

# International Labor Rights Forum

February 2014

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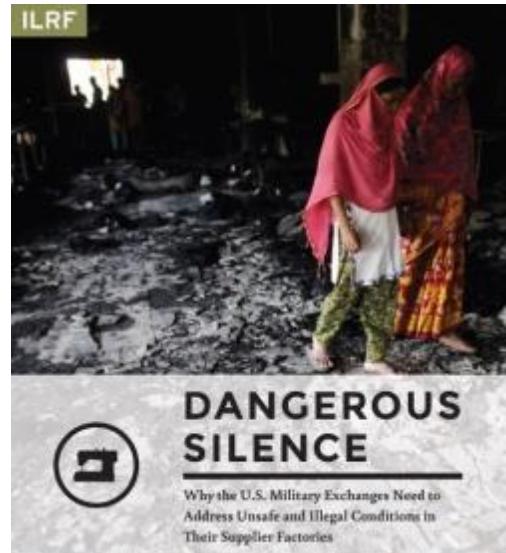
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## New ILRF Report: U.S. Military Exchanges Turn Blind Eye to Working Conditions at Suppliers

Retail operations run by the U.S. government are buying clothing from unsafe and abusive factories in Bangladesh, according to a [new ILRF report](#) featured yesterday on [ABC News](#). In relying on factories' own unverified claims of compliance with labor law or the audits of companies such as Walmart and Sears the exchanges are, in effect, "flying blind." In some cases the exchanges cut off relationships with suppliers when presented with evidence of violations, leaving workers behind in potential deathtraps.

To present our recommendations, ILRF submitted written testimony at a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing yesterday. [Read ILRF's testimony as well as the powerful testimony by Rana Plaza survivor Reba Sikder and labor leader Kalpona Akter.](#)

Last month a Defense Appropriations report praised the new Marine Corps licensing policy, which requires licensees to join or abide by the requirements of the Bangladesh Safety Accord, and urges military exchanges to adopt the same standard.



## Happy Valentine's Day from ILRF!

This Valentine's Day we are showing the workers who make our Valentine's goodies how much we care. Show your support with one of the following actions:

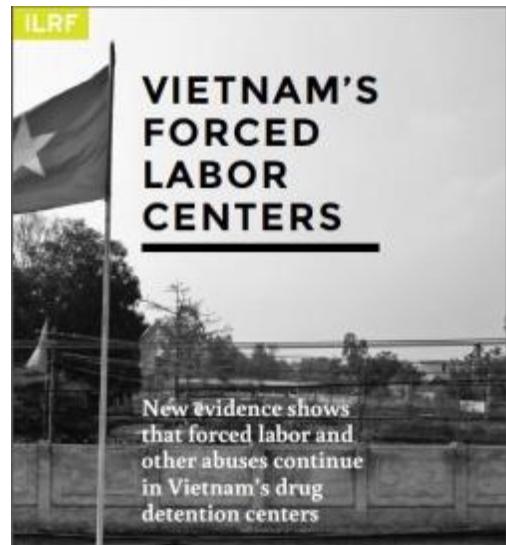
- [Show your love](#) by supporting our work with cocoa farmers in Cote d'Ivoire with a gift in honor of your Valentine!
- Host a screening of [The Dark Side of Chocolate](#) to inform your friends about the problems in cocoa supply chains.
- Purchase ethically-sourced chocolate from vendors like [Equal Exchange](#).



## New ILRF Report: Vietnam's Forced Labor Centers

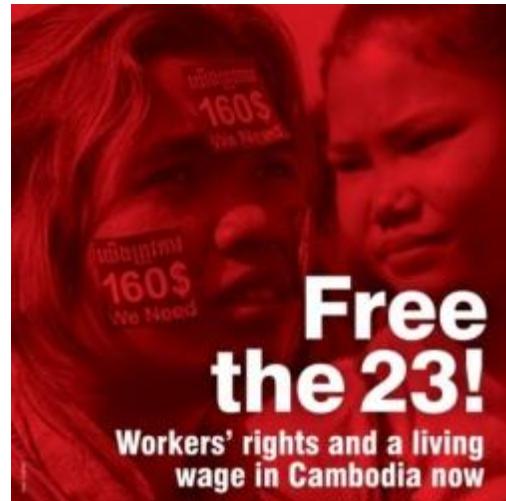
A series of interviews conducted by ILRF partners with recently released drug center detainees in Vietnam confirm that forced labor, torture, and other human rights abuses continue in the centers, despite the government's pledge to scale up voluntary forms of drug treatment.

Now is the time for the international community to send a clear message to the Government of Vietnam: forced labor cannot be legally or medically justified as "treatment" for drug dependence. International donor organizations, multinational companies that source from Vietnam, and the U.S. and EU should renew the call for immediate closure of drug detention centers.



## ILRF Condemns Violence Against Workers in Cambodia

Following a violent crackdown by state security forces against striking garment workers and activists in Phnom Penh on January 2 and 3, ILRF joined with labor groups in Cambodia and globally in calling on the government to immediately release the detainees, drop the charges against the protesters, and resume good faith wage negotiations. Despite the groundswell of international support and the courageous struggle of Cambodian workers, 21 union leaders and activists still remain unjustly detained, the government continues to deny people's right to peaceful assembly, and the \$160 wage demand has not been met. On January 10 and February 10, ILRF protested at the Cambodian Embassy in DC in coordination with [actions](#) in a number of countries. ILRF is also calling on global brands sourcing apparel from Cambodia to pay higher prices to factories and support a living wage.



## Burmese Workers in Thailand Organize, Negotiate and Win

Workers from one of the largest shrimp factories in Thailand have negotiated a settlement with their employer and developed an agreement for a representative labor committee within the factory. The workers were organized to action by the Migrant Workers Rights Network (MWRN), with support from ILRF, after their employer threatened to fire employees who did not sign away their rights to reduced pay during a work shortage. Thirty workers showed up at 8 p.m. on a Saturday, discussed what to do for four hours, and elected a small group to take their response to the employer. Read more [here](#).



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## Gap Receives Public Eye Jury Award

A panel of internationally renowned business ethicists granted [Gap Inc](#) (which also owns Athleta, Banana Republic and Old Navy) an award of shame at the Public Eye Awards held outside the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Liana Foxvog represented ILRF at the [press conference](#) and said: "In planning our nomination, ILRF, SumOfUs and United Students Against Sweatshops thought: What's the worst kind of irresponsible company? One that portrays a public image of being a leader in responsibility while actively undermining real corporate responsibility. That's how we decided to nominate Gap."



### **Upcoming Events:**

April 4-6: [Chico Vive Conference](#), DC

April 4-6: [Labor Notes Conference](#), Chicago

April 24: Global Day of Action: PAY UP! Rana Plaza survivors and families need compensation now! *Save the date and stay tuned...*