

South Africa: Metrorail protesters hand memorandum of grievances to the President

Tuesday 30 July 2019, by [NICODAMUS Pearl](#) (Date first published: 26 July 2019).

Disgruntled members from various unions marched through the streets of Pretoria to submit a memorandum of grievances at the Union Buildings, earlier today.

Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA) commuters, members of the Federation of Unions of South Africa (FEDUSA) and the United National Transport Union (UNTU) were raised complaints about the unsafe working conditions of Metrorail employees.

The protestors said the majority of the security systems were broken down and the conditions of the trains were not safe for commuters.

FEDUSA Social Justice and Gender Officer, Brenda Modise said the health and safety conditions of the trains were affecting both employees and commuters.

“The trains are not safe at all. They are death traps because they do not have enough signalling which results in a lot of accidents that we have faced.”

“Women and children are the ones who mostly get hurt due to overcrowding and pressure in the trains since there are not enough trains.”

Modise said the main concern was about the lot of money that the government was spending on many projects without considering the safety of the disadvantaged who use the train as a mode of transport each day.

She enthused that it would be better if the government used some of the money for a good cause and fix the Metrorail issues.

It's been years since several representative organisations and commuters have been calling for the government to intervene on the Metrorail issue without success.

Earlier this year, President Cyril Ramaphosa was once stuck in a train for three hours when he took a train from Pretoria station to Mabopane as part of his campaign to determine the depth of the challenges but since then nothing was done to fix the problem.

Daily Metrorail commuter Bennet Makama said the situation of the trains was dire as trains were always stuck, getting people to work late resulting in some being fired as they did not afford any other means of transport.

“For some of us, a train is the only public transport that we can afford because taxis are very expensive but the problem is that the trains are not safe and reliable at all.”

“Sometimes you can wait for a train from 10 am until 4 pm and they only tell you that the signalling lines are broken or that there were delays,” said Makama.

He said for more than ten years that he has been a train commuter nothing has changed and the situation was only getting worse each day.

While FEDUSA Deputy General Secretary, Saya Carstevs said PRASA would not be able to tackle all the challenges alone hence there was a need for intervention from the government.

“The issue of signalling system must be moved out of the way because if we do not have modern signalling then we cannot implement the people’s train also called ‘Prasa train’ known to be operating in Mamelodi and other areas.”

“The Prasa train will be a better solution because it is a bit faster compared to the current Metrorail and with Prasa train there will be better signalling which will make commuting better,” Carstevs said.

The memorandum which was signed and accepted by Acting Deputy Director General, Jan David de Villiers comprised of a few demands which included:

- The deployment of South African National Defence Force (SANDF) to patrol and safeguard the 22,298 route kilometres
- South African Police Service (SAPS) be instructed to prevent, combat and investigate crime, maintain public order, protect and secure the Inhabitants of South Africa
- Integrate Prasa and Transnet as they were prior to 2006
- Force Prasa to comply with the provisions of the Occupational Health and Safety Acts which gives people a right to a safe and healthy working environment.

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