

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS IN THE RINTEX STORY

February 2019



Three years after worker rights violations at the Rintex garment factory in Mexico's Morelos State were first reported to international brand buyers, their supplier closed the factory rather than reinstate fired workers who had been attempting to form an independent union. The following is a brief chronology of events in the Rintex story.

2016

- Rintex workers, accompanied by the Worker Support Centre (CAT), speak out about worker rights violations at the factory, and seek MSN's support in securing intervention from the brands they had identified as sourcing from Rintex, including GAP, Nike, Ralph Lauren, and licensees producing Disney-brand products.
- GAP, Nike and Ralph Lauren agree to cooperate in investigating the allegations, which include the signing of an employer protection contract by an unrepresentative union and the hiring of workers on consecutive short-term employment contracts, thereby denying them job security and seniority rights.
- A July 2016 report from the social auditing organization Verité confirms many of the workers' allegations, and identifies additional violations, including sexual harassment and irregularities in severance pay.
- GAP takes the lead in requesting that Rintex implement a corrective action plan. One positive outcome is the elimination of the short-term employment contracts and the issuing of indefinite-term contracts. However, the employer also takes some steps backward, dismissing four women associated with the sexual harassment complaint and attempting to simulate the presence of a democratic union.

2017

- Verité's follow-up assessment in early 2017 verifies that worker rights violations continue and confirms the retaliatory firing of the four women workers. In response to pressure from Gap, Rintex reinstates the four women workers, however the atmosphere of hostility against them continues inside the factory.
- Although Gap agrees to maintain orders with the factory while continuing to press for corrective action, as requested by MSN and the CAT, Nike and Ralph Lauren begin to phase out production, claiming this had nothing to do with Verité's findings or the lack of progress on corrective action.
- Workers at the factory form a coalition in order to press for improvements in working conditions.

2018

- Faced with management surveillance and harassment, workers decide to move forward with a plan, supported by the CAT and the Authentic Labour Front (FAT), to organize a democratic union.
- In May, Rintex fires over 50 workers, all of whom are either leading worker organizing efforts or are members of the new union. By the end of June, under considerable economic duress all fired workers accept severance payments and dismantle their protest camp in front of the factory.
- At the request of MSN, CAT and FAT, Gap agrees to move up its last Verité assessment from August to July. Following the assessment, GAP recommends that the fired workers be reinstated with back pay, or be given full legal severance. At the same time, it informs Rintex of its decision to phase out orders over the next six months.
- Rintex responds by pressuring fired workers to settle for incomplete severance, and urges the remaining workers to identify any lingering 'troublemakers' at the plant, blaming them for the situation. CAT, FAT and MSN urge GAP to find a way of guaranteeing worker's full legal severance as part of its exit strategy, but Gap fails to do so.
- In August, rumours are circulating that the company plans to close the factory rather than seek new clients. Meanwhile Rintex continues to dismiss workers and reduces working hours for those who remained. With a closure in sight, many workers leave 'voluntarily', relinquishing their right to severance. The last remaining workers are dismissed in December 2018.
- Between 2016 and December 2018, around 450 workers lose their jobs at Rintex.