

September 4, 2023

To
Mr. Abu Ubaida
Managing Director
Price Jacquard Sweater Ltd.
via: [REDACTED]@gmail.com



[HRW.org](https://www.hrw.org)

Dear Mr. Ubaida,

Re: Shahidul Islam's murder and the factory's social audits

Human Rights Watch is an international non-government organization working on a range of human rights issues in over 100 countries worldwide, including Bangladesh. We have been researching and writing about workers' rights in the garment industry, covering a range of aspects on labor rights, including the importance of right of workers' freedom of association, the role of fair purchasing practices, and the limitations of social audits and so on. We accept no funding from any government or political entity to ensure our independence.

We are currently preparing to publish a report on workers' right to freedom of association in Bangladesh and social audits. In this context, we will also be writing about the murder of Shahidul Islam, and the social audits conducted by Prince Jacquard Sweater Ltd.

As you know, Shahidul Islam was the Gazipur president of the Bangladesh Garment and Industrial Workers Federation (BGIWF), an independent union federation. According to a First Information Report (FIR) registered by the police, he and other representatives met with officials from Prince Jacquard Sweater Ltd. to try to resolve workers' complaints regarding unpaid wages for the months of May and June and Eid bonus. As the representatives were leaving and reached the front of the factory, a gang approached and threatened them for helping workers, and attacked them. The attackers beat Islam unconscious and he was declared dead in a hospital. We understand that the investigation is pending.

We have also learned that Prince Jacquard Sweater Ltd. had in the past conducted social audits using amfori BSCI and Sedex Member's Ethical Trading Audit (SMETA)'s systems in 2021 and 2022. We do not have copies of the audit reports themselves but understand that in the past, these audits found "multiple violations," including "delayed payment of wages, a failure to ensure annual wage increments as stipulated by law, gaps in benefit payments, and irregular deductions in payments."

Please share any comments and further information you have on the above. We request additional information regarding the following aspects for our forthcoming publication:

1. We understand from your comments to the media, that “there was a delay of payment but that it has cleared all unpaid wages, including Eid bonus.” Could you please provide the dates when wages for the months of May and June, and the Eid bonus were paid, the number of workers paid, and the total amounts disbursed as wages and bonus?
2. Could you please provide us copies of all amfori BSCI and SMETA audit reports of your factory, including those from 2021 and 2022 and related corrective actions?
3. Could you briefly please explain the underlying reasons why the factory has been experiencing repeated wage-related problems dating back to at least 2021?

We look forward to your response by September 6, 2023, so that we may reflect your response in our upcoming reporting on this subject. All responses can be sent to Aruna Kashyap at [\[REDACTED\]@hrw.org](mailto:[REDACTED]@hrw.org).

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Aruna Kashyap

Associate Director
Economic Justice and Rights Division