

# International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations



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## **IUF statement on the deadly fire at Hashem Foods, Bangladesh**

The IUF regrets the loss of life of adults and children that happened as a result of the fire that started on July 8 at the Hashem Foods factory in Rupganj, Bangladesh. Our condolences and solidarity go out to all those affected.

While the final death toll is not yet known, Bangladesh's police and fire services have already confirmed that doors and gates were locked and that children were working in the factory. It is horrific that children as young as 11 years old were employed in Hashem Food factory and that due to the hidden employment of child labour, an unknown number of children perished in the fire and many are missing.

The IUF calls on the government of Bangladesh to establish immediately an independent public inquiry which must cover:

- the criminal negligence of the company in creating the hazardous conditions that led to the fire causing death and injury to workers;
- how the company could ignore health and safety regulations, fire safety regulations and why no factory inspection identified the hazardous working conditions;
- the prevalence of child labour in the factory in violation of ILO Convention No.138 and the Fundamental Principles of Rights at Work.

The IUF further calls for urgent inspections of all food factories to enforce fire safety and occupational health and safety regulations and to ensure that there is no child labour.

We further call on the government to recognize the demands of the Sajeeb Group Workers Justice Committee to ensure all necessary measures are taken to protect workers' rights and prevent future tragedies like this. Further the government must respond to the Justice Committee's demand that medical treatment is provided to injured workers and that the workers and their families are fully compensated without delay.

The right to occupational health and safety and the elimination of child labour can only be ensured if all workers in food factories are guaranteed access to their right to freedom of association as provided for in ILO Conventions No.87 and No.98. Only through independent, democratic trade unions formed by workers themselves can the right to a safe workplace and a workplace free from child labour be guaranteed.