Another Crisis in Jordan

Workers Strike the IBGM Factory over Illegal Sweatshop Conditions, Strikers Beaten and Threatened with Forcible Deportation

Over 370 guest workers from Bangladesh, sewing clothing for Hanes, Perry Ellis strike the Chinese-owned IBGM sweatshop over miserable and illegal working conditions

August 27, 2011.

The strike began on August 20, when a young Bangladeshi woman seamstress, Ms. Salma, sought permission to use the bathroom. When her Indian supervisor, Mr. Latif, refused, she challenged him, asking why the workers are not free to use the toilet. Mr. Latif grew furious, grabbing the young woman by her ear and hair, and violently slapping her.

The International Business Garments Manufacturing Company Ltd (IBGM) is a
subcontract supplier to the Classic sweatshop, both of which are located in the Al Hassan Industrial Park in northern Jordan. The IBGM factory is also sewing clothing for another Chinese factory called Camel in the Al Karak industrial park, and for Perry Ellis.

Even during the holy month of Ramadan, when many of the workers are fasting, IBGM management forces the workers to toil 11 ½ hour shifts, from 7:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. The workers are currently sewing Hanes athletic tee shirts and shorts. The workers must complete 164 sewing operations per hour, or one operation every 22 seconds. It is a furious, exhausting pace. Workers who do not reach the mandatory goal are forced to work two additional hours of overtime without pay.

Under pressure, some 200 Sri Lankan and Indian workers have not joined the strike.
Hanes Champions labels smuggled out from IBGM factory in August, 2011
Stop the Firings, Beatings and Torture
Do Not Deport any Workers

- **Workers burned:** A Jordanian manager, Mr. Sadi, punished two male sewing operators for not returning to work by **forcibly pressing their exposed hands onto a heating press, burning their skin.** The two burned workers are Mr. Helal and Mr. Khokon.

- **Women workers attacked by management:** Managers tried to physically drag striking women workers back into the factory.
• **Leaders fired:** IBGM management has posted the pictures of 12 male worker leaders who are to be fired and forcibly deported. The names of these brave workers are Kamal, Jakir, Mofizul, Loulu, Faruk, Mintu, Sohel, Hobi, Torun, Faruk, Touhid, and one un-named worker.

• **Food withheld:** Right now, the workers are barely surviving on rice and water. The Institute for Global Labour and Human Rights will support the strikers with food aid.

• We understand that to date, at least seven striking workers have been attacked and injured by IBGM managers. These include four women (Ms. Fatema, Ms. Salma, Ms. Lovely and Ms. Shahnza) and three men (Mr. Rasel and the two men who were burned, Mr. Helal and Mr. Khohon).

Prior to the strike, the IBGM workers filed complaints with factory management and the local Ministry of Labor office in the Al Hassan Industrial Park. **It was only after receiving no response that the workers went out on strike.**
Workers Attacked and Beaten

On Monday, August 22, several Chinese, Jordanian and Bangladeshi managers-including IBGM's Chinese owner whom the workers refer to as "Mr. David"-went to the Bangladeshi women's dormitory to pressure the women to return to work. When the women refused, managers attempted to drag and force the workers to leave their dorm. Then they started beating the women.

One of the women used her cell phone to call a few of the male workers. When six or seven of the male workers arrived, IBGM management immediately started beating and punching them, and hitting them with their walkie-talkies.

One Jordanian manager, Mr. Sadi is allegedly threatening to sexually abuse and humiliate the women if they do not immediately return to work.

The respected local Jordanian women's rights organization, Tamkeen was also unable to reach the Ministry of Labor, when they called seeking help to end the state of siege and abuse of the workers at IBGM.

"We have tried to contact the Labour Ministry officials to inform them about the workers' problems but they were not available. We also tried to contact them via the Ministry's hotline, but no one answered." Tamkeen's president, Linda Kallash, went on to add, that even if guest workers could get through to
the 'hotline,' the automated message system responds only in Arabic and English, which are languages the guest workers are unfamiliar with. The Ministry of Labor's "hotline" is in fact "useless" to the workers, Ms. Kallash stated. *(The Jordan Times, August 23, 2011)*

**Illegal Sweatshop Conditions**

Over 580 foreign guest workers from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and India—approximately 35 percent of whom are young women—are forced to toil under harsh and illegal conditions at the IBGM factory.

- **Toilet pass system humiliates workers:** Workers needing to use the bathroom must wait their turn to receive a "toilet pass." Management monitors the time workers stay in the bathroom, fining them $1.00 per minute for overstaying their time limit.

- **Slapped for failing to meet production goals:** IBGM workers report being threatened, pushed and slapped for failing to meet excessive production goals. (Management recently arbitrarily increased production goals by over 20 percent, with no increase in wages.)

- **Sick days not allowed:** No matter how ill a worker may be, they are forced by management to attend the factory and reach their production goals. Workers too sick to go to the factory are fined $4.00 to $5.00 for each day missed. No medicines are provided by factory management.

- **Dorms infested with bed bugs:** Workers report that their dorms are completely overrun with beg bugs, so much so that they cannot sleep, since they are constantly being bitten. Management has done nothing to combat the infestation. There are also acute water shortages in the
workers' dorms. Two or even three days a week, management shuts off the water supply.

- **All overtime is mandatory:** Workers have no choice but to remain working until management lets them go. Workers failing to reach their excessive production goals are not paid for the overtime hours they are forced to toil to complete their targets.

- **Half-cooked food:** Workers report that the food management provides is half-cooked and barely edible.

- **Cheated of vacation pay:** The IBGM factory does not pay the workers for working through their legal vacation holidays each year. By law, management must pay "earned leave" to the workers for toiling through their vacation leaves.

- In May of 2011, India workers struck IBGM over management's illegal deduction of $28.20 per month to cover food costs. In the work contracts they purchased, it was clearly stated that food would be provided free of charge. Following the May strike, management continued to illegally deduct $14.10 from the workers’ wages for food.

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