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## PRESS RELEASE

**Paying the price for clothing factory disasters in south Asia:**

### **Pakistan factory fire victims sue KiK**

**Berlin, 13 March 2015** – Justice, not hand-outs. Liability, not voluntary giving. These are the calls made by survivors and relatives of victims of the fatal fire at the Ali Enterprises textile factory in Karachi (Pakistan). 260 people were killed in the fire on 11 September 2012, a further 32 were injured. German discount clothing retailer KiK was by its own admission the factory's main customer. Four of those affected by the disaster have now filed a compensation claim against KiK at the Regional Court in Dortmund. Muhammad Hanif, Muhammad Jabbar, Abdul Aziz Khan Yousuf Zai and Saeeda Khatoon are all members of the Baldia Factory Fire Association, the organization run by those affected by the fire, and are seeking 30,000 euro each in compensation. The European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR), medico international and the National Trade Union Federation (NTUF) from Pakistan are assisting with the case, which was filed by Berlin lawyer Dr. Remo Klinger.

“As in many south Asian countries, the workers in Karachi have paid for KiK's clothes with their health and their lives,” says ECCHR General Secretary Wolfgang Kaleck. Hanif survived the fire but suffered serious injuries. Jabbar, Zai and Khatoon each lost a son in the fire. “They want justice to finally be done.” The case against KiK should make it clear that transnational corporations' responsibilities also extend to the working conditions in their subsidiary and supplier companies abroad. “KiK tried to silence the survivors with charity hand-outs. Now they are fighting back. With their case they are sending a strong signal against the policies of impunity,” says Thomas Seibert, south Asia coordinator at medico international.

KiK made relief payments in the immediate aftermath of the fire. But the company subsequently refused to pay compensation for the loss of income from many family breadwinners. After two years of negotiations an unsatisfactory compensation offer was tabled in December 2014. “KiK made it clear: there would be no compensation payments,” says lawyer Klinger. KiK was unwilling to commit to specific sums for long-term compensation. The Baldia Factory Fire Affectedes Association rejected the offer and selected the four claimants.

**More on this case at:** <http://www.ecchr.de/working-conditions-in-south-asia.html>

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