

Uber works towards "addressing the issues" as e-hailing protest hits third day

Today, 24 March 2022, marks the third day of the three-day labour strike and mass protest by drivers from Uber, Bolt, InDriver, and DiDi, who are calling for e-hailing industry regulation and improved conditions of employment.



Source: JacksonDavid via [Fxabay](#)

Between 50,000 and 70,000 drivers were [expected](#) to turn off their apps from Tuesday until Thursday.

According to [Business Insider South Africa](#), on Tuesday, 22 March, drivers of Uber and Bolt drivers went offline in protest over high commission rates and safety concerns and the lack of insurance in the industry, among other issues. The decreased number of drivers online caused a surge in demand and drove prices up.

“ E hailing strike is now starting to move from Marabastad to The Union Buildings to hand over a memorandum.

[#uberstrike](#) [@AbigailJavier](#) pic.twitter.com/RRxcdci4uk— EWN Reporter (@ewnreporter) [March 22, 2022](#) ”

More than 700 drivers participated in the shutdown in Pretoria alone, Gugu Damba, convener of the shutdown, told [Business Insider South Africa](#).

Uber issued a statement in response to the strike saying: "We take the concerns of drivers seriously and are currently engaging directly using our various engagement channels to work towards addressing the issues. Our commitment to drivers is to continuously find ways of maximising their earning potential while meeting the needs of the riders."

Uber has noted that the drivers are independent contractors and drivers and not employees or workers.

The [planned disruption](#) includes food delivery services like Uber Eats.

According to [Times Live](#), the drivers are demanding that government regulates the industry to ensure fair pricing, accountability and proper vetting of drivers.

The planned action has prompted a call from Gauteng transport MEC Jacob Mamabolo to drivers to suspend the imminent strike.

He called a meeting on Monday, 21 March 2022 with the Private Public Transport Association (PPTA), which represents the interests of e-hailing drivers nationally, to discuss the ramifications.

PPTA founder Vhatuka Mbelengwa told *Times Live* that they would attend the meeting with the MEC, but the strike action would continue as planned.

Government support, intervention needed

"We want the industry to be regulated. There is ongoing exploitation. We feel government should be coming to our aid. The MEC is trying to deter us from going on strike, but we are not going to do that. However, we will honour the meeting," Mbelengwa said.

“ Prices for Uber and Bolt trips shot through the roof on Tuesday as drivers of the e-hailing services embarked on a nationwide strike, leaving riders stranded. <https://t.co/blm3dHbDOS> [pic.twitter.com/9H1VXC8AbB](https://t.co/blm3dHbDOS)— Business Insider SA 🇿🇦 (@BISouthAfrica) [March 22, 2022](#) ”

"Pricing in the sector has been a gripe for a long time. Pricing is the reason why there has been violence.

"We have established a WhatsApp information line for drivers. It is our central line of communication so we can get the right information to drivers and report on incidents that may be happening.

"We do know that whenever we go on strike, criminality will raise its head. We established this central line so incidents can be reported and we can inform law enforcement.

"There may be some drivers who will work but most of the industry will not work. We can't force people to take part in the strike."

Mbelengwa [criticised](#) the SA National Taxi Council and the Department of Transport for being mute on taxi drivers' suffering.

The PPTA wants the Department of Trade, Industry, and Competition to outline the duties and responsibilities of internet companies like Uber and Bolt.

According to Mbelengwa, the companies are uninterested in connecting with them directly.

Mbelengwa believes that while the platforms refer to drivers as partners, their pricing decisions do not represent a partnership.

Mbelengwa stated that it was critical to act now in order to establish guidelines for how tech businesses in South Africa operated.

"Technological upheavals will be felt across numerous businesses," he said.

"We're all doomed if we don't set a precedent today that says this is how tech should operate in this country."

As reported by [Eyewitness News](#), e-hailing drivers operating in Gauteng slammed Mamabolo for threatening to get a court indictment to stop their planned national shutdown.

The drivers said they were not backing down and have accused the government of empowering companies to freely exploit those working in the industry.

One driver was quoted saying, "every step we take, we need petrol; we are nothing without petrol and there is no alternative to that. We are not lawyers, we are not in the industry to fight so that is why I feel like they always ignore us because they know that our strike is just going to be a day or two and at the end of the day, we still need to finance vehicles".

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