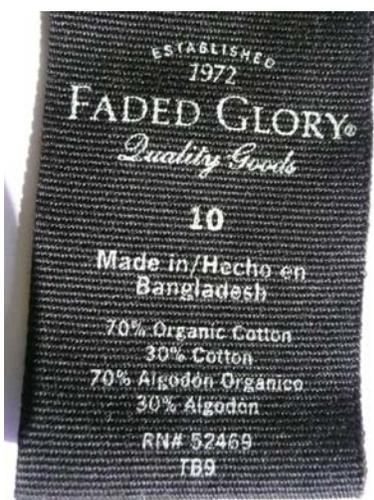


Over 3.5 million mostly young women garment workers are trying to climb out of misery. With a new minimum wage of just 35 cents an hour, the workers could live with a modicum of dignity. *Ask Wal-Mart to stop lobbying against a new minimum wage of 35 cents an hour for Bangladesh's garment workers.* They should be ashamed!

**Please call Wal-Mart today.**

Wal-Mart "Organic" Jeans Sell for just \$8.00.....Is that a great deal, or what? Imagine, women's "Faded Glory" relaxed-fit, flared blue jeans selling at Wal-Mart for just \$8.00!



### **Seventy percent "organic" and 100 percent starvation wages**

We had the chance to meet with some of the young women in Bangladesh who sew Wal-Mart's women's organic jeans at the **Anowara Apparels** factory in Chittagong. Wal-Mart accounts for nearly 100 percent of the production at Anowara Apparels, where 90 percent of the 2,500 workers are young women struggling to survive.

The workers did not know much about organic cotton, but they did know that the denim fabric is rough, stiff, abrasive to handle and difficult to sew. Each assembly line of 25 sewers is given a mandatory production goal of completing 250 pairs of Faded Glory jeans per hour, or ten pairs per worker. This means the women are allowed just *six minutes to sew each pair of jeans*.

The minimum wage in the factory is 11 ½ cents an hour for new workers, while senior sewing operators can earn 17 cents. It is now becoming clearer how Wal-Mart can sell a pair of "organic" blue jeans for only \$8.00 --*The young workers in Bangladesh are paid less than two cents for each pair of jeans they sew!*

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**\$8.00** 97¢ SHIPPING TO HOME

**Faded Glory - Women's Organic Cotton Relaxed-Fit Flared Jeans, Size 4**

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FADED GLORY

1 of 2 images View & Enlarge

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Walmart.com	<b>\$8.00</b>	<b>Not Available at this time</b>
Walmart Stores	Prices in Store May Vary	IN LIMITED STORES <b>Find in Store</b> <input type="text"/> ZIP Code <input type="text"/> <a href="#">(Learn More)</a> <b>FIND IT NOW</b>

### A Bargain Based on Misery

Senior sewers are paid **1.7 cents** for each pair of Wal-Mart jeans they sew. (Each worker must sew 10 pairs of jeans per hour, or one pair every six minutes-which is 10 percent of an hour. Ten percent of their 17-cent-an-hour wage amounts to 1.7 cents.)

Given the 17-cent-an-hour wage senior operators earn, the women can only afford to rent miserable one-room hovels in slum neighborhoods. When it rains at night, the roof leaks. The workers and their families must sit up, covering themselves with plastic. All they can afford to eat is the cheapest rice and lentils, and sometimes mashed potatoes. They cook with scraps of wood, as gas is too expensive. Dozens of workers share one hand pump, where they line up to clean dishes, scrub their clothes and wash themselves.

Bangladesh's woman Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, just days ago told the media: "The wage the workers are paid, I will say, is not only insufficient, but also inhumane. It is simply impossible for [the garment workers] to even live from hand to mouth in the capital with the peanuts they get in wages."

In a July 18 meeting with Bangladesh's Minister of Labor, Mr. Khondker Mosharraf Hossain, he told us that *the government would like to support the garment workers' demands for a new minimum wage of 5,000 taka a month, which is just 35 cents an hour, \$16.60 a week and \$71.94 a month.* In a just world, he continued, the workers should earn more than 35 cents an hour. The problem Bangladesh faces, he said, is that the giant multinational retailers-like Wal-Mart and Tesco-will not pay for the desperately-needed wage increase. It's the exact opposite, as

each year the multinationals want to cut production costs and drive down wages. The Labor Minister asked for help to control the multinationals.

The lives of *over 3.5 million workers in Bangladesh, most of them young women, hang in the balance*. The workers are united in their modest demand for a 35-cent-an-hour minimum wage, which they told us would "*make a huge difference in our lives*."

### **It Does Not Have to Be This Way**

Would paying 35 cents an hour in Bangladesh bankrupt Wal-Mart?

Hardly!

If the new minimum wage is set at 35 cents an hour for entry-level workers, this means that junior and senior operators would earn anywhere from 42 cents to 55 cents an hour, or \$3.32 to \$4.43 a day. With these wages, the workers explained to us, they could afford to purchase sufficient food, so they would not always be hungry, and they could rent slightly better rooms. They could afford to pay for primary school education for their children. They could help their parents a little more. Some workers told us they would even open bank accounts in order to save for emergencies.

Here is what the workers are asking for: In the case of Wal-Mart's production at the Anowara Apparels factory, the workers explain that the denim fabric is too difficult to handle and that 25 sewers can only complete 200 pairs of jeans per hour, not 250 pairs. The workers need seven-and-a-half minutes to complete each pair of Wal-Mart "Faded Glory" jeans. If the garment workers win their modest minimum wage increase to **35 cents an hour** for entry level workers, then junior operators (with three to five years experience) would earn **42 cents an hour**, while senior sewing operators (with over five years experience) would earn **55 cents an hour**. *In the best-case scenario, instead of being paid just 1.7 cents to sew each pair of Wal-Mart jeans, the workers-under the new minimum wage and given 7 ½ minutes to sew each pair of jeans-would now earn 5.3 to seven cents for each pair of jeans they sewed.*

The only question is, could Wal-Mart afford to pay the Bangladeshi workers 3 ½ to 5 ½ cents more to sew their "Faded Glory" jeans? Of course they could!

There are only two reasons that Bangladesh's over 3 ½ million young women garment workers are trapped in misery: *greed, and because the multinationals can get away with it.*

The **Anowara Apparels** factory in Chittagong is just one of *seven* garment factories owned by the **Valiant Group**, which describes itself as a "market leader in the apparel industry of Bangladesh." The Anowara factory and the Valiant Group are owned in turn by the powerful **Habib Group of Industries** in Bangladesh.

The Valiant Group produces not only for **Wal-Mart**, but also for **Kohl's, Sears, J.C. Penney, Lee, Wrangler, Arrow, Chaps, Macy's** and **Izod**.

In short, **Wal-Mart, Anowara Apparels/Valiant Group** and the other garment retailers have *all the power in the world to set a 35-cent-an-hour minimum wage in Bangladesh so that over 3.5 million mostly young women garment workers can finally climb out of misery and at least into poverty.*

Wal-Mart, Tesco and the other giant retailers are responsible, and must be held accountable if they continue lobbying to keep the garment workers' wages well below subsistence levels. When we asked the young Anowara Apparels workers if they had a union at the factory, they told us: "*Oh, no. We couldn't even think of it. We would all be fired and thrown out of the factory and left on the street with no way to survive.*"

But the young women workers did tell us that if they did not get the 5,000 taka a month, 35 cent-an-hour new minimum wage, they would strike.

If the garment workers do not win their 35 cent-an-hour minimum wage demand-or something very close to it-it is possible they will strike. If 3.5 million mostly young women garment workers walk out, *this could be the largest women's strike in history.*

####

### **Please call or email Wal-Mart!**

Tell Wal-Mart to support the modest 35-cent-an-hour minimum wage demand of Bangladesh's garment workers, not one cent less.

Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.  
702 SW 8th Street  
Bentonville, AK 72716  
Phone: 479-273-4000  
Fax: 479-273-4329

E-mail: [Rajan.Kamalanathan@wal-mart.com](mailto:Rajan.Kamalanathan@wal-mart.com), Mr. Rajan Kamalanathan, Vice President of Ethical Sourcing

It is possible that the new minimum wage could be announced by the Bangladeshi government as soon as the end of this week. *Please call, fax or write to Wal-Mart right away.*

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Thus far, more than 2,100 people signed on to our [petition letter to Wal-Mart](#).

A full page ad was published in Bengali in Bangladesh's leading newspaper, The Daily Ittefaq, on July 21. Union leaders in Bangladesh described the solidarity statement as "unprecedented" and said that it had "helped build the confidence of the workers." Unions printed 20,000 copies of the ad to distribute at rallies and worksites. The day after the ad was published, all the newspapers carried major stories about the garment workers struggle for a new minimum wage of 35 cents an hour.

## Workers Uniting

*The world's first global trade union with over 2.5 million members  
in the United States, Canada, England and Ireland*

**Stands in Solidarity  
with the Brave Garment Workers of Bangladesh**

**in their call for  
Justice Now!**

**A new minimum wage of  
Not one taka less than 5,000!**

**Respect for the legal right to organize!**

Workers Uniting supports the very modest demand of Bangladesh's garment workers for a minimum wage of at least 5,000 taka a month. There is not a clothing company in America or Europe that could not easily afford to pay 5,000 taka.

Bangladesh's three and a half million garment workers, who are among the hardest workers in the world, deserve justice and to raise their families in dignity.

Our vision is to unify workers in the western developed economies with our sisters and brothers across Asia, Africa and Latin America.

*Over two thousand people across America and the United Kingdom have signed this petition.*

Leo Gerard, President of the United Steelworkers Union  
Derek Simpson, Joint General Secretary of Unite-the-Union  
Charles Kamugama, Director, Global Institute for Labour & Human Rights  
Stephen Davison, Unite-the-Union; Gordon Roddick, Ron Lynn, President, Sue Burger, Treasurer and Richard McSwiggan, Financial Secretary, USW Local 8567; Chris Matheson, UNITE-the-Union; Fr. Mark Hallinan, Society of Jesus; Mario Frances Roselli, Calicut University; Lillian Lucas, University of Toronto; Josepito Rodriguez, Mexico; Néida Multicultural, UNAM; Mareses Sheehan, SE Labor Management; David Newby, Wisconsin State AFL-CIO .....and over 2,000 more...

For a complete content of the ad, please visit <http://www.nlcnet.org/alerts?id=0175>

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Note: It appears this link no longer is active?