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Subject: Immediate intervention sought to re-open Unitex Exports, garment factory in Ambattur.

Date:

To

Dr. J. Jayalalitha

Honourable Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu

Fort St. George

Chennai 600009

Dear Dr. Jayalalitha,

We are writing to draw your attention to the issue of women workers of Unitex Exports, a garment export factory in Ambattur, Chennai which was closed without legal notice or settlement of statutory benefits and dues. More than a hundred women were rendered jobless, after working for more 20 years at this factory. They have been defrauded of their hard earned statutory benefits like (provident fund, gratuity, medical insurance, earned leave, closure compensation, etc.) running into lakhs of rupees, accounts have not been settled and wages have not been paid for last three months violating the Payment of Wages Act.

Unitex Exports management appears to have evolved systematic practice of closure without proper process of law, and settlement of workers dues as in the case of Aditya Exports and Vivasan Exports also in Ambattur Industrial Estate. The owner Mr. Radhakrishnan has a new factory 30 km away at Sevapet, where labour laws are not adhered as well.

The management has failed to participate in the tripartite dialogue with Garment and Fashion Workers Union representing all 120 workers at the Labour Commissionerate. It continues to act in a unilateral manner with no regard for law and despite directions from your government's labour department. It is shocking that no action has been taken to bring an errant employer while workers sit outside the factory demanding what is their due.

Workers earning small amounts, such as Rs 3500 who do not have the resources to engage in lengthy legal battles, should be protected by your government and ensured that they receive wages till such time as the dispute is resolved. These women workers carry multiple burdens, many of them being single parents, having to repay loans, pay for children's education, etc. Most of them are women over 40 years age, and unlikely to get employment elsewhere, thus sudden unplanned loss of employment has caused them enormous stress.

We believe your government needs to intervene and take proactive measures to prevent what appears to be blatant cheating and thus we request you to ensure:

1. That Unitex Exports management complies with the direction of the labour authority, and pay workers 3 months wages immediately (under provisions of the Payment of Wage Act)
2. That Unitex Exports Management reopens the factory, or follows due process of law regarding closure. It should be strictly directed to negotiate with workers' representatives, (in this case it being the Garment and Fashion Workers' Union).
3. That in case of failure to reopen the factory, workers' dues should be settled within a time frame and through a negotiated tripartite settlement backed enforcement by the authorities.

Yours

