



**Ethical
Trading
Initiative**

For workers' rights. For better business.

The Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP,
First Secretary of State and Secretary of State for
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs

5 March 2021

Dear Sir

The threat to the lives and livelihoods of half a million garment workers in Myanmar

I am writing you on behalf of Ethical Trading Initiative, a leading alliance of companies, trade unions and NGOs that promotes respect for workers' rights around the globe.

Our members include global companies with thousands of suppliers, international trade union bodies, specialised labour rights organisations and development charities.

Responsible businesses committed to ensuring respect for workers' fundamental rights of opinion and expression, as well as freedom of association and peaceful assembly, are becoming increasingly concerned about the escalating violence and the growing threat to workers in their Myanmar supply chain.

Reports of harassment and persecution of elected worker representatives and trade unionists, and anticipated difficulties around payment of workers due to the interruption of banking and communications systems, are of great concern. News of plans to introduce laws to restrict internet activity, would constitute a direct and concerning assault on freedom of association and assembly.

There are half a million garment workers, based in 600 factories, across Myanmar. The sector accounts for a third of Myanmar's total exports and is worth \$5.8 billion a year to the country's economy. If democracy is not restored, the hard-fought social and economic progress of the country and the wellbeing of its people, particularly ethnic minority groups and women, will be significantly put at risk.

We welcome the fact that the UK government has spoken out about the need for a pathway back to democracy and to urge action by the International Community. We would urge the UK Government's continued intervention to help drive change. We would ask that the government uses its influence on the global stage to safeguard the democratic, legal and regulatory environment within which our members operate in Myanmar.

Ethical Trading Initiative

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We are urging our brands, and their suppliers, to immediately undertake enhanced human rights due diligence to identify whether they are doing business, directly or indirectly, with companies known to be owned or controlled by the Myanmar military. But their ability to continue sourcing from Myanmar and for British businesses to continue to help support growing prosperity in Myanmar, will only be possible within a framework where human rights are respected, enshrined in law, and upheld.

Please be assured of our support for this engagement and do not hesitate to contact me if you require further information.

Yours sincerely

Peter McAllister
Executive Director
Ethical Trading Initiative