



PRESS RELEASE

Triumph Sacks Union Leader for T-Shirt

Clean Clothes Campaign Calls on Underwear Company To Reinstate Thai Union President

For Immediate Release

August 26, 2008

Contact: Tessel Pauli

Phone: +31-204122785

Email: info@cleanclothes.org

(Amsterdam) The Clean Clothes Campaign has launched a public campaign against Triumph International, one of the world's largest brands of intimate apparel, for sacking a union president at one of its factories in Thailand.

On July 30, 2008, a Thai subsidiary of Triumph International, one of the world's largest makers of intimate apparel, dismissed union president Jitra Kotshadej for wearing an unfashionable t-shirt. She wasn't wearing the t-shirt at work, and it wasn't the colour or the design of the t-shirt that caused offence. It was the message that caused the problem: 'Those who do not stand are not criminals. Thinking differently is not a crime.' The t-shirt refers to the abuse of *lèse-majesté* legislation to suppress political opposition and the right of people to refrain from standing during the royal anthem.

"When a union president is dismissed, it inherently raises questions about the company's motives," according to Tessel Pauli, Urgent Appeals Coordinator for the Clean Clothes Campaign. "Dismissing her for wearing a t-shirt that supports freedom of expression is simply outrageous."

Ms. Kotshadej was participating in a late night TV debate on women's reproductive rights when she wore the t-shirt. Despite the fact that she was speaking in her private time and not in her capacity as a union leader or worker at Triumph's Body Fashion (Thailand) Ltd. Factory, the company filed a petition with the labour court and received permission to dismiss her. Ms. Kotshadej never even had a chance to defend herself, since she was not informed about the case by management, and she never received the summons nor the court order. Since then, 3000 of her co-workers walked out of the factory in a show of solidarity, demanding the reinstatement of their union president. The workers are demanding Ms. Kotshadej's reinstatement and a guarantee that the company won't take any disciplinary measures against workers participating in the strike.

The Clean Clothes Campaign, an international organisation that works to improve conditions and support the empowerment of workers in the global garment industry, attempted to intervene on Ms. Kotshadej's behalf by bringing her case to the attention of Triumph's Swiss-based financial headquarters. In a letter to the CCC dated August 8, the company refuses to respond to the call for Ms. Kotshadej's reinstatement and in a leaflet distributed amongst the striking workers on August 13, it was explicitly mentioned that the company would not rehire her. In response to pressure from the CCC, Triumph International later claimed to agree with the three demands presented by the workers, but then issued a statement in which it expressed its unwillingness "to discuss reinstatement of the former employee at this time". The Triumph International Labour Union has presented the company with 2500 signatures of union members supporting the fight for reinstatement, which it refused to accept.

The Clean Clothes Campaign is criticising Triumph for denying Ms. Kotshadej the basic human right of freedom of expression, which is part of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as of the OECD guidelines for Multinational Enterprises that lays down the principles companies should adhere to regarding labour and consumer rights.

—end—

For more information: <http://www.cleanclothes.org/appeals.htm>

The Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC) works to improve conditions and support the empowerment of workers in the global garment industry. The CCC has national campaigns in 12 European countries with a network of 250 organisations worldwide.