

Sweatshop Abuse and MIT's Prospective Actions in Pursuit of International Labor Justice

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Sweatshop Abuse and MIT's Prospective Actions in Pursuit of International Labor Justice

The term “sweatshop” refers to those factories relying on the exploitation and abuse of workers. Often (although not always) located in developing countries, these factories have been frequented by independent university researchers, who have published numerous accounts of worker imprisonment and physical abuse, as well as economic evidence revealing that many of these [factories](#) pay wages so small that their workers cannot live outside poverty. Several factories use horrific [labor](#) practices, and many factory workers have also been severely burned or mutilated in the workplace, while women among the labor population have often been forced to take birth control or abort their pregnancies (Given, 1997; Fernandez, 1997). The health burdens placed upon sweatshop workers have been extensively documented, and include exposure to noxious fumes, organophosphate compounds, and silica dust, resulting in record high cancer, asthma, bronchitis, pneumoconiosis, and leukemia rates in many regions because workers aren't provided with masks and gloves (Kim et al., 2000).

These abuses are neither just nor irreconcilable, but many people believe that sweatshops are an economic necessity and will come to pass on their own with economic development. Closer examination of both the social and economic dimensions of sweatshop labor, however, reveals this presumption to be far from the truth.

Most objections to anti-sweatshop action stem from the idea that sweatshop jobs are the best opportunities available to people living in poor conditions. "They keep coming back day after day, so they must want these jobs." Trying to make the jobs better will simply me...

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