

Taxi strike chaos leads to closure of health facilities

By  Katja Hamilton

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The ongoing taxi strike in the Cape Metropole, accompanied by violence and transportation disruption in rural areas, has plunged the region into a state of crisis. As a consequence, numerous health facilities have been forced to close, services have been suspended, and the region is grappling with a significant reduction in capacity.



Source: [Pixabay](#)

The morning of 7 August witnessed a multitude of staff members unable to reach their workplaces due to road closures and violence flaring in certain areas, exacerbating the situation further.

According to the police, a motorist opened fire following an incident where they were hit with stones on Airport Approach, resulting in one fatality and three others sustaining injuries.

The City of Cape Town further reported the arrest of 35 individuals allegedly involved in violence linked to the ongoing taxi strike. Among the arrests, 27 individuals were apprehended in connection with a taxi blockade on the N2, causing significant traffic disruptions. Additionally, eight taxi drivers were arrested in Mfuleni.

Elective surgeries were postponed at the central hospitals of Tygerberg, Red Cross and Groote Schuur Hospital, the community health centres and clinics of Phillipi, Nyanga, Crossroads, Nolungile, and Gugulethu have been closed, and community-based care in these areas has also been suspended. Regarding emergency medical services and forensic

pathology services, access to red zone areas have only been possible with a law enforcement escort.

The stay-away is being led by the South African National Taxi Council in the Western Cape (Santaco-WC).

Despite urgent negotiations initiated last Thursday, a resolution to the taxi strike remains elusive. As a result, Cabinet has committed to convening daily to address the pressing situation and find a way forward.

Western Cape Premier Alan Winde took charge of a special provincial Cabinet meeting this morning. The meeting aimed to provide updates on the extensive engagements and interventions undertaken since the strike's inception.

Strike impact on critical services

"I am angry that as a result of the strike, residents have been unable to get home to their families or to work, school, shops, clinics and other critical sites. Many government services, including health and social development, are having to close facilities and are unable to provide desperately needed services to our communities. Our schooling system is also being affected. This is not acceptable," the premier stated.

"We welcome Santaco's condemnation of the levels of violence associated with the strike. However, we remain deeply concerned by the violence, loss of life and destruction of property that has been associated with the strike.

“ *"We are calling for calm, and urge all parties to go back to the negotiating table in order to urgently find an agreed way forward."* - [@go2Michelle](#), ActionSA Western Cape Provincial Chairperson [#TaxiStrikehttps://t.co/HrxpiNorSh](#)—
ActionSA (@Action4SA) [August 7, 2023](#) ”

"Santaco's leadership must ensure that the violence associated with the strike ends immediately. We also note and support the interdict granted by the Western Cape High Court to Golden Arrow Bus Services against Santaco and its affiliates. The Western Cape Government is also pursuing legal action, along with the City of Cape Town, to interdict the violence".

The Premier continued, "The ongoing violence is making it very difficult for negotiations to proceed. We are a government that stands for the rule of law. A withdrawal of services is an important Constitutional right, but violence, intimidation and destruction of property are not.

"This is non-negotiable. We want to bring all stakeholders back to the negotiations, but this has to be in an environment of calm. We must also not allow this issue to be politicised as this will only further complicate matters."

All law enforcement agencies have been mobilised since the strike was called. The maximum number of personnel and resources have been deployed to respond to acts of violence and protect what services are able to be offered amid the industrial action.

Santaco has confirmed the national taxi strike will continue until Wednesday, 9 August.

ABOUT KATJA HAMILTON

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