

Shein Representative Declines to Address China Cotton Questions at UK Hearing

Liam Byrne, chair of the Business and Trade Committee, said the lawyer's reluctance to answer questions 'bordered on contempt of the committee.'

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The logo of fast fashion e-commerce company Shein outside its office in Guangzhou, southern China, on June 11, 2024. Jade Gao/AFP via Getty Images



By Lily Zhou

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A lawyer for Chinese fashion brand Shein was accused of disrespecting British members of parliament (MPs) after failing to answer questions about the origin of the company's cotton products at a hearing on Tuesday.

Yinan Zhu, Shein's general counsel for Europe, [told](#) MPs on the Business and Trade Committee that some of Shein's suppliers are in China. She repeatedly declined to say whether any of Shein's products contain cotton from China or from the country's Xinjiang region after being pressed several times by the committee chair, Labour MP Liam Byrne.

She also declined to answer Byrne's questions on whether Shein believes there's forced labor in Xinjiang.

Zhu referred the committee to the "Code of Conduct" of Shein's suppliers and offered to write to the committee members about any further questions they may have.

A [published](#) "Code of Conduct" on Shein's website says suppliers "shall not use forced labor, including prison labor, bonded labor or other forms of forced labor."

Zhu told the committee that third-party auditors of Shein's suppliers are particularly vigilant on forced labor and child labor issues and declined to say if the company prohibits sourcing cotton from Xinjiang.

Zhu also declined to confirm reports that Shein is seeking to be listed on the London Stock Exchange and that Shein had sought permission from the China Securities Regulatory Commission to be listed in the UK or the United States.

"I'm not able to comment" on any questions related to the matter, Zhu said, adding that she's not familiar with the details of the news report

on seeking permission from Chinese authorities.

She told the committee that the company “comply with all laws and regulations in the countries that we do business as they’re applicable to us.”

Liberal Democrat MP Charlie Mayard said he found it “completely ridiculous” that the lawyer declined to state whether Shein is selling cotton products made in China.

“I find it very unhelpful and disrespectful that you’re here doing this,” he said.

Concluding the session, Byrne said the committee had been “pretty horrified by the lack of evidence” from Shein.

“You’ve given us almost zero confidence in the integrity of your supply chains. You can’t even tell us what your products are made from,” the MP said.

“You can’t tell us much about the conditions which workers have to work in, and the reluctance to answer basic questions is frankly bordered on contempt of the committee.”

Shein didn’t respond to The Epoch Times’ request for comment by publication time.

During the same session, representatives from Stephen Heary, senior legal counsel at Temu, said the platform does not permit “sellers from the Xinjiang region.”

According to the latest U.S. report on human rights practices in China, the Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in Xinjiang continue to be put in extrajudicial internment camps, prisons, and other “re-education” training schemes.

International businesses have faced pressure to leave the region. In November 2024, Volkswagen [said](#) it would divest its joint-venture factory in Xinjiang, two months after international lawmakers [urged](#)

it to do so “in recognition of the impossibility of meaningful human rights due diligence in the region.”

In September 2024, days after Byrne was elected as the chair of the Business and Trade Committee, the Labour MP [called](#) on the new Labour government to introduce its own version of the U.S. Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA).

Under U.S. law, all goods that come wholly or partly from Xinjiang or made by an entity on the UFLPA Entity List are presumed to be forced labor products and banned from entering the United States, with the onus on the importers to prove their shipments are not in violation of the act.

Campaigners have previously called on lawmakers to close the gap between UK and U.S. legislation, saying it has turned the UK into a “[dumping ground](#)“ of Uyghur forced labor products.

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