



PRESS RELEASE

June 4, 2021

Killer Powder, Toxic Corporation!

On June 1, 2021, the United States Supreme Court rejected an appeal by Johnson & Johnson (J&J) of a Missouri court verdict that had awarded \$2.1 billion to claimants who had contracted cancer from J&J's baby powder.¹

The legal manoeuvrings are over and the facts are clear for everyone to see: the use of J&J's asbestos-contaminated talc-based baby powder sold globally for decades can be deadly. This product was withdrawn from sale in North America last year (2020), but continues to be marketed elsewhere.

We condemn the continued sale of this product in markets outside North America. In light of the Supreme Court ruling, we urge decision-makers, politicians, government agencies and consumer organizations in every country where this product is being sold to think again.

Johnson & Johnson does not care for the health of your citizens; its top priority is corporate profits. Despite the fact that a safer J&J alternative baby powder product exists – cornstarch-based baby powder – toxic talc remains on the shelves of supermarkets and drug stores in India, China, Japan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, Brazil, the UK and elsewhere.

As groups which mobilize support for asbestos victims at home and abroad and which fight for global action on the asbestos hazard, we are as one when we urge you, on the grounds of public safety, to order a mandatory product recall of J&J talc-based baby powder and issue guidelines forbidding its sale in your country at the earliest opportunity.

Commenting on the implications of the Supreme Court's announcement, Coordinator Laurie Kazan-Allen of the International Ban Asbestos Secretariat (IBAS) said:

“Twenty Americans contracted a fatal cancer through their use of Johnson & Johnson's baby powder. We applaud their bravery in bringing this case and hope the Supreme Court's decision will give them and their families a sense of achievement in exposing the reprehensible and deadly actions of J&J. In acknowledgment of the courage of these women and in light of the reprehensible corporate behaviour they exposed, we call on national governments, regional authorities and international agencies to take steps to protect populations from exposures to lethal baby powder as a matter of priority.”

¹ Kazan-Allen, L. *Victory for U.S. Ovarian Cancer Victims*. June 3, 2021.

<http://ibasecretariat.org/lka-victory-for-us-ovarian-cancer-victims.php>

Higgins, T. *Supreme Court rejects Johnson & Johnson's appeal of \$2 billion penalty in baby powder cancer case*. June 1, 2021.

<https://www.cnbc.com/2021/06/01/supreme-court-rejects-johnson-johnsons-appeal-of-2-billion-baby-powder-penalty.html>

Highlighting the hazard posed by asbestos exposures in Asia, Sugio Furuya of the Asian Ban Asbestos Network (ABAN) said:

“Today, ovarian cancer is the 7th most common cancer in women. While the incidence is growing all over the world, there are more women affected by this disease in Asia than on any other continent. It cannot be coincidental that asbestos use remains legal in the countries with the highest number of cases – China, India, USA, the Russian Federation and Indonesia. Johnson & Johnson continues to deny that use of its asbestos-contaminated talc-based baby powder can cause cancer but given the Supreme Court’s decision these denials are no longer credible. What will it take to protect women and children from more deadly exposures? Surely, the time has come for the company to cease sale of this damaged and damaging product outside of North America? If not, there may be many more other multibillion dollar verdicts.”²

Welcoming the Court’s decision, grassroots activist Mohit Gupta from the Occupational and Environment Health Network of India (OEHNI) and the India Ban Asbestos Network (IBAN) said:

“We completely deplore J & J’s continued production and sale of talc-based talcum powder in India and other countries around the world except North America. The company’s continued litigation and denial of liability for causing harm to people in pursuit of more profits is criminal. J&J should immediately stop selling this product around the globe, apologise for its mis-conduct and ensure that the people who have been caused harm are adequately compensated. All lives matter.”

Echoing her colleague’s comments, Pooja Gupta of the Indian Ban Asbestos Network said:

"We at the India Ban Asbestos Network applaud the decisions of the Supreme Court and the Missouri Courts which made it crystal clear that the right to life takes precedence over the right to monetary gain. There is no question in our minds that Indian women have contracted ovarian cancer from exposures to Johnson & Johnson’s toxic baby powder. The fact that this product is still being sold in India and elsewhere is an abomination. IBAN is consulting its members and other grassroots organizations about actions which can be taken to hold the company to account for this despicable example of double standards which values the lives of Americans whilst discounting those of non-Americans. It's deplorable and extremely sad to see big corporations like J&J taking lives for granted. It seems that as far as the company is concerned, human health is of less import than a healthy balance sheet.”

The U.S. plaintiffs’ lead trial lawyer Mark Lanier was adamant about the brazen and destructive behaviour of Johnson and Johnson and its subsidiary saying they had:

“knowingly manufactured and sold dangerous, life-threatening products. Since the verdict, J&J has finally quit selling this asbestos-laced talc product in the US and Canada...Asbestos kills people. Asbestos does so without regard to where the people live, the language they speak, or the color of their skin. Why then, does J&J stop selling its asbestos-laced talcum powders only in the US and Canada? That is both racist, and inhuman.”³

² The World Ovarian Cancer Coalition Atlas. April 2018.
<https://worldovariancancercoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/THE-WORLD-OVARIAN-CANCER-COALITION-ATLAS-2018.pdf>

³ Kazan-Allen, L. *White Powder, Black Lives*. July 10, 2021.
<http://ibasecretariat.org/lka-white-powder-black-lives.php>

Governments have a responsibility for safeguarding the lives of their citizens. Allowing sales of Johnson & Johnson's asbestos-contaminated talc-based baby powder to continue is an abrogation of this duty. To support those injured by the company's products, the issuing of serious financial sanctions should be considered by governments. It seems that affecting the corporate bottom line is the most effective way of communicating the message to this American-owned multinational: all lives matter.

Notes for Editors

1. For more information, please contact: Sugio Furuya (ABAN) by email at 2009aban@gmail.com or WhatsApp +81 8030246210.
2. Information about the groups which issued this press release can be accessed at:
 - Asian Ban Asbestos Network (ABAN)
Website: <http://anroev.org/aban>
 - Occupational and Environmental Network of India (OEHNI)
Website: <http://oehni.in/>
 - Indonesian Ban Asbestos Network
Website: <http://inaban.org/>
 - Associação Brasileira dos Expostos ao Amianto (ABREA)
[Brazilian Association of Asbestos Victims]
Website: <http://www.abrea.org.br>
 - International Ban Asbestos Secretariat (IBAS)
Website: <http://ibasecretariat.org>