

Striking drivers forcefully stop and inspect trucks in Gqeberha

Truck drivers affiliated to All Truck Drivers Forum and Allied South Africa (ATDF-ASA) hit their brakes on Monday to join a nationwide strike to demand that freight companies stop hiring immigrants.

By [Joseph Chirume](#) 2 Mar 2022



Source: Joseph Chirume via [GroundUp](#) | Striking drivers forced trucks to pull over and park at the truck stops in Gqeberha on Monday.

In Gqeberha, ATDF-ASA members were seen patrolling major highways and roads, forcefully stopping some trucks. The drivers were instructed to park at the City's three truck stops, namely, the Caltex Garage in Wells Estate, Swartkops Truck Stop and at the Deal Party.

According to a memorandum circulating locally by ATDF-ASA, the striking South African drivers are also demanding a 15 wage increase. They accused the government of prioritising immigrant workers for permit renewals.

ATDF-ASA said: "The foreigners are given a grace period of one year to renew their work permits, but South Africans are required to stop working when their Public Drivers Permit (PDP) lapses and no grace period is given to renew their permit

On Monday, there were two long queues of stationary trucks at the Caltex Truck Inn.

A striking South African driver, who asked not to be named, said that they are overworked and often penalised for taking time during trips to park off and rest. "We only rest when our trucks are queuing during loading and unloading at depots. Off days are very short. Foreign drivers accept any condition and are prepared to work for very low wages and under inhuman conditions," he said.

A driver, who was among those stopped near the Caltex Truck Inn during the strike, said: "This is very unfair. I'm delivering bread to feed people, including school children and patients at hospitals. Protesting drivers should have allowed critical deliveries like food and medicine to proceed. Why can't they go to those companies employing undocumented foreigners and close their gates?"

CEO of the Road Freight Association (RFA) Gavin Kelly told GroundUp that this issue has been ongoing for four years. "It's frustrating that the authorities have not put in place the proposals we made at the very beginning. To this day (they) are still fiddling with draft policies," said Kelly.

"What these agitators must understand is that there will be no sudden free jobs for all. Those wanting to drive will need to

demonstrate their ability to drive safely and properly,” he said.

Kelly said the RFA has representation on the Council of the National Bargaining Council for the Road Freight and Logistic Industry (NBCRFLI). He accused the labour department of only inspecting companies registered with the NBCRFLI which are mostly compliant.

“Non-compliant companies employ undocumented foreigners whom they pay far less than what is required through the M&A Collective Agreement. This places them in a position to undercut the companies that pay decent wages and required extra rates, operate safe vehicles and are generally far more reliable and professional,” he said.

In response to questions about the strike and some of the allegations, Eastern Cape Department of Roads and Transport spokesperson, Unathi Binqose, said they were aware of the drivers’ strike. Binqose referred our questions to the labour department. “We continue to negotiate with drivers to open up the roads and avoid traffic disruptions.”

In a TV interview on Monday about the strike, Labour Minister Thulas Nxesi criticised the union and the actions of the strike drivers, calling it “disruptive”.

“We’ve gone out of our way to make certain concessions for them. We are not sure what their agenda is. People have the right to demonstrate but not with violence. We are expecting them to make an input into the issue of quotas. We can’t ban the employment of foreign nationals, we are trying to limit and control.”

On Tuesday, police spokesperson, Colonel Priscilla Naidu confirmed that there were no further traffic disruptions and that arrests were made during the strike on Monday.

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