

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Burberry loses Chinese brand ambassador as Xinjiang fallout continues

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Zhou Dongyu has reportedly dropped Burberry. Image credit: Burberry

By LUXURY DAILY NEWS SERVICE

Tensions between British fashion house Burberry and China continue to escalate after the Chinese government traded sanctions with the United Kingdom over accusations of human rights abuses in the Xinjiang region.

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Reuters is reporting that Chinese actor Zhou Dongyu has terminated her contract as a Burberry ambassador, as more consumers share support for boycotts against Burberry and other Western brands on Chinese social media. Like many luxury labels, Burberry relies heavily on sales from China, particularly as the luxury market recovers faster than Europe and the Americas.

Burberry backlash

On March 26, China announced sanctions against individuals and entities in the U.K., including several members of Parliament, for their criticisms against the treatment of more than 1 million people in Xinjiang, predominantly Muslim, who have been confined to work camps.

The E.U., U.K., United States and Canada had issued travel and financial sanctions on March 22 against Chinese officials for their reported involvement with human rights violations against Uighur Muslim workers ([see story](#)).

Burberry is reportedly being targeted as a member of the Better Cotton Initiative, which last year suspended licensing any cotton sourced in Xinjiang.



Burberry designs for a Chinese mobile game have reportedly been removed. Image credit: Burberry

Fellow BCI members Adidas and Nike are also being targeted by China, as is Swedish retailer H&M. French luxury conglomerate LVMH is also a member of the BCI, but has not yet been swept up in the criticisms from the Chinese government and consumers.

According to Reuters, actor Ms. Zhou will no longer work with Burberry since the label has not "clearly and publicly stated its stance on cotton from Xinjiang." She most recently appeared in the brand's Chinese New Year campaign ([see story](#)).

According to Burberry's [corporate site](#), more than 75 percent of its cotton was sourced responsibly during fiscal year 2019-2020, though any references to sourcing have been removed.

In a [November 2020 letter](#) to the U.K.'s foreign affairs committee, Burberry confirmed it does not source any raw materials from Xinjiang, including cotton.

Virtual Burberry designs have also reportedly been removed from the Chinese mobile game Honor of Kings, which is developed by Tencent-owned TiMi Studios ([see story](#)).

Burberry experienced strong sales growth in mainland China during the third quarter of its fiscal year, including a triple-digit boost in full-price digital sales ([see story](#)). The 2021 fiscal year for the brand ends on March 27.