

Mexico accuses mega fashion retailers of cultural appropriation

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Mexico accuses major clothing companies of cultural appropriation?

Mexico City, June 1 (RHC)-- Mexico has accused international fashion brands Zara, Anthropologie, and Patowl of cultural appropriation, saying they used patterns from Indigenous Mexican groups in their designs without any benefit to the communities.

Mexico's Ministry of Culture said in a statement on Friday that it had sent letters signed by Mexico's Culture Minister Alejandra Frausto to all three global companies, asking each for a "public explanation on what basis it could privatize collective property."

The Ministry of Culture said Zara, owned by Inditex, the world's largest clothing retailer, used a pattern distinctive to the Indigenous Mixteca community of San Juan Colorado in the southern state of Oaxaca. "The design in question was in no way intentionally borrowed from or influenced by the artistry of the

Mixtec people of Mexico,” Inditex said in a statement sent to Reuters news agency.

Anthropologie, owned by URBN, used a design developed by the Indigenous Mixe community of Santa Maria Tlahuitoltepec, while Patowl copied a pattern from the Indigenous Zapoteco community in San Antonino Castillo Velasco, both in the state of Oaxaca, according to the Ministry of Culture. URBN and Patowl did not respond immediately to requests for comment.

The extent to which fashion designers have profited from incorporating cultural designs without acknowledging their origins or fairly compensating communities has been a point of contention in recent years. In 2019, the Mexican government accused fashion house Carolina Herrera of cultural appropriation of Indigenous patterns and textiles from Mexico in its collection.

Carolina Herrera’s parent company, Puig, did not respond immediately to requests for comment. In 2019, Herrera’s creative director Wes Gordon reportedly said the collection “pays tribute to the richness of Mexican culture”.

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