

----- Original Message -----

Subject: Richard's speech.

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Date: Tue, December 11, 2007 6:46 pm

To: ineke@cleanclothes.org

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Press Release from the SOCIALIST GROUP OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Strasbourg ,Tuesday 11th December

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Seven European Human Right campaigners are facing international arrest warrants being put in place from tomorrow (Wednesday 13) by the Indian Government for highlighting human rights abuses taking place in the Indian garment industry, the European Parliament has been told today.

UK Labour Richard Howitt MEP, Vice-Chair of the European Parliament Human Rights Sub-Committee, in his speech to the European Parliament in Strasbourg today, called on Member States of the EU to refuse the extradition of seven human rights campaigners following the lawsuits initiated by the clothing manufacturer Fibre and Fabrics International (FFI) and its subsidiary Jeans Knits Pvt. Ltd (JKPL).

The case has been taken against the Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC) and the India Committee of the Netherlands (ICN) for their role in publicising reports of high work pressure, forced unpaid overtime, and physical and verbal abuse at their plants.

On December 1, the Magistrates Court in Bangalore requested the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs to execute arrest warrants, and call for extradition of the seven Dutch nationals, branding these activists as "international criminals" for raising human rights concerns. Tomorrow sees all necessary documentation being handed over to the Home Affairs Ministry allowing them to implement the extradition request.

Speaking to a packed European Parliament chamber as part of a debate on Human Rights, Socialist Group member Richard Howitt said MEP " if these international arrest warrants are sanctioned by the Indian government it criminalises free speech and sends the message that human rights concerns cannot be raised without fear of persecution.

"I call on India not to give executive approval to the international arrest warrant, and I ask EU Member States to back the stance already taken by Holland and publicly declare that they will not extradite these people."

ENDS

Editors Note:

Please find attached a photo featuring Richard Howitt MEP and one of the accused human rights activists Ineke Zeldenrust from the Clean Clothes Campaign.

For more information on the Socialist Group, please go to www.socialistgroup.eu ;
<http://www.1million4disability.eu/>