits. Workers are also taught to look out for these risks and report them through their factories' Safety Committee or the Accord's Safety and Health Complaint Mechanism. Most workers at Ali Enterprises would have escaped their death if there had been clear escape routes and functioning fire exit doors.

## NISHAT MILLS LTD. UNIT 2

<b>Sourcing Brands</b>	Bestseller
<b>Incident</b>	Workers reported incidents of exits being blocked at Nishat Mills LTD (Apparel Division), Unit 2.
<b>How the Accord would've prevented it</b>	The Accord regularly inspects all covered factories for fire safety, including immediate safety risks like blocked fire exits. Workers are also taught to look out for these risks and report them through their factory's Safety Committee or the Accord's Safety and Health Complaint Mechanism. Most workers at Ali Enterprises would have escaped their death if there had been clear escape routes and functioning fire exit doors.

## INTERLOOP LTD (HD05)

<b>Sourcing Brands</b>	C&A
<b>Incident</b>	Workers reported incidents of exits being blocked at Interloop Ltd HD05
<b>How the Accord would've prevented it</b>	The Accord regularly inspects all covered factories for fire safety, including immediate safety risks like blocked fire exits. Workers are also taught to look out for these risks and report them through their factories' Safety Committee or the Accord's Safety and Health Complaint Mechanism. Most workers at Ali Enterprises would have escaped their death if there had been clear escape routes and functioning fire exit doors.

## INTERLOOP LTD HD 2

<b>Sourcing Brands</b>	C&A
<b>Incident</b>	Workers reported incidents of exits being blocked at Interloop Ltd HD 2
<b>How the Accord would've prevented it</b>	The Accord regularly inspects all covered factories for fire safety, including immediate safety risks like blocked fire exits. Workers are also taught to look out for these risks and report them through their factories' Safety Committee or the Accord's Safety and Health Complaint Mechanism. Most workers at Ali Enterprises would have escaped their death if there had been clear escape routes and functioning fire exit doors

## CONCLUSION

Nasir Mansoor, General Secretary of National Trade Union Federation in Pakistan states, *“The factory incidents highlighted by the workers in Pakistan show how dire the need is for Accord expansion. Workers deserve to feel safe and protected when going to work and it’s the responsibility of brands to ensure this as they are the ones profiting. Brands should stop delaying the expansion process and take immediate steps to make factories safer.”*

Brands have the power – and the responsibility – to ensure the remediation of hazards at their suppliers and to ensure safety for the workers. **In coordination with partners in Pakistan, we call on brands in the Steering Committee that have failed to meet their obligation to expand the Accord to stop delaying the expansion process and immediately expand it to Pakistan, initiating independent inspections of their Pakistani supplier factories in line with Accord standards.**