



On March 2, 135 large cardboard boxes arrived at the Port of Savannah, in the U.S. state of Georgia. They were packed with hundreds of pairs of shorts in two patterns and delivered to the warehouses of the largest kids'-clothing-only retailer in the United States, the Children's Place.

The first pattern featured blue pineapples on red cotton twill and the second, red palm trees on a dark blue background. Both styles were a bargain, just \$19.95 at retail and, after discount, well under half that on TCP's website at the time of writing. Belying their carefree design, the mini surfer dude shorts came from a cheerless factory in a landlocked city in a country half a world away — Shams Styling Wears, located on the outskirts of Bangladesh's capital, Dhaka.

Shams occupies a drab nine-story concrete tower in Savar, a polluted industrial suburb. The structure is less than five miles from Rana Plaza, the eight-story garment factory building that collapsed on April 24, 2013, killing more than 1,100 workers and injuring at least twice as many. The disaster was supposed to mark a turning point in the manufacturing of ready-made garments, the largest industry in Bangladesh. In the aftermath, multinational brands launched two major initiatives to improve the structural, fire and electrical safety of their Bangladeshi factories.

In May of that year, a European-led consortium that included the brands Primark and H&M launched the legally binding Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh. The agreement created a system of inspections that would warn, punish and eventually disqualify factories that didn't meet basic safety benchmarks.

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