

**GAP urged by US lawmakers to improve working conditions overseas** Copyright 2002  
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A group of 11 US lawmakers have written to GAP Inc president and chief executive officer Millard Drexler urging him to improve the working conditions of employees in overseas factories who make clothes for the retailer.

The Congressmen and women are concerned about reports that workers at plants used by GAP in Guatemala and Lesotho have been subjected to poverty wages and sexual harassment, and are not permitted to organize labor representation.

"We are calling on GAP to pay its workers living wages, ensure decent working conditions, guarantee the right to organize, and end the campaign of violence and intimidation," Congresswoman Janice Schakowsky told reporters at a press conference on Capitol Hill.

The lawmakers are also demanding that the retailer make public the location of all its factories worldwide to enable human rights advocates to monitor conditions and report back to the buying public.

GAP reported a 17 pct fall in its April sales for the four weeks to May 4 last week on sales of 962 mln usd, compared with sales of 1.2 bln for the same period a year earlier.

The firm is due to release its first-quarter earnings results later today. The lawmakers highlighted several instances where employees have allegedly been assaulted by plant managers.

"In one case, Marashanala Ramaliehe, a worker at a Lesotho plant that produces for GAP, was stabbed by a factory manager while she was leading a protest against mistreatment and unfair conditions in the plant," the lawmakers said in their letter to Drexler.

A San Francisco-based spokeswoman for GAP refuted the lawmakers claims and said the letter is the first communication on the matter that the company has received from the lawmakers.

"We're all for transparency and disclosure and open dialogue," she stressed adding that "we have already taken action on these issues and have been for sometime."

GAP supports the rights of employees to organize labor representation and many of the plants that have been criticised for their labor conditions do not produce clothing exclusively for GAP, she noted.

She explained that GAP also employs local staff around the world to assess and appraise the working conditions in plants that it uses to produce its clothing as well as working to help educate workers on their rights.

The spokeswoman added that GAP does not disclose the locations of all the plants it uses around the world for proprietary reasons.

GAP also owns the Banana Republic and Old Navy retail outlets.