



February 7, 2020

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Dear Friends,

I write to announce that this year I will be transitioning out of ILRF. This is my tenth year and I am incredibly proud of what we have built here. Although it's hard to part with such an amazing organization, I will forever hold ILRF's mission in my heart and continue in new ways to help grow and strengthen the work of ILRF and our partners in the global labor rights movement. Right now is a good moment to pass the torch. Finances are stable and senior staff are in a good position to support my successor and carry us through this transition.

ILRF's board of directors has been super supportive. We established a transition committee and are working together to engage funders, allies and staff around the process. I will continue in my role for several months and then take a three month sabbatical in order to write about some of the work ILRF has been leading over the past decade.

Looking back, there are three significant markers that shaped the past decade at ILRF. Much of this work was possible thanks to the already solid groundwork laid by my predecessors.

- **Our advocacy for enforceable brand agreements** (also referred to as worker-driven social responsibility agreements), has flourished. Prior to the collapse of Rana Plaza, we documented the fundamental flaws in voluntary, confidential corporate social responsibility initiatives. Then building on our experience as witness signatories to the Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Safety, we shared those lessons with worker advocates in apparel in other countries, and in other industries such as seafood, electronics, and agriculture. We published a series of reports exposing the flaws in voluntary, confidential codes of conduct and certification programs. We developed guidelines for a new approach based on transparent, legally binding agreements negotiated between brands and workers and their organizations. And we continue campaigning to advance more such agreements.
- **Building comprehensive, cross-issue campaigns have become a hallmark of ILRF's advocacy.** We have leveraged collaboration from allies in the U.S., Canada, Europe, Korea, and Australia to lift up our grassroots partners' reporting on abuses and bring pressure on cotton, seafood, apparel, palm oil, and melon industry leaders to respect workers' rights. Building on the successes of the ILRF-housed Cotton Campaign, which has driven fundamental and ongoing reforms in Uzbekistan, we honed a coalition-building approach that combines legal and policy advocacy with corporate campaigns and prioritizes the organizations building power locally. All these campaigns work across issues, engaging allies from sister movements, such as environmental rights, women's rights, anti-corruption, and children's rights.

- **Raising the profile of Labor Rights Defenders.** ILRF's urgent action response and continual fundraising and advocacy to support grassroots partners under pressure is an ongoing priority. We design campaigns based on our partners' priorities and constantly work to help them leverage international policy mechanisms and solidarity. This June 11, we will host the tenth Labor Rights Defenders Awards, an event we have used to strengthen Awardees' campaigns and, on a number of occasions, to get charges pending against them dropped.

**Please join us on June 11 in Washington, DC for a celebration of this year's Labor Rights Defender Awardees.** We will be honoring the Dr. Lorretta Johnson, Secretary-Treasurer of the American Federation of Teachers; the General Agricultural Workers Union of Ghana, for their work to address child labor in the cocoa industry; the Red for Ed teachers' movement in the U.S.; and Sharan Burrow, General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation.

I look forward to continuing to collaborate with all of you and to supporting ILRF's advocacy for workers' rights in the global economy. Please help circulate the attached job description and don't hesitate to reach out to me in the coming months to share your thoughts and ideas about ILRF's work and the future of workers' rights in the global economy.

In solidarity,



Judy Gearhart  
Executive Director

