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Johnson & Johnson, Decathlon Halt Business in Russia

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Valery Sharifulin / TASS

Decathlon and Johnson & Johnson on Tuesday became the latest major Western brands to suspend operations in Russia as the economic fallout from Moscow's invasion of Ukraine continues to mount.

Sporting goods retailer Decathlon, owned by France's Mulliez conglomerate, had so far refused to suspend its operations in Russia, angering Ukrainian employees and inviting international pressure.

The retailer cracked Tuesday, saying it will close its nearly 60 stores across Russia but pledging to continue to support its 2,500 Russian employees.

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"In strict compliance with international sanctions, Decathlon notes that the supply

conditions are no longer met to continue its activity in Russia," Decathlon, which has been in Russia since 2006, said in its statement.

Also on Tuesday, U.S. health giant Johnson & Johnson said it will no longer supply personal care products to Russia, citing the "increasing scale of the humanitarian crisis" that has resulted from the war.

Johnson & Johnson clarified that it would continue to supply Russia with essential medicines and medical devices, which are exempt from international sanctions, but would halt the supply of products including Listerine mouthwash and Aveeno skincare.

Hundreds of Western companies have left Russia in the weeks since the country launched an offensive against Ukraine in February, dealing a blow to Russia's labor market and leaving shortages of essential goods on supermarket and pharmacy shelves.

The Kremlin has so far blamed panic-buying and stockpiling by consumers for shortages of medicines in Russian pharmacies, insisting there is enough stock for everyone.

"I want to tell the public: you don't need to stock up," Russian Health Minister Mikhail Murashko claimed Wednesday in a televised cabinet meeting with President Vladimir Putin.

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