

RETAIL

Leading US fashion and retail trade groups speak out against forced labor use in China's Xinjiang province

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Garment factories slowly resume production in China amidst the coronavirus outbreak. Image credit: Sheng Lu Fashion

By LUXURY DAILY NEWS SERVICE

Five leading fashion and retail trade organizations have issued a joint statement condemning the alleged use of forced labor affecting ethnic minorities in China's Xinjiang province.

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The statement from the [United States Fashion Industry Association](#), [Retail Industry Leaders Association](#), [National Retail Federation](#), [American Apparel & Footwear Association](#) and the [Footwear Distributors and Retailers of America](#) reflect a matter of grave concern to fashion brands and retailers.

"The statement recognizes the seriousness of the situation on the ground in Xinjiang and it reinforces the efforts that fashion brands and retailers have already undertaken to identify and stop forced labor in their supply chains," the associations said in the statement issued from the United States capital of Washington.

"The industry calls on the U.S. government and NGO's to work together with industry to find a solution. There is a long way to go and we want to be part of the solution."

Below is the statement in its entirety:

Joint statement from USFIA, RILA, NRF, FDRA and AAFA on reports of forced labor in Xinjiang

Washington, DC March 10, 2020 As an industry representing brands and retailers, we do not tolerate forced labor in our supply chains.

We work together to identify and eliminate forced labor, and conditions that can lead to forced labor, in the countries from which we source products. The industry continues to evolve and improve our existing approaches to identify, detect, and address risks of forced labor in our supply chains. We actively engage countries all over the world to advance respect for human rights.

We are deeply concerned by reports of forced labor and the treatment of Uyghurs and other ethnic minority workers

in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) and elsewhere in China. The reported situation is of a scale, scope, and complexity that is unprecedented during the modern era of global supply chains.

As acknowledged by both the U.S. government and non-government experts, the conditions in Xinjiang and the treatment of ethnic minority workers from the region present profound challenges to the integrity of the global supply chain, including issues of transparency, access, and auditing. Accepting the status quo is not an option.

Companies across the industry are considering all available approaches to address the situation. Brands and retailers are drawing on expert guidance and assembling industry stakeholders to address the situation. We are framing these actions through the lens of the United Nations (UN) Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and our own

commitment to the fair treatment of workers in our supply chains. Our members have expressed strong concerns to their suppliers and reiterated that suppliers must maintain a supply chain that is free of involuntary and forced labor.

While we are taking action, our industry cannot solve this alone.

A successful solution for all, including the workers, will require state-to-state engagement and collaborative partnerships across government, industry, labor advocates, nongovernmental organizations, and other stakeholders. Therefore, we urge the U.S. government to immediately engage a multi-stakeholder working group to develop and deploy a collective approach that accurately assesses the problem and find constructive solutions that target bad actors and protect the rights of workers and the integrity of global supply chains.

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