



Industrial Workers' Federation of Myanmar

Responsibilities and Rights

No 384, Corner of Kone
Bound street and Sable
Street,
(15) Ward, East Dagon
Township, Yangon,
11211 Myanmar
Cell: 95 9 798 374785

IWFM statement on the investments of garment brands and suppliers under the military coup in Myanmar

18th February, 2021

Every day hundreds of thousands of workers across Myanmar are participating in peaceful civil disobedience against the unlawful military coup. They risk facing harassment, violence, detention and even death. As workers sacrifice themselves in restoring democracy in the country, we call upon all suppliers in the Myanmar garment, shoe and leather industry to respect workers' fundamental freedom of association, expression and peaceful assembly and to refrain from imposing disciplinary actions against workers for their participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement.

The IWFM has always worked to maintain a relationship with suppliers that promote both a stable business environment and the fundamental rights of Myanmar workers. The ongoing demonstrations in Myanmar are critical to pushing back military intrusion into fundamental rights and freedoms that are essential to ensuring a stable environment for industrial relations. The future of the Myanmar garment industry depends upon a peaceful and sensible solution to the current political crisis as the looming threat to democracy is also a threat to the business environment for foreign investors. Myanmar's workers are exercising universally protected human rights to assemble and peacefully protest the military coup and call for a return to the civilian-led government elected by the people.

IWFM has been respecting dialogue and negotiation in resolving labour disputes with employers based on the Freedom of Association Guideline negotiated under the ACT. We urge the employers to observe the guideline, refrain from punishing workers for their participation in workplace strikes and the civil disobedience movement, and maintain dialogue with the trade unions in resolving differences and addressing the current crisis.

Together with our international partners, we are in active conversation with buyers about the situation in Myanmar. The right to freedom of association and to join trade union activities under ILO Convention No.87 is not derogatory under a declared state of emergency. Multinational companies are also obliged under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights to avoid infringing human rights and to address adverse human rights impacts with which they are involved. The IWFM urges the brands to exercise vigilant due diligence with their suppliers in Myanmar to ensure that these principles are respected and human rights abuses in the supply chains are identified and addressed.

We value social dialogue and partnership with brands and employers in Myanmar to protect employment and decent work for workers. We cannot emphasize more the importance of protecting the fundamental freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly which are at the core of sustainable industrial relations and economic development of the country. We appeal to your continuous support in this critical time.

Khaing Zar Aung
President