



PRESS RELEASE

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Betraying the Olympic spirit

New campaign calls for sportswear companies to clean up their act

Giant sportswear brands are violating the rights of millions of workers around the world in order to fill shops with the latest and cheapest sports shoes, clothes and accessories in time for the Athens Olympics.

Today the Clean Clothes Campaign, Global Unions and Oxfam launch a new worldwide campaign *Play Fair at the Olympics*. The campaign calls on the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and companies such as Fila, Puma, Umbro, Asics, Mizuno and others to clean up their acts.

Using new research *Play Fair* exposes the ruthless tactics used by the global sportswear industry to produce the latest fashions, made cheaper and faster and to ever more punishing deadlines. In order to deliver, suppliers are forcing their employees to work longer and harder, denying them their fundamental workers' rights.

Play Fair researchers spoke to workers such as Phan from Thailand and Fatima who works in an Indonesian factory that supplies Fila, Puma, Nike, Adidas and Lotto:

"We do not feel we can demand higher wages, welfare and legal status," said Phan. "If I don't complete my daily target within regular work hours I have to work overtime without pay... I don't feel that I have job security..." said Fatima.

"The sportswear industry is spending heavily on marketing in the run up to this year's Olympic Games which is supposed to be a showcase for fairness and human achievement. But the exploitation and abuse of workers' right endemic in the industry is violating that Olympic spirit," said Global Unions spokesperson Guy Ryder, General Secretary of the 151 million-member International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU).

"This global business model is allowing the biggest companies freedom to offload cost and risk down the production chain to those who are least able to resist," said Adrie Papma, a *Play Fair* spokesperson for Oxfam. "Women workers are disproportionately affected and expected to work excessive and often unpaid overtime. They are having to battle against discrimination and fight for a living wage, union rights, maternity leave and pensions."

Play Fair draws on the testimony of workers and factory managers in Bulgaria, Cambodia, Thailand, China, Indonesia and Turkey. These findings show that:

- Companies' promises to behave responsibly are often superficial and lacking in credibility, and are ignored by company buying teams who use cut-throat tactics to reach their targets;
- Factory managers are failing to meet the high-pressure demands from companies and comply with rules on respecting labor standards at the same time;
- The industry is therefore undermining the very labor standards it claims to uphold; some factories falsify records routinely in order to pass inspection and there is plentiful evidence of workers enduring abusive and exploitative working conditions or being sacked for joining a union.

"If hypocrisy and exploitation were an Olympic sport, the sportswear industry would win a medal," said Junya Yimprasert from the Thai Labour Campaign and member of the Clean Clothes Campaign network. "The industry is sacrificing human rights in the search for profits. Should the race to outfit athletes mean a race of the bottom for these workers?"

The campaign says that change would be in the industry's own interests. Some companies acknowledge that the way the industry works is not sustainable and that they have a responsibility to help solve the problem, but according to Ms Yimprasert the industry has not done enough to clean up the widespread problems in the sector. *Play Fair* says that the entire industry must work together to change its purchasing practices to begin to make a difference.

The IOC has an obligation to challenge the abusive business practices of its sponsors and licencees. The industry needs to make prices fairer, deadlines more appropriate and treat labor standards as important a set of criteria as cost, time and quality.

The industry must emphasize to every supplier that the rights to join and form trade unions and the right to collective bargaining are fundamental to implementing international labor standards.

"It is not only the big brands which are responsible," said Guy Ryder. "Governments must also work together and resist pressure to sacrifice labor standards and local factory owners need to accept their responsibility to respect workers' rights and to pay a living wage."

The *Play Fair* campaign brings together workers and consumers all over the world to urge the sportswear industry to change the way it works. Events are planned this year to push the IOC and the industry to work with NGOs and union organizations such as the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers Federation to embrace "ethical sourcing" and make their promises a reality.