



not ok,
anywhere



Adidas exploitation: the truth behind the brand

Around the world 775,000 workers, mainly women, in 1,200 factories across 65 countries make Adidas products. Almost all of the jobs are outsourced to factories in poorer countries, yet through Adidas' buying practices the company has enormous influence over their working conditions, and ultimately their lives. In the run up to the London 2012 Olympics research has exposed the harsh reality of life for these workers.

The Playfair 2012 campaign, which War on Want supports, highlighted the appalling experiences of workers making Adidas official Olympic and Team GB goods in China, Sri Lanka and the Philippines in their recent *Fair Games* report. Further investigative research by *The Independent* revealed more stories of the abusive treatment of workers in sweatshop conditions in Indonesian factories.

Across all of the factories researchers visited, workers faced the same issues: poverty pay, terrible working conditions and threats, harassment or punishment if they try to organise trade unions to defend their rights.

This is exploitation. It wouldn't be ok for Adidas to treat workers like this here, and it's not ok anywhere else.

Poverty pay

Adidas have spent £100 million securing their position as the official sportswear partner of the London 2012 Olympics and Team GB. Yet away

from the Olympic spotlight the workers who make their clothes struggle to get by on wages that don't even cover their basic needs.

In Indonesia, workers are paid as little as 34p an hour, with some factories not even the legal minimum wage. As a result, workers said they skip meals to save money and that every day someone in their factory passes out because they are exhausted or unwell. In the Philippines, workers said that their basic wage does not cover their families' minimum needs; more than half of those interviewed said that they are forced to pawn ATM cards to loan sharks for high-interest loans.

None of the workers Playfair researchers interviewed in China, Indonesia, Sri Lanka or the Philippines are paid a living wage – a wage that covers the cost of basic necessities such as food, housing, clothing, healthcare and education.

It doesn't have to be this way. Adidas can ensure that all of its suppliers pay a living wage, through its buying practices. Yet despite repeated calls from workers and campaigners, Adidas still refuse to commit to a living wage.

Working conditions

Faced with such low pay, workers often have little choice but to work excessive hours just to scrape together enough to get by. Playfair's research found workers in China are working from 8am to 11pm, regularly working overtime in excess of the legal limit. In Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the Philippines workers all reported

that overtime is compulsory in order to meet their production targets.

Long hours are not the only problem workers face – in China, workers live in a state of permanent uncertainty with little job security. The majority of workers are employed on temporary contracts – and their contracts state that they have two places of work over 120 miles apart. The workers say that if they disobey their managers they fear being transferred, effectively dismissing them.

Workers also face an appalling lack of basic dignity and respect at work. In Indonesia workers need their managers' permission just to go to the toilet. Workers reported being verbally abused, having shoes thrown at them or being slapped across the face.

Adidas must take responsibility for this unacceptable abuse of workers' basic dignity. All workers must be able to work reasonable hours, free from the fear of harassment and abuse. Adidas must act to ensure that this is not allowed anywhere in their global supply chains.

Right to organise

Freedom of association, the right of workers to organise and bargain collectively, is an internationally recognised human right. It is recognised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the core standards of the International Labour Organisation, and is the basic tool through which workers can defend and secure their rights. In their official codes of conduct for suppliers, Adidas state that their suppliers must respect the right of workers to organise and bargain collectively for wages.

Yet for the workers making Adidas goods around the world this right is far from reality. In Indonesia the trade unions that do exist are not given bargaining rights by the factory management. Workers also face individual harassment and punishment for union

organising; at one factory in Indonesia supplying Adidas 10 workers were suspended earlier this year and face losing their jobs – believed to be as a result of their union activism.

At Adidas' Chinese suppliers trade union activities are even more repressed. Playfair's Fair Games report found that the staff manual in one factory makes clear that any activity to educate or organise the workers to secure improvements in working conditions is a punishable offence; if workers hand out leaflets they will be fired immediately.

Not only are the workers unable to organise to secure their rights, they are effectively gagged from speaking out. Managers at Adidas' Indonesian suppliers told workers they must lie about their pay, hours and conditions during Adidas factory audits. At a factory in China a worker was dismissed simply for telling an auditor they worked until 10pm on a daily basis.

Trade unions are essential to workers securing their basic rights, decent pay, working conditions and their fundamental dignity. Through organising collectively they can assert their power and end this exploitation and abuse. Adidas must stop the repression of trade unions throughout its supply chains and instead ensure a positive environment for trade union organising.

Take action

Demand Adidas end worker exploitation now, email Herbert Hainer, Adidas CEO, order free materials and find out more about the campaign at notokanywhere.org

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Find out more about the Playfair 2012 campaign at playfair2012.org