

Transport minister calls for resolution to Cape Town taxi strike

Transport Minister Sindisiwe Chikunga says the Department of Transport expects to meet with both the South African National Taxi Council (Santaco) and officials in the City of Cape Town following the taxi industry's suspension of services in the city.



She was speaking on the sidelines of the National Dialogue on Coalition Governments held in Cape Town.

On Wednesday after the taxi council suspended operations, taxis blocked roads, including major highways, resulting in the burning of buses and intimidation of motorists.

The strike follows a standoff with the City of Cape Town on various issues, including the impounding of taxis and operating license applications.

Chikunga said the department is expecting to convene a meeting with all role players to find a solution to the impasse.

“We have requested the MEC for Transport [in the Western Cape] because we believe the Department of Transport should lead and not the police because this is a matter that requires the Department of Transport nationally and provincially, sitting together with the metro.

"Of course, also the taxi industry itself represented by Santaco. We have invited the national leadership of Santaco, also their provincial and local leadership so that we hear exactly what the issues are and find solutions to those problems," Chikunga said.

The Minister called for taxi operators to reconsider the suspension of services, which has left thousands of commuters without transport.

"We are extremely concerned about what has happened. What we would like SANTACO to do is maybe call off the strike while we are trying to find a solution. The people who become victims are not the people that they are unhappy with, but it is the commuters.

"Of course we would want to protect the Netball World Cup. We have got other events that have to take place in Cape Town. [The taxi industry] plays a key role in the transportation of commuters and we would definitely try to persuade them to consider calling off the strike," she said.

Chikunga condemned the violence that erupted allegedly at the hands of taxi drivers in the area but also called on city officials to mete out "equal treatment" to all motorists, including those in the transportation industry.

"We are not saying that law enforcement should not enforce the law and we are not saying that the taxi industry should not abide by the law... of the road because that actually leads to accidents.

"However, when that law is meted, it should not just target the taxi industry. We are opposed to that. We can't have a by-law that is just for the taxi industry. If it is wrong to cross any barrier line, it should be wrong for the bus, the taxi and for everybody. It should not just focus on and target the taxi industry," she said.

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