

Cabbies block Prague airport to protest against Uber (Update)

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Protesters slowed traffic to Prague's Vaclav Havel airport

Czech taxi drivers on Monday blocked traffic at Prague's international airport to protest what they and many of their counterparts abroad call unfair competition from the controversial ride-sharing app Uber.

Cab drivers have previously staged demonstrations against Uber in countries including Britain, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Indonesia, Italy,

Poland, Spain and Taiwan.

Around 1,200 cabs, according to organisers, deliberately drove slowly for three hours in the Czech capital, causing a traffic jam on the main access road to Vaclav Havel airport.

The traditional cab operators are notably upset that drivers for the US ride-sharing service operate without cab licences and taximeters.

"Uber drivers don't respect the laws in force," said Petr Polisensky, spokesman for the association of Prague cab drivers, before denouncing what he called "inaction on the part of authorities".

"The mayor of Prague has been ignoring (Uber's) illegal activity," he added in a statement published on social media.

Uber's spokeswoman in the Czech Republic, Miroslava Jozova, for her part said "we're willing to engage in dialogue".

"There's room enough for all kinds of businesses in Prague," she added.

Prague mayor Adriana Krnacova said the city "does not have the legal means to regulate digital platforms".

Around 70 taxi drivers in the country's second city of Brno—where a regional court recently banned Uber—staged a similar protest on Monday in solidarity with their Prague counterparts.

According to Uber, around 400,000 Czechs have downloaded its application since 2014. The company has around 2,000 freelance drivers in the country of 10.5 million people.

Uber has become one of Silicon Valley's biggest venture-funded startups

and has expanded its ride-sharing services to dozens of countries.

It does not employ drivers or own vehicles, but instead relies on private contractors with their own cars, allowing them to run their own businesses.

The app claims it is a service provider, connecting passengers with these freelance drivers directly and cheaply.

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