



Versace de-activates Facebook wall as jeans protests go social

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A new era of activism – social media activism – is well under way, as evinced by the example of luxury Italian fashion brand Versace. Versace has turned off fan posts on its Facebook page after activists publicly protested a controversial method it uses to produce jeans.

Online campaign site Change.org revealed the Italian fashion house Gianni Versace has de-activated its Facebook wall after activists posted dozens of messages demanding the company **ban sandblasting**, a technique used to give jeans a used look which is highly dangerous to workers.

Sandblasting involves workers firing sand under high pressure at jeans and has been known to kill workers in garment-producing countries, like Turkey and Bangladesh, where jean sandblasting is done manually.

The large amounts of silica dust generated during sandblasting can cause silicosis, a potentially lethal pulmonary disease, as workers inhale tiny particles of silica.

A number of major brands, such as Levi's, H&M, C&A and Gucci, have already abolished sandblasted jeans in their collections. However, Versace has taken no action despite repeated calls from international labour rights groups, like the Clean Clothes Campaign, for it to do so.

A new era in social activism

Hundreds of European and American activists have joined the group's campaign on Change.org, demanding that Versace ban sandblasting.

"What has happened here is remarkable," said Meredith Slater, an organiser with Change.org.

"Versace customers call on the company to simply follow the lead of other major clothing brands and stop seriously endangering its workers. Instead of responding to the content of that demand, the company decides to try and silence any criticism.



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“The Clean Clothes Campaign has already gotten Levi’s, H&M, C&A and Gucci to end the practice of sandblasting, and now they have launched an impressive social media campaign and recruited hundreds of supporters from all over the world to demand that Versace do the same,” Slater added.

John Kennedy