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Workers' protests in China

Taxi driver protests continue despite government relief measures

- News from around the world -

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In mid-March *China Labor Bulletin* reported "After a month in which there were virtually no worker protests in China because much of the country was on lockdown, workers are beginning to take collective action again. Many protests have been related to the economic distress caused by the coronavirus (Covid-19) epidemic." One of the the most mobilized sectors is that of taxi-drivers. [1] We republish CLB's report below.

As China gradually resumes normal economic activity, the country's 2.6 million taxi drivers are still reeling from the devastating economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic. Increasingly desperate drivers are staging large-scale protests demanding a reduction in the fees they have to pay cab companies or the right to get out of the business entirely without penalty.

Many drivers were already struggling financially prior to the pandemic and there was a noticeable increase in protests towards the end of last year, mainly related to local government regulations, cab company management, and, in particular, competition from ride-app and unlicensed drivers. [2]

During the height of the pandemic, many taxi drivers could not work at all, and even after control measures were lifted in various parts of the country drivers still struggled to make a living because of a lack of customers. In the southwestern city of Nanning, for example, drivers were only making 120 yuan a day on average in March, according to the [Nanning Daily](#), about 80 percent less than their average income during the same period last year.

At the same time, many cab companies were still demanding several thousand yuan a month in vehicle rent from their drivers, meaning that drivers were actually losing money each month.

Since the start of this year, CLB's [Strike Map](#) has recorded 25 taxi driver protests (compared with 54 for the whole of last year), the majority of which included demands for rent reductions or cancellations. Most recently, on 13 April, several hundred drivers from a number of cab companies in [Shenzhen](#) staged a mass protest demanding relief from excessive rents and fees or the right to return their vehicle without penalty. This was followed by a protest by drivers in the small Jiangxi city of [Ganzhou](#) on 14 April also demanding a fee reduction.

Several local governments, including the Beijing municipal government, have now introduced measures to ease the burden on taxi drivers through reduced rents or additional subsidies, but many only did so after drivers took strike action.

In [Liuzhou, Guangxi](#), for example, thousands of taxi drivers staged a mass protest on 10 March, demanding that taxi companies reduce or waive all contract fees, which at the time stood at between 130 yuan and 200 yuan a day depending on vehicle type. The local transport authorities held an emergency meeting with the taxi companies that day and promised a response to the drivers within five days. Eventually, the authorities agreed to a continued 50 percent reduction in fees and additional fuel subsidies.

In other cities such as Dalian, however, some taxi companies are refusing to make concessions even after driver protests and are insisting that drivers pay their rental fees as usual.

Other long-standing grievances such as driver ownership rights and the push to convert all taxis to electric vehicles have also been brought into sharper focus by the coronavirus crisis. Many drivers complain that even though they

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own their car, the cab companies still maintain some operating rights and can charge drivers accordingly, adding to the drivers already considerable burden. In addition, drivers say, forcing them to upgrade to electric vehicles at this time is both impractical and unreasonable.

Continuing tensions are evident by frequent confrontations between regular cab drivers and ride-app drivers over alleged customer snatching. Clearly, there is much more local governments should be doing to ensure drivers' rights and interests are protected.

For a more detailed analysis of the recent taxi protests, please see the article on our Chinese website - [«Å úßfL fp¾ ø:ÉøÆSL”BX](#).

15 April 2020

Source [China Labor Bulletin](#).

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[1] See *China Labor Bulletin*, 17 March 2020 "[Collective protests begin to flare up again as China returns to work](#)".

[2] *China Labor Bulletin*, 6 January 2020 "[Latent grievances erupt in massive taxi driver protests across China](#)".