Beat: News

Death toll from Bangladesh factory inferno reaches 112

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USPA News - The death toll from a fire that swept through a garment factory on the outskirts of Bangladesh`s capital over the weekend has risen to at least 112, officials said on Monday as thousands of people took to the streets to demand better safety standards. The fire broke out at around 7:30 p.m. local time on Saturday at the Tazreen Fashion factory, part of Tuba Group, in the suburb of Ashulia near the capital Dhaka.

Some 740 people, many of them women, were working in the nine-story factory building when the fire started on the ground floor. Although the inferno came just days after a fire drill at the factory, scores of workers found the stairs on several floors had been intentionally blocked by production managers, leaving them trapped as the fire continued to spread quickly and the floors of the building began to fill with smoke. Witnesses said firefighters took more than 30 minutes to arrive at the scene and the blaze was not under control for more than 20 hours, giving those who were trapped in the building little chance to survive. At least 112 bodies had been recovered by Monday, but the majority of them were burnt beyond recognition. Many burnt or suffocated to death, though some of the victims died after jumping out of the building in an effort to survive. Around 200 people were also injured, but no official details were released on their conditions. Hospital sources said a number of people were in a critical condition, indicating the death toll is likely to rise further. Local authorities suspect an electrical short circuit might have caused the disaster, but Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina claimed the fire was intentional. "It was not an accident, rather a planned arson," she said on Monday, as quoted by the New Age newspaper. "It was done at a time when buyers come and sign contracts. I do not know when such games over people`s lives will end." Thousands of people took to the streets of Dhaka on Monday to demand better safety standards. Saturday`s inferno is the country`s worst fire since June 2010 when an electrical explosion ignited flammable chemicals at a store in a densely populated area of Dhaka, causing a fast-moving fire which burnt family homes and factories, killing at least 124 people and seriously injuring 150 others.

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