

# Berlin taxi drivers hail city's Uber ban

August 14 2014, by Frank Jordans

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In this June 11, 2014 file photo taxi drivers gather after a protest drive against the competition from Internet and mobile applications designed for calling cabs in Berlin, Germany. Berlin taxi drivers are now celebrating a decision by authorities to ban the ridesharing service Uber from operating in the city. The Berlin Taxi Drivers' Association said Thursday, Aug. 14, 2014, that the move means its members aren't put at a disadvantage by having to abide by rules that Uber doesn't. (AP Photo/dpa, Joerg Carstensen, File)

**Berlin taxi drivers were celebrating Thursday after authorities banned the ridesharing service Uber from operating in the city because of safety concerns.**

In a decree Wednesday, Berlin authorities said they wouldn't tolerate Uber putting customers at risk by allowing them to ride in cars that hadn't been checked, and with drivers who weren't vetted or properly insured. The argument echoes that of established cab companies who claim Uber's app-based services, which offer limousines and pickups by private drivers, dodge rules that ordinary taxi firms have to abide by.

"I've got no problem with anyone who plays by the same rules as everyone else and shows that they can do it better," said Richard Leipold, head of the Berlin Taxi Association. "There are plenty of apps on the market in Berlin that do just that."

Fabien Nestmann, general manager for Uber Germany, said the company intends to challenge the ban.

Berlin's decision "is not progressive and it's seeking to limit consumer choice for all the wrong reasons," Nestmann said. "As a new entrant we're bringing much-needed competition to a market that hasn't changed in years."

The San Francisco-based company, which has received financial backing from Google, said it remains open to dialogue with authorities and rivals.



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Wednesday's ban, which comes with the threat of a 25,000-euro (\$33,400) fine for non-compliance, follows a separate Berlin court ruling in April that Uber's limousine service breaks the law. The Berlin Taxi Association, which had brought the case, didn't ask the court to enforce

that ban because it wanted to wait for possible appeals, Leipold said.

"Those legal proceedings are still underway, but I'm confident they will end in our favor," he said.

Uber has faced opposition from taxi drivers and authorities in several cities worldwide. According to its website the company operates in four other German cities: Munich, Frankfurt, Hamburg and Duesseldorf.

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