



## SEWING CLOTHING FOR GLORIA VANDERBILT, MOSSIMO & KOHL'S *YOUNG WOMAN RAPED - HANGS HERSELF*

Something terrible happened at the Al Safa factory. A young woman is dead. Some rumors circulated, but the guest workers at the Al Safa factory—even today—are still too terrified to speak of the woman's death, afraid that they could be beaten, fired, and even imprisoned, before being forcibly deported, if management knew they were publicly speaking about the girl.

This is what we have been able to piece together at this point. A young woman from Bangladesh, no more than 20 years of age, hung herself in early February 2005, after—allegedly—being raped by a factory manager. She hung herself in a bathroom using her scarf. It seems that her body was not immediately returned to Bangladesh, but remained in a locker at a local morgue for at least several months. To date, we know of no official investigation into her rape and death.



***“One woman’s success can only help another woman’s success.”***

-Gloria Vanderbilt

### Al Safa Garments Industrial LLC

*In June 2005, Al Safa was producing for Gloria Vanderbilt, Mossimo for Target and Sonoma for Kohl's*

Al Safa Garments Industrial LLC  
Al Hassan Industrial Estate  
P.O. Box 50 Al-Ramtha, Jordan

**Contact:** Siddiquir Rahman (Manager)  
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**Ownership:** Indian capital  
**Managing director:** Md. Faruk  
**Established:** November 11, 2003  
**Number of Workers:** 550 + (350 men, 200 women)

95% of workers between the ages of 16 and 25  
**Guest Wrks:** 200+ Bangladeshi, 200 Indian, 100 Sri Lankan  
50+ Jordanian workers

**Production:** Pants, jerseys, polo shirts

The **Al Safa Garments** factory in the Al-Hassan Industrial Estate is a rough place for the 500 or more guest workers from Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka. At most, the workers receive one day off a month, while being

STANDARD SHIFT 7:30 A.M. TO 11:00 P.M.	
7:30 a.m. – 12 noon	Work, 4 ½ hours
12:00 noon – 12:30 p.m.	Lunch, 30 minutes
12:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.	Work, 7 ½ hours
8:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.	Supper, half hour
8:30 p.m. – 11:00 p.m.	Work, 2 ½ hours

forced to work 15 ½ hours a day, from 7:30 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. Wages are paid sporadically—if at all—and never come close to what the workers are legally owed. **In fact, for the first five months of 2005, the workers were not paid at all. And when the workers asked for their wages, the owner responded, “If you like money, go back to Bangladesh.”** In other words, hold your tongue or be deported. When the guest workers arrived, their passports were confiscated. **Workers report being slapped and punched for failing to meet production goals.** In the summer, factory temperatures exceed 100 degrees.



The bathrooms are filthy, lacking toilet paper, soap and towels. The workers are housed 10 to 12 people per room measuring 10 by 15 feet, sleeping on the floor. There are no tables or chairs, and often no electricity or water. The food is also terrible, too little and sometimes makes the workers sick. They are given a piece of bread

*This label was smuggled out of Al Safa factory.*

and tea for breakfast, and only occasionally an egg. Lunch is always the same: rice, lentils and vegetables. Supper is the same, only sometimes they are given chicken. All the workers are young—16 to 25 years of age. There are 200 guest workers from Bangladesh in the plant.

## HOURS AND FORCED OVERTIME

- **Routine 15 ½ hour shift, from 7:30 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.;**
- **Some shifts stretch to 12:30 a.m.—17 hours;**
- **Working seven days a week with an average of one day off per month;**
- **At the factory 104 hours a week, while working 97 ½ hours;**
- **No government holidays, no sick days, no legal vacation days.**

The standard shift at the Al Safa factory is from 7:30 a.m. to 11:00 p.m., 15 ½ hours a day. But it all depends upon when the daily production goal is finished, so sometimes the workers are able to leave earlier, at 10:00 p.m., though more often they must stay to 12:30 a.m. With a half hour breaks for lunch and for supper, the actual working time each day is 14 ½ hours

Al Safa guest workers work seven days a week, with one day off a month on average. Nor are government



holidays respected. Sick days and medical leave are also not permitted, and legal annual vacation days are never granted. The work schedule is grueling.

Even if the workers are let out ‘early’ on Friday – which is supposed to be the weekly day off – working from 7:30 am to 6:30 pm, **they are still at the factory 104 hours a week while actually working 97 ½ hours.** Friday they would be at the factory 11 hours while working 10 ½ hours, while every other day they would be at the factory 15 ½ hours while working 14 ½ hours.

Of course, such a work schedule is blatantly illegal. Under Jordanian law, the regular workweek is 48 hours, eight hours a day, six days a week. Workers are supposed to receive at least one day off a week, and overtime cannot exceed two or three hours a day, 14 hours a week, and 60 hours a month. **Al Safa’s guest workers are being forced to work 49 ½ hours of overtime each week, which exceeds the legal limit by 358 percent!** It gets even worse, as we shall see, since the guest workers are not even paid for the vast majority of overtime hours they are required to work.

Al Safa workers also have to work through the eight national statutory holidays, and are denied their legal right to 14 days paid vacation each year.

## CHEATED OF THEIR WAGES:

- **For the first five months of 2005 the workers were not paid;**
- **Wages – if they are paid at all – are paid sporadically and never even come close to what the workers are legally owed;**
- **Paid 27 percent below the legal minimum wage;**
- **Including overtime, even at the best of times, the workers are cheated of 50 percent of their wages;**
- **Workers paid just \$32.42 for 97 ½ hours of work.**

For the first five months of 2005, January through May, the Al Safa guest workers were not paid. When the Bangladeshi workers questioned the manager, practically pleading for their wages, he always said: “I’ll pay you tomorrow,” or “I’ll pay you when you leave.” When the workers kept pressing him, the manager would become angry and threaten them: **“If you like money so much, go back to Bangladesh.”** In other words, hold your tongue or you will be returned to Bangladesh with none of your back wages. Workers are also beaten for asking too many questions.

In the regular 48 hour workweek, the workers should have earned \$27.69, at 58 cents an hour, which is the legal minimum wage. Al Safa management ignored that and extended the “regular” workweek to 63 hours, in the process lowering the guest workers’ wages by 28 percent, to just 42 cents an hour, 16 cents less than the legal minimum wage. As has been mentioned several times, when the workers were paid at all, they were never paid for anywhere near the number of overtime hours they were forced to work each week.



In fact, in separate interviews with the workers during the summer of 2005, the highest monthly wage anyone reported earning in the last one and a half years, was just \$141.34, including overtime. Even this highest wage was just half of what the worker legally should have earned.

For the regular 40 hour week the legal minimum wage is **\$27.69**. All overtime hours must be paid at a 25 percent premium, or 72 cents an hour. Since the standard workweek at Al Safa is 97 ½ hours, this means that the workers are routinely putting in 49 ½ hours of overtime each week, which at 72 cents an hour, comes to **\$35.70**. Combined regular and overtime pay should at a minimum total **\$63.39** a week. But even for the highest paid worker this was not the case. He was paid just **\$32.42** -- \$26.34 for regular hours and just \$6.08 for overtime, which is \$30.97 below what he was legally owed. **Even in the best of times, the Al Safa workers are being cheated of almost half of the wages legally due them.** Over the course of a year this adds up, with each guest worker being cheated of some **\$1,610.44 in wages owed them** – more than a year’s regular wages!

## ABUSIVE CONDITIONS AT THE AL SAFA FACTORY:

### HELD AS INDENTURED SERVANTS:

Upon their arrival at Al Safa, management confiscates the guest workers passports. Nor are workers provided the required identification cards, meaning that if they venture outside the industrial park or their dorm and are stopped by the police they could be imprisoned and deported. Some workers who have been at the factory for a year and a half still have never dared to make even a short trip to the nearby city of Irbid, and certainly not to the capital Amman.

### BEATINGS AND THREATS:

**Workers report being shouted at, beaten, slapped and punched for failing to reach assigned production goals, making even minor errors and for making any demands.** The ultimate trump card and threat management wields is to have disgruntled **workers imprisoned**



**and deported back to Bangladesh without their back wages, where they will be unable to pay off the money they borrowed to purchase their work contract in Jordan.** This guarantees that the worker and their family will be trapped in a growing debt and misery which they have no hope of escaping. Male workers from Bangladesh reported borrowing 150,000 taka, or \$2,212, to purchase their three year contract to work at the Al Safa factory. Interest rate on the informal market in Bangladesh can total five percent a month, meaning their interest payments alone would come to \$110 a month.

### FILTHY BATHROOMS:

Workers need permission to use the toilet, and the **bathrooms are filthy, lacking toilet paper, soap and towels.**

TYPICAL DIET	
Breakfast	Piece of pita bread with tea – and sometimes an egg
Lunch	Rice, lentils and vegetables;
Supper	Rice, vegetables – and only sometimes chicken.



**PRIMITIVE DORM CONDITIONS:**

**Ten to 12 people are crowded into a room measuring 10 by 15 feet, sleeping on the floor, with no tables or chairs. The rooms are dirty and a foul stench hangs in the air from a lack of ventilation. Some days there is no electricity or running water. No recreation is available in the dorm – not even a television or radio.**

**FOOD—TERRIBLE AND TOO LITTLE:**

Workers report that the food they are served is tasteless, to little, lacks adequate nutrition and sometimes makes them sick.

**SWEATING WHILE THEY WORK:**

The factory is crowded and temperatures can exceed 100-103 degrees in the summer. Despite five fans, the ventilation is never enough, and **workers sweat the entire day through.**

**PROHIBITED FROM SPEAKING:**

Speaking to other workers during working hours is strictly prohibited. This also holds for when foreign buyers enter the factory. The workers are told not to look up or speak to them.

**NO SICK DAYS / NO MEDICAL TREATMENT:**

**Any worker needing a sick day will have three days wages cut as punishment.** There is no doctor, no nurse, no medicines and no health care available at Al Safa.

**THE WORKER'S HOPE:**

What the workers hope for is extremely modest and doable. **What they are asking for is one day off a week so they can rest, and that they are paid correctly for all the hours they work.**

If North American buyers would only guarantee that their suppliers respect Jordan's basic labor laws, the misery of the workers could be ended over night.

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**COMPANY CONTACT INFORMATION**

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**TARGET**

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Minneapolis, MN 55403  
Phone: (612) 304-6173  
Website: www.targetcorp.com  
CEO: Bob Ulrich, pay in 2005 was \$6.57 M

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**KOHL'S CORPORATION**

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Web Site: <http://www.kohls.com>  
CEO: Mr. R. Lawrence Montgomery, pay in 2005 was \$ 1.64M