

Taxi driver unions protest Uber's return to Barcelona

March 18 2021, by Renata Brito and Aritz Parra



A taxi driver stands next to his cab as they march slowly blocking the traffic along one of the avenues in Barcelona downtown, Spain, Thursday, March 18, 2021. Hundreds of yellow-and-black cabs disrupted Barcelona's road traffic on Thursday to protest against the return of the ride-hailing giant Uber to the northeastern city after a 2-year hiatus. (AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti)

Hundreds of yellow-and-black taxi cabs disrupted traffic in Barcelona on Thursday to protest the return of the ride-hailing giant Uber to the northeastern Spanish city after a 2-year hiatus.

The U.S.-based multinational was driven out of the streets of Barcelona in February 2019, when regional authorities ordered that rides arranged through [mobile apps](#) had to be hired at least 15 minutes in advance.

At the time, Uber said the requirement was "totally incompatible with the immediacy of on-demand services."

But Uber resumed operating in the city of 5.4 million residents this week, allowing users to order rides from over 350 regular cabs charging with [taxi](#)-meters.

The company said it is seeking regulatory permission to also offer fixed rates for rides, Uber's original model.

The company's current platform in Barcelona also provides car-sharing services and displays information about public transportation, following a similar initiative in London, Paris, Lisbon and Rome, Uber said in a statement.

The return has angered cab driver unions in the Catalonia region's capital. Three columns of taxis made their way through Barcelona's main thoroughfares on Thursday, advancing toward the seat of the regional parliament.



Taxi cabs move slowly blocking the traffic along one of the avenues in Barcelona downtown, Spain, Thursday, March 18, 2021. Hundreds of yellow-and-black cabs disrupted Barcelona's road traffic on Thursday to protest against the return of the ride-hailing giant Uber to the northeastern city after a 2-year hiatus. (AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti)



Taxi drivers throw fake money in the air during a protest in Barcelona downtown, Spain, Thursday, March 18, 2021. Hundreds of yellow-and-black cabs disrupted Barcelona's road traffic on Thursday to protest against the return of the ride-hailing giant Uber to the northeastern city after a 2-year hiatus. (AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti)



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Representatives of the Elite Taxi union called drivers who are working with Uber "traitors" and called the company's re-entry in Barcelona illegal.

Syed Junaid, a driver representing Pak Taxi, an association of cab drivers of Pakistani origin, said that Uber was using the coronavirus pandemic to lure hard-hit [drivers](#) and pit them against their peers in order to gain a foothold in the market.

"That's what they've done in other cities around the world," Junaid told The Associated Press. "We won't allow them to do it here, because we have overcome the worst and we are about to leave the pandemic behind, so we don't need their platform to survive."

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