



For Immediate Release: October 4, 2011

Press Release
**Taxi Workers Stand in Solidarity to Call Attention
to Violence and Unsafe Conditions in the Taxi Industry**

A Peaceful Rally
Wednesday, October 5, 2011
4pm
Civic Center Steps

On October 5, 2011, taxi drivers rally to address their safety problems that have been largely ignored over the past decades. On September 28, 2011, well-known member of the taxi community, Mir Sadat Sahou, 68 years old, was murdered during his shift in La Jolla, CA. Like Mr. Sahou, most of our drivers suffer long, 60 to 70-hour work weeks and are vulnerable to injury from assaults and accidents at a higher rate than any other workforce. But they have few health and safety protections.

The Department of Labor reports taxi driving as the most dangerous job in the country, with drivers 60 times more likely to be killed and 80 times more likely to be robbed than other U.S. workers. Drivers have been spat on, threatened, and punched in the head by drunken and violent passengers.

Libaan, a victim of robbery and assault, says, "The customer refused to pay me and punched me in the head. I called the police, and the officer threatened to arrest me. This pain and suffering should not be ignored." Driver Mohammed explains the daily fear: "Drivers often face threats. I had a \$65 fare in La Jolla. The customers went to hit me and never paid. I don't work at night. But even during the day, I'm scared. I'm not comfortable. I believe that somebody's going to do something. I work because I need to provide for my family."

Most taxis have one basic vehicle design, known as "Code Blue," where a light on the top of the car illuminates. Most drivers and police officers do not know of this feature, which does not prevent a physical assault nor provides immediate assistance. There are no other safety protections.

Every day, drivers receive police and Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) tickets for minor rule infractions such as missing road maps, or standing 12 feet away from their vehicle, or neglecting to wear a name badge. Meanwhile, they are silenced from identifying safety concerns out of fear of retaliation and blacklisting from the industry. There is no formal grievance process for safety violations or whistle blowing claims.

Taxi drivers have been an invisible face of San Diego's Metropolitan Transit System for too long. Taxi drivers are an integral part of the public transportation system, and yet, unlike public employees, they labor 12-hour shifts, 6 to 7 days a week, without health insurance or personal safety safeguards.

Therefore, we call attention to the unsafe working conditions of our taxi drivers and rally to promote safety such as optional window barriers, cameras and other improved security systems to protect taxi cab drivers who work unprotected. Mr. Sahou's tragic death emphasizes the urgent need of taxi safety protections for both drivers and their passengers.

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