

GOVERNMENT

## Burberry, others face backlash over Xinjiang labor concerns

March 25, 2021



*Burberry spoke up against forced labor allegations in the region. Image credit: Burberry*

By LUXURY DAILY NEWS SERVICE

British fashion label Burberry is one of several brands enduring the wrath of Chinese state media and consumers after expressing concerns over alleged forced labor practices in China's Xinjiang region.

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After multiple Western brands, including H&M, Nike and Adidas, commented on possible human rights abuses in Xinjiang, Chinese consumers began calling for boycotts and online retailers have dropped some brands. On Monday, the EU, United States, Britain and Canada issued travel and financial sanctions on Chinese officials over human rights violations against Uighur Muslim workers.

### China retaliates

The accusations from Western countries claim that more than one million people in Xinjiang, predominantly Muslim, have been confined to work camps.

Beijing denies accusations of mistreatment, saying that it uses vocational training to promote economic development to avoid extremism.

Reportedly, holdings company Tencent announced on Chinese social media platform Weibo that severed its latest video game partnership with Burberry, which was revealed earlier this week ([see story](#)). Burberry has not yet confirmed whether the deal is off, though the press release detailing the collaboration is no longer available on the brand's corporate site.



*Xinjiang produces a fifth of the world's cotton. Image credit: Kering*

According to Reuters, shares in Adidas were down 4.5 percent, the biggest loss on the German blue chip index DAX. Shares of H&M fell 2.2 percent.

H&M products were missing from China's ecommerce platforms Tmall and JD.com by Wednesday evening, according to [the Associated Press](#) and [BBC](#).

China's largest region, Xinjiang produces nearly 20 percent of the world's cotton, which raises considerable concerns over what might happen if more brands discontinue business relations and governments continue imposing restrictions on the region.

In January, fashion and retail trade associations showed support for an order from the United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to withhold cotton and tomato products produced in Xinjiang at all U.S. ports of entry. Through the course of its investigation, the agency identified the following forced labor indicators: debt bondage, restriction of movement, isolation, intimidation and threats, withholding of wages and abusive living and working conditions ([see story](#)).

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