

COMMERCE

Hugo Boss under fire for unsavory labor conditions at Turkish garment factory

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Hugo Boss hangers

By STAFF REPORTS

Global consumer watchdog SumOfUs has drafted a petition calling out German fashion label Hugo Boss for unethical labor practices in Turkey.

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As of press time, the SumOfUs petition had approximately 75,000 signatures, and gaining, as the watchdog group works to bring attention to what it calls a violation of Turkish labor laws by Hugo Boss. As brands up their transparency efforts in relation to environmental impact, closer attention is likely to be given to its labor practices as well.

Tailored (mis)treatment

The petition demands that Hugo Boss' executives respect the rights of Turkish workers to unionize and to pay its employees a fair, living wage.

SumOfUs' petition comes after the Fair Labor Association found that Hugo Boss' factory in Izmir, Turkey violated a number of Turkish labor laws. Beyond Turkish law, the FLA also found Hugo Boss to be breaking its sanctioned code of conduct and, even more damaging, the label's own standards.

The FLA, an organization affiliated with Hugo Boss, also discovered that the more than 4,000 garment workers at the Izmir factory were subjected to severe reprisals, punishments and even dismissals for attempting to unionize. Additionally, workers worked hours exceeding the legal limit and the factory's evacuation routes and emergency exits were not up to par.



Hugo Boss spring/summer 2016 campaign

"Major fashion companies rarely own the factories where their garments are made – but Hugo Boss owns this one, and it's the largest garment factory in [Turkey]," said Eoin Dubsky, a campaigner for SumOfUs, in a statement. "Hugo Boss could easily do the right thing and improve conditions in the Izmir factory – setting an industry standard for labor relations in Turkey.

"As Hugo Boss advertises its spring collection to the fashion world and boasts record earnings to investors, it would be wise for executives to pay attention to consumer concerns," he said. "Fashionable people simply don't want to wear clothing made by exploited workers."

Likewise, consumers who choose to purchase leather goods do so in hopes that the animal was fairly treated.

French leather goods house Herms faced continued pressure from the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals following the activist organization's allegations in June 2015 of mistreatment of alligators and crocodiles that eventually become its handbags and watches.

After PETA released video footage of farms that it linked to the brand, Herms issued a statement to press, but at first remained quiet on social media even in the face of hundreds of negative comments ([see story](#)).

The SumOfUs petition targeting Hugo Boss' labor practices in Turkey can be viewed [here](#). For the FLA's full report findings regarding the brand's business practices, click [here](#).

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