



ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
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September 9, 2021

Steven Kolb, Chief Executive Officer
Council of Fashion Designers of America
65 Bleecker Street
New York, NY 10012

Ari Emanuel, Chief Executive Officer
Endeavor Group Holdings Inc.
11 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10010

Dear Mr. Kolb and Mr. Emanuel,

In September 2011, Gulnara Karimova, daughter of then president of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimova, was set to host a show exhibiting her new clothing line for New York Fashion Week (NYFW). Karimova held significant positions in the Uzbekistan government, which human rights groups including Human Rights Watch had criticized for killing protestors, detaining journalists and human rights defenders, torturing prisoners, and subjecting children to forced labor in cotton harvesting. In the wake of these criticisms, Karimova's NYFW show was canceled.

Today we write to you on a similar issue of fundamental human rights facing NYFW. On April 9, 2021, a New York Times article reported that several China-based sports brands, including Anta and Li-Ning, have affirmed their continued use of cotton harvested in Xinjiang. In addition, in March of this year, China-based news outlets, as well as social media platforms, reported that several China-based fashion brands, including Mukzin, Semir, and Threegun, also publicly proclaimed their continued use of cotton harvested in Xinjiang. These brands participated in previous NYFW events in the past few years. Many global brands are ending the sourcing of cotton goods made in Xinjiang, but Anta, Li-Ning, Mukzin, Semir, and Threegun have publicly embraced Xinjiang cotton, likely making them complicit in the use of forced labor.

While these brands are not scheduled to participate in this year's NYFW, the fact that they have participated in recent NYFW events raises the concern that forced labor has tainted past NYFW events and could taint future NYFW events as well. As the Congressional-Executive

Commission on China has documented, since 2018, reporting has revealed that authorities in Xinjiang have systematically forced predominantly Muslim ethnic minorities, including Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and others, to engage in forced labor throughout China. There is credible evidence that forced labor exists in Xinjiang's cotton production. Ethnic minority workers who pick cotton in Xinjiang are subjected to close monitoring and control, and individuals have been detained for refusing to take part in such work programs.

Furthermore, it is not possible for credible labor audits to independently verify whether supply chains in Xinjiang are tainted by the products of forced labor. Labor rights organizations have warned that firms should not be conducting audits in Xinjiang, as workers subjected to surveillance and the constant threat of detention cannot speak freely about their working conditions. Indeed, auditing cotton production may do more to facilitate the continued use of forced labor in production than to eliminate it. A July 2021 U.S. government interdepartmental business advisory warned of "extreme challenges" to conducting reliable audits in a region where genocide and crimes against humanity are taking place. The advisory said that auditors in Xinjiang have been detained, harassed, threatened, and stopped at the airport.

In response to evidence of the forced labor occurring in Xinjiang, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has issued "Withhold Release Orders" preventing the import of Xinjiang-originated goods, including apparel, cotton, and cotton products, from entering the United States. Congress is currently considering the *Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act*, which would create a "rebuttable presumption" that goods sourced in Xinjiang are made with forced labor and are thus prohibited from entering the United States. The Senate passed the bill in July 2021, and a version of this bill passed the U.S. House of Representatives in 2020.

Xinjiang cotton is synonymous with the repression that takes place in Xinjiang. The Chinese government has created a system of mass surveillance and internment, restricted individuals' ability to peacefully practice their religion, forcibly sterilized women, and separated children from their families. Forced labor plays an integral role in the genocide taking place against Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in the region.

In light of this, we urge CFDA and IMG to work with corporate affiliates, designers, and high-profile celebrity clientele to do the following:

1. Prevent companies that have publicly endorsed Xinjiang cotton such as Anta, Li-Ning, Mukzin, Semir, and Threegun from participating in NYFW shows and events.
2. Raise awareness about the ongoing genocide taking place in Xinjiang and the potential role of forced labor in the production of products on display during NYFW. We hope that the result of such efforts would be that participants of NYFW do not display products made in whole or in part with cotton products from Xinjiang.

NYFW shows connected with forced labor have been removed from NYFW events in the past, and we hope the organizers of NYFW continue combatting forced labor now and in the future. Complicity in forced labor is neither consistent with American values nor with U.S. law. As the

CFDA and IMG host this September's and future NYFW events, we hope that you do so in a way that respects and protects the human dignity of all who make NYFW possible.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Jeffrey A. Merkley in blue ink.

Senator Jeffrey A. Merkley
Chair

Handwritten signature of James P. McGovern in blue ink.

Representative James P. McGovern
Co-Chair