

Fight Injustice with the Anglican Alliance

With the new term starting and winter just around the corner, you may be considering updating your wardrobe - but do you ever wonder where your clothes come from?

Take a look at your new winter coat or festive jumper and chances are its label reads 'Made in Bangladesh'.

That's because this tiny South Asian nation – around the size of England and Wales – is now the 2nd largest exporter of clothing in the world after China. It's a booming industry, driven by increasing demand for cheap clothes with a quick turnaround. But those making the clothes have yet to see the benefits: the textile industry accounts for 45 per cent of all industrial employment in Bangladesh but makes up just five per cent of the total national income. In day to day terms, the average garment worker is paid the equivalent of nine pence per hour – only 14 per cent of a realistic living wage.

On top of rock bottom wages, these workers face long hours and poor working conditions that often become life-threatening: in April 2013, the Rana Plaza factory collapse in Savar left over 1,000 people dead and 2,500 injured. Five months later, the victims have not yet received a penny of compensation, and at talks in Geneva this September, only nine of the 29 companies implicated in the crash turned up to discuss a settlement.

So how should we as Christians respond to such inequality and injustice? Proverbs 31:9 commands us to, "Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy." Jesus taught us first and foremost to love our neighbour – and that includes the sweatshop worker on the other side of the world just as much as the person living next door. We are told time and again to act as a voice for the voiceless, but many of us don't know how to make this a reality.

That's why the Anglican Alliance have recently released [a resource pack](#) to equip Christians to live up to this call, and take action on behalf of those in Bangladesh. Instead of calling for an all-out boycott, the Alliance, as part of a global coalition of ecumenical churches, are urging Christians to [put pressure on retailers](#) to improve rights for the people who make their clothes. And we are seeking out students to across the country to hold prayer meetings or special services and events to raise awareness.

The #lookbehindthelabel campaign follows action by Anglican Bishop Paul Sarker, Moderator of the Church of Bangladesh, to support the injured and bereaved families after the Rana Plaza collapse. At the launch of the campaign in September, garment worker Monika Hambrom, told the group via Skype of her ordeal during the disaster:

We saw that the building was cracked the day before the collapse. We were told to come in to work the next day and we would receive our wages for the month. Then the factory would be closed as it was unsafe to work in. We did not expect it to collapse. The next morning, at 8:45am, the electricity shut down. As the generators came on, the building shook and fell down. I cannot remember what happened, it was so dark. I struggled out from under the rubble and, thank God, some people saw me and dragged me out.

Monika is slowly recovering, but the effects of the ordeal she suffered that day remain. She told the Alliance, *"I cannot sleep since the collapse of the building - it still comes to me in my dreams. I want to continue my work but in a safe place and for a just wage."*

You can get involved with the campaign and add your voice to the call for justice. Help make Monika's prayer a reality and contact the Anglican Alliance at:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/anglicanalliance>.

Twitter: @AngliAlliance

E-mail: anglicanalliance@aco.org

Resources are also available on our website at <http://anglicanalliance.org/pages/8376>

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