

MAY 16, 2002

**MEMBERS OF CONGRESS DEMAND END
TO WORKER ABUSE IN GAP FACTORIES WORLDWIDE AS EVIDENCE MOUNTS OF
WIDESPREAD INTIMIDATION, EXPLOITATION AND SWEATSHOP CONDITIONS**

**UNVEIL VIDEO EVIDENCE OF ABUSE AGAINST WORKERS IN AFRICA AND RELEASE
REPORT ON WORLDWIDE VIOLATIONS**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representatives Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), and Nydia Velázquez (D-NY) today released evidence that factory workers who manufacture GAP Inc. clothing in Africa, Central America, and the Caribbean are being exploited, abused, threatened, and in some cases beaten and stabbed.

The members, who were joined at a news conference on Capitol Hill by union representatives and advocates for international workers rights, demanded in a letter to GAP Inc. President and CEO Millard S. Drexler that he ".take immediate action to improve their working conditions, to pay wages that take workers and their families out of poverty, and to ensure their right to organize."

The following is Schakowsky's statement:

"It is an honor to stand here with my brothers and sisters, committed members of Congress, and advocates to demand justice for workers, not just here at home, but across the world. I am a dues paying member of UNITE!. And as a union member, I know what it means to be a part of a family that will always stand with you and fight on your behalf, every step of the way."

"Workers, without fear, should have the right to organize, to mobilize, and to demand respect, equity, and justice. Unfortunately, that has not been the case in GAP factories in Lesotho, Guatemala, El Salvador and the Dominican Republic. Workers in GAP factories have no right to organize, no right to demand better working conditions, fair treatment or living wages, and they have no hope of climbing out of poverty."

"American consumers across the country want to know that the clothes and products they buy are not produced in factories that engage in sweatshop practices or deny workers basic labor rights. That is why the GAP must end this brutal and inhumane campaign against its workers."

"Today, we are sending a letter to the GAP's President and CEO, Millard S. Drexler, demanding that his corporation live up to its own "Code of Vendor Conduct" which clearly states that "Factories must not interfere with workers who wish to lawfully and peacefully associate, organize or bargain collectively." We are calling on the GAP to pay its workers living wages, ensure decent working conditions, guarantee the right to

organize, and end the campaign of violence and intimidation. We are also demanding that the GAP make public the location of all its factories worldwide so that human and labor rights advocates can monitor conditions and report back the buying public. Representative Nydia Velázquez will be introducing a bill that would require this disclosure of all manufacturers and I enthusiastically join her in that effort.

"The evidence is irrefutable. Workers who manufacture GAP products are living in poverty, earning pennies an hour, and not making enough to pay rent or put food on the table. This is from the same company that is spending millions in advertising to create an image of clean, comfortable, and wholesome living. A pretty face can't hide the ugly truth.

"Daniel Maraisane, the General Secretary of the Lesotho Clothing and Allied Workers Union (LECAWU) will tell us about the poverty wages and violence that workers making GAP jeans face in Lesotho. Gap workers in Lesotho earn so little that they cannot afford to feed their children. A pair of pants and a shirt from the GAP cost more than the \$54 a worker in Lesotho makes in a month. And when they stand up to defend their rights and demand a living wage they are brutally repressed and even stabbed.

"Maria Mejia, a Central American Labor Rights Investigator from Guatemala, will describe the miserable conditions that GAP workers face there. Those conditions include poverty wages and sexual harassment. When workers demanded their rights, the GAP pulled its work out of their factory.

□

"The GAP is looking the other way while its workers are being abused, and threatened, and they're banking that the American people are not paying attention. They are wrong. The American people demand accountability and responsibility and we will fight to bring change to ensure that corporations end the exploitation of workers here at home and abroad."

May 16, 2002

*Mr. Millard S. Drexler
President and CEO
Gap Inc.
2 Folsom Street
San Francisco, California □ 94105-1205*

Dear Mr. Drexler:

We are writing to express our deep concerns about the situation facing workers in factories that produce for the Gap and to ask that you take immediate action to improve their working conditions, to pay wages that take workers and their families out of poverty, and to ensure □ their right to organize.

Earlier this year, we were told of deplorable conditions at the Shin Won production factory in Guatemala, where workers were paid poverty wages, sexually harassed and fired for union activities. Now, we have learned of incidents where workers involved in workplace organizing have been physically attacked, and where the Gap has pulled work and closed a factory where workers were organizing to improve conditions. These and other incidents violate the Gap's own "Code of Vendor Conduct" that "Factories must not interfere with workers who wish to lawfully and peacefully associate, organize or bargain collectively."

In one case, Marashanala Ramaliehe, a worker at a Lesotho plant that produces for the Gap, was stabbed by a factory manager while she was leading a protest against mistreatment and unfair conditions in the plant. In a Salvadoran facility, a plant manager threatened a worker with a shard of glass. Most disturbing, we have learned that just as workers were succeeding in organizing and in winning changes at the Salvadoran Tainan plant, the Gap has "cut and run" from the facility, thereby abandoning workers, and teaching exactly the wrong lesson to workers at all your other plants.

Such actions on the part of your company and your contractors effectively repress workers who are attempting to organize in order to win higher wages and end egregious human and labor rights violations. These actions must end, and you are in a position to make that happen.

We believe that you need to act forcefully and immediately to ensure that Gap contractor facilities respect the rights of their workers and improve their working conditions. Specifically, we ask that you:

- Ensure that workers in facilities that produce for the Gap are paid living wages and are provided with decent working conditions**
- Guarantee that workers are afforded the right to organize, form a union and bargain for better wages and conditions, free from physical threats, intimidation or coercion**
- Act to ensure that workers who were fired for exercising their labor rights are rehired and compensated for their unfair termination**
- Publicly disclose the names and addresses of all factories producing for the Gap so that human and labor rights advocates can monitor conditions and practices at those factories**
- Not "cut and run" when labor abuses become public, and especially when workers are organizing to end those abuses.**

American consumers across the country want to know that the clothes and products they buy are not produced in factories that engage in sweatshop practices or deny workers basic labor rights. We call on you to use the very significant purchasing power of the Gap to stop labor violations and improve working conditions in plants around the world. It is not sufficient to have a "Code of Vendor Conduct" when that Code is clearly being ignored and violated in practice on a daily basis.

We will be monitoring the actions of the Gap in this regard so that we can inform our constituents of your response and determine what additional steps we will need to take in order to protect the rights of workers in Gap contract facilities.

Thank you for your attention to our request. We look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

***Sincerely,
U.S. Representatives
Jan Schakowsky
Nydia Velazquez
Sherrod Brown
John Conyers
Bernard Sanders
Peter DeFazio
Marcy Kaptur
Hilda Solis
Sam Farr
Cynthia McKinney***