

Yellow taxi drivers 'suffer' as ride-hailing apps gain popularity

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Yellow taxi owners said that they are suffering great losses due to the prevalence of ride-hailing applications.

Yellow taxi companies and drivers in Jordan expressed their frustration, due to "the inability of the Ministry of Transport to regulate the sector".

Tareq, a yellow taxi company owner, who preferred to be identified by his first name only, said that taxis are the only source of income to thousands of Jordanian families, who are "immensely suffering", especially after the pandemic.

"Despite many protests and strikes from taxi drivers, the Ministry of Transport is not responsive to our demands, and ride-hailing applications are still operating and affecting our work negatively," Tareq told The Jordan Times over the phone.

Tareq noted that during the pandemic and lockdowns, taxis did not earn any money at all, stating that: "We are already struggling because of the pandemic, and now even after the lockdowns are over, we are still barely working, as people are using the transport applications".

According to Tareq, licensed taxi companies, which pay fees and taxes to the country's Treasury, "are unfairly suffering great losses".

Mohammad Khadir, a taxi driver, said that he only gets five to seven passengers a day.

"Unfortunately, I barely make my daily sustenance, and the taxi is my only source of income. I am lucky if I get 10 passengers a day," Khadir told The Jordan Times.

However, Maha Razi, a 23-year-old Jordanian, said that the reason people are resorting to ride-hailing as some taxi drivers can be "unprofessional and exploitative".

"Taxi drivers pick and choose who to stop for and where they want to go. I used to wait for more than an hour for a taxi to stop for me and agree to take me where I wanted to go, which is why I decided to start using the applications as it is much easier and faster," Razi told The Jordan Times. Razi noted that even if some taxi drivers agree to take the ride, they may demand more money than on the electronic meter.

She pointed out that the smart transport drivers follow the GPS location, which is "much more comfortable and safe", even if it is sometimes more expensive than a regular taxi ride.

Director of Information and Communication at the Land Transport Regulatory Commission, Abla Weshah, said that there are currently six ride-hailing application companies in Jordan.

According to Weshah, the yellow taxi has been integrated and entered as an option within the smart applications where people can request it.

"The commission is helping taxi offices and drivers as much as we can. We regulated the cost for a ride with a smart application to be 15 per cent more than the cost of a ride in a regular yellow taxi," Weshah told The Jordan Times on Monday over the phone.

Weshah also noted that the minimum yellow taxi fare was modified four years ago to be JD1, regardless of the distance.

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