

Fashion giant H&M suspends orders in Myanmar in response to post-coup violence

- Police and military have killed more than 50 people to quell daily demonstrations and strikes against a February 1 military coup
- H&M has about 45 direct suppliers in Myanmar, it said on its website, and has sourced in the country for seven years

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Myanmar has been riven by clashes between protesters and security forces. Photo: AFP

Sweden's H&M, the world's second-biggest fashion retailer, said on Monday it was shocked by the use of deadly force against protesters in Myanmar and that it had paused placing orders in the country.

Police and military have killed more than 50 people to quell daily demonstrations and strikes against a February 1 military coup, according to the United Nations last week.

H&M has around 45 direct suppliers in Myanmar, it said on its website, and has sourced in the country for seven years.

“Although we refrain from taking any immediate action regarding our long-term presence in the country, we have at this point paused placing new orders with our suppliers,” Serkan Tanka, Country Manager Myanmar, said in an email.

“This is due to practical difficulties and an unpredictable situation limiting our ability to operate in the country, including challenges related to manufacturing and infrastructure, raw material imports and transport of finished goods.”

Two protesters were killed by gunshot wounds to the head in Myanmar on Monday, witnesses said, while shops, factories and banks were closed in the main city Yangon as part of the uprising against the country’s military rulers.

Tanka said H&M was extremely concerned about the situation in the country and that it was in dialogue with UN agencies, diplomatic representatives, human rights experts, trade unions and other multinational companies.



A pedestrian walks past an H&M billboard. Photo: Bloomberg

“These consultations will guide us in any future decision in relation to how we as a company can best contribute to positive developments in accordance with the will of the people in Myanmar,” he said.

Myanmar’s garment industry is smaller than that of neighbouring countries Bangladesh, China and Thailand. However, its around 600 factories are significant employers, providing jobs for around 450,000 workers in 2020, according to the Myanmar Garment Manufacturers Association.