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## PRESS RELEASE

### Factory fire lawsuit

## German Court: Pakistani victims awarded legal costs in case against KiK

**Berlin, 30 August 2016** – Justice for the 260 dead and 32 injured: that’s the demand from those injured and bereaved by a devastating fire at the Ali Enterprises clothing factory in Karachi, Pakistan. In March 2015, four victims brought a legal action against the German clothing discounter KiK at the Regional Court in Dortmund. KiK was the main client of the factory, which was destroyed in a fire in September 2012. Today the court has issued an initial decision: the court has accepted jurisdiction and granted legal aid to the claimants to cover their costs. This decision is a first step towards dealing with human rights violations by German companies abroad before German courts.

This decision is welcomed by the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR), which is supporting the lawsuit along with medico international, as well as by the claimants’ lawyer Prof. Dr. Remo Klinger. By bringing this case the claimants want to make clear that transnational corporations are liable for the working conditions in their subsidiary and supplier firms.

“The people suffering from the consequences of our global textile industry are calling for justice. This case could mark the first time that those who profit from this unjust system are held legally accountable in Germany,” says ECCHR General Secretary Wolfgang Kaleck. He says the case against KiK shows the urgent need for law reform. “The German government must introduce enforceable due diligence obligations for German companies operating abroad. The National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights provides a chance to finally do so.” Thomas Seibert from medico international states: “The pressure from the Global South is growing, more and more workers are organizing themselves and are ready to go to court to fight for fair working conditions.”

Employees at the KiK supplier in Karachi suffocated or burned to death because many windows were barred and some emergency exits were blocked. The claimants (one survivor of the fire and three people who lost family members) are members of the Baldia Factory Fire Affectedes Association, a group set up by almost 200 families. They are calling for compensation from KiK to the value of €30,000 per claimant.

**More information at:** [https://www.ecchr.eu/en/our\\_work/business-and-human-rights/working-conditions-in-south-asia/pakistan-kik.html](https://www.ecchr.eu/en/our_work/business-and-human-rights/working-conditions-in-south-asia/pakistan-kik.html) and <http://www.medico.de/themen/aktion/textil/>

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